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Adventure Compendium

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Adventure Compendium

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INTRODUCTION

Adventures? They make an adept's life special!

• Krolok, Ork Nethermancer •

The age of **Earthdawn** is an era of magic that existed thousands of years ago in our world's dim past. Magic touched every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Name-giver races: humans, elves, dwarfs, orks, trolls, windlings, t'skrang, and obsidimen. However, as the levels of magic rose, so, too, did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic brought Horrors to Earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, the peoples of Barsaive hid underground as the Horrors devastated their lands during the dark time that came to be called the Scourge.

Now, the people of Barsaive have emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels, ready to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire. From all across Barsaive, bold heroes step forward to champion their land, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures. Through magic, skill, and daring, Barsaive's heroes strive to heal the world of the scars left by the Scourge. In so doing, they become Barsaive's living legends.

The **Adventure Compendium** contains a number of roleplaying adventures set in the world of **Earthdawn**. While each of the adventures in this compilation—**Mists of Betrayal**, **Terror in the Skies**, **Infected**, **Shattered Pattern**, and each of the **Blades** adventures—can be run on its own, this volume features additional adventure hooks and gamemaster guidelines for running them as a campaign.

GAMEMASTERING NOTES

This book contains everything needed to start an **Earthdawn** campaign, but is also flexible enough to be used in a currently running campaign. The **Earthdawn Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums** are both required to use the adventures in this book.

Each adventure is suited for three to five players using characters of varying Circles (see below). If necessary, the gamemaster may adjust the individual encounters that make up each adventure to suit larger or smaller groups. For example, if the group has only three players and their characters battle two dozen orks because the adventure says so, the game session is likely to end very quickly. To avoid such problems, the gamemaster should feel free to change any part of the adventures that he deems fit. However, each adventure should pose a challenge for the players. Without the risk of failure, the game becomes dull and no one has fun. The gamemaster should ensure that the player characters only survive the adventure through hard work, smart playing, and a little bit of luck.

Though gamemaster characters can play significant roles in these adventures, the gamemaster should not allow them to overshadow the player characters. When the adventurers attempt to overcome a particular obstacle, or try to think of a way out of some dangerous situation, avoid using gamemaster characters to tell the players how to resolve the problem. After all, if players make the right choices all the time, both they and the gamemaster have a lot less fun. Whenever possible let your group of players make their own beds and squirm in them. To help the player characters out of trouble, these adventures include several loyal companions who try to help their friends when needed. These gamemaster characters serve as a safety net for the adventurers, and also draw them deeper into the story as they come to know the people they live and fight beside.

To run the adventures, the gamemaster needs to be familiar with the contents of this book and the **Gamemaster's Compendium**; both gamemaster and players should be familiar with the **Player's Compendium**.

The contents of the Adventure Compendium are for the gamemaster's eyes only.

Making Tests

During the course of the adventures contained in this book, whenever characters attempt to take actions such as casting a spell, swinging a sword at an opponent, tracking a Horror, or flirting with a barmaid, the gamemaster or the player rolls dice against a **Difficulty Number** to determine the action's outcome. These dice rolls are called **Action Tests** (see the **Game Concepts** chapter of the **Player's Compendium**, p. 18).

To make an Action Test, the player or gamemaster rolls the appropriate **Action dice** based on the **step number** of the ability being used. If the dice roll result is equal to or greater than the Difficulty Number, the test succeeds and the character accomplishes his action. If the result is less than the Difficulty Number, the character fails to accomplish his action. In tests that deal with magic, the result often determines the duration of a magical effect.

Frequently, a test result determines not only basic success or failure, but the degree of success. A test may have one of six result levels: Pathetic, Poor, Average, Good, Excellent, or Extraordinary. A **Poor** result usually indicates simple failure at the task. A **Pathetic** result, less than the Difficulty Number listed for a Poor result, is often bad enough to have unpleasant side effects. An **Average** result, equal to or barely exceeding the Difficulty Number, usually means the character only just accomplished his action. A somewhat better roll yields a **Good** result, and a total close to double the Difficulty Number means an **Excellent** result. To achieve an **Extraordinary** result requires an even better roll again.

Additionally, any result level greater than Average may give the character some additional gain for his actions, including valuable extra information. The amount of gain for each result level is determined by the gamemaster, unless specifically noted.

In many cases when the player characters must make a test, the required ability is given, followed by the Difficulty Number of the task in parentheses. For example, a Perception (8) Test means that a character must use his Perception step to make a test against a target Difficulty Number of 8. A result of 8 or better succeeds; anything else fails.

How to Use This Book

Aside from the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums**, this book contains everything required to run the contained adventures. The pace of each story will often go very fast, much like a rollercoaster ride. To stay on top of the adventures' rapidly changing events, the gamemaster must know what happens in advance so he can hurl the unwitting characters into the next challenging situation before the players have time to think. The gamemaster should be familiar with the basic outline of the plot and know precisely which developments trigger later events. As always, the gamemaster should also be prepared to deal with the unexpected.

The following sections outline how the adventures are structured:

Encounters and Events

The **Plot Synopsis** at the beginning of each adventure summarizes the story background and the most probable course of the story. The encounters that follow describe the situations and events the characters must deal with during the course of the adventure. Each encounter contains a summary of the action that occurs during the encounter, and also explains the encounter's objective. This overview is followed by four sections: Setting the Stage, Themes and Images, Behind the Scenes, and Troubleshooting.

The next section, **Setting the Stage**, contains a description of the encounter's surroundings and includes maps, if applicable. This section may also contain a narrative describing the player characters' location and what is happening to them as if the characters were actually there. Any special instructions for the gamemaster are highlighted.

Themes and Images helps the gamemaster set the mood and pacing for a particular encounter. It includes hints about imagery to use in the scene, emotions to convey, sounds, sensations, and so on. The information provided varies in form and content from scene to scene, ranging from general themes to specific sensory impressions.

Behind the Scenes explains what is really going on in each encounter. This section provides the gamemaster with all of the information he needs to run the encounter, such as specialized descriptions of locations and events, and statistics for any gamemaster characters the player characters may meet or creatures they may fight. If the players or gamemaster need a map to play an encounter, it appears here. As with **Setting the Stage**, any special instructions for the gamemaster are highlighted.

The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track should things go awry. For example, the characters may miss an important clue or lose a fight that they need to win. Most gamemasters will not want the player characters to get discouraged or killed off too easily. This section offers the gamemaster options for keeping the game going over trouble spots. The gamemaster can, of course, ignore these hints and invent his own solutions, or simply let the chips fall where they may. As noted earlier, however, the freeform nature of roleplaying means we can't anticipate everything the player characters might do! The gamemaster is again advised that he should be prepared to improvise if required.

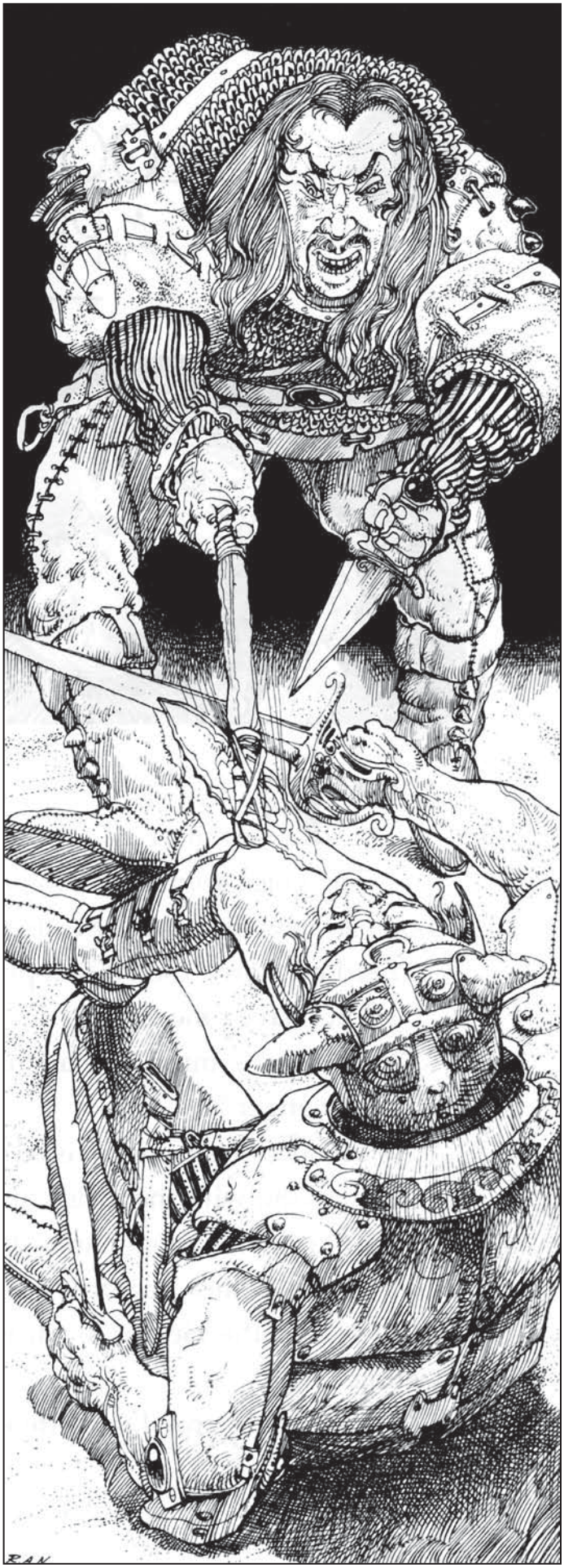
Game Information

The following sections provide additional information on the adventure, gamemaster characters, optional rules, and handouts.

Loose Ends

Following the encounters, this section sums up the consequences of the adventure and suggests ways in which the gamemaster might use the adventure's gamemaster characters and settings in future adventures.

Awarding Legend Points is also included in this section—guidelines for awarding the adventure's Legend



Points to the player characters. The gamemaster awards Legend Points after each gaming session, as well as at the end of the adventure.

Cast of Characters

This section provides descriptions and game statistics for the most significant gamemaster characters.

New Magical Treasures

This chapter contains complete game information on the new magical treasures that can be found in the **Adventure Compendium**.

Player Handouts

Finally, this chapter contains information that the player characters will use during the adventures. This information can be photocopied or handwritten by the gamemaster. Permission is granted to copy these handouts *for personal use only*.

Preparing the Adventures

It is impossible to create a published adventure that provides the appropriate opposition level for every diverse group of player characters. Some groups are inherently more powerful than others.

The gamemaster must adjust game statistics and capabilities of the opposition to provide an appropriate level of difficulty for his group. If the adventure does not suit the player characters' strengths and weaknesses, the gamemaster may use it as an outline, the bones on which to develop an adventure of his own. Or, if it works well except for a glitch here and there, the gamemaster can change any part of the plot or events to make the adventure a better one.

To aid the players in roleplaying, the gamemaster should create a framework that explains why these particular characters have embarked on this adventure together. Whether or not the characters have adventured before, most if not all are inexperienced. The group may have come together by chance, seeking security in numbers; after all, Horrors still lurk in Barsaive's wilderness. Or perhaps everyone is from the same town or a kaer that only recently opened up. The latter suggestion also gives a plausible reason for the characters to be ignorant of many potential hazards.

If he wishes, the gamemaster may create a short scenario that ends with the characters near the location where the next adventure begins. An opening scenario may also help the gamemaster and players get a feel for the rules and setting of the game.

Several maps and handouts are included with each adventure. The gamemaster should photocopy any handouts and have them ready to use when

needed. In addition to props, gamemasters might want to use background music to help convey mood. Use the descriptions in the **Themes and Images** sections to find out what kind of music might be appropriate for a given encounter.

Keep in mind that you, as the gamemaster, have a unique responsibility to make the adventure exciting, keep the players involved, and hold the story on track. In describing the world of **Earthdawn**, try to answer all the players' questions about what the characters see, hear, touch, smell, and taste. Feel free to go beyond the descriptions provided in this book when evoking places and moods. Refer to the **Adventures and Campaigns** chapter on p. 97 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more advice and guidelines on running adventures.

The following information gives an overview of the adventures contained in this book. Each of these can be run as a stand-alone adventure, or as part of an ongoing campaign (see **Campaign Information**, p. 10).

Mists of Betrayal

Mists of Betrayal takes place in the northeastern reaches of Barsaive. The adventurers will travel to the town of Haven, built near the ruins of the forgotten city of Parlainth, and to Blood Wood, the seat of elven power. On the way, they will confront a tangled web of deceit, corruption, and betrayal that strikes at the heart of Barsaive.

This adventure is best suited for three to five Initiate and Novice (First to Fourth Circle) adepts of any Discipline. **Mists of Betrayal** is a linear adventure, meaning that each event follows a particular sequence. However, the gamemaster should feel free to adapt the adventure to suit his group of players. Though the encounters progress logically, the gamemaster need not follow the adventure precisely as written in order to run a successful game. Many things are not as they seem; plots and manipulations go on constantly behind the scenes.

Though the players have a legitimate task to perform, much more happens than the characters realize. Keeping this in mind, the gamemaster should let the players believe that they control their own destiny while arranging events to lead the characters exactly where he wants them to go.

Terror in the Skies

Terror in the Skies takes place in Travar, a bustling trade city in southwest Barsaive. The adventurers are hired to make the skies safe for the huge airships that move trade goods to and from the city. In the course of this adventure, the characters will travel to an ancient windling kaer, explore its haunted depths, and return to the beleaguered city of Travar with an ancient text called the Tome of Banishment. Along the way, they will fight many a pitched battle in the skies with monsters that shoot fire and a vast airship that carries a powerful Horror and its dark minions. **Terror in the Skies** is best suited for three to five Novice (Second to Fourth Circle) adepts of any Discipline. Like **Mists of Betrayal**, **Terror in the Skies** is a linear adventure.

Infected

Infected takes place in the hinterlands of Barsaive, west of the Kingdom of Throal and south of Lake Vors. In these barren lowlands lie hundreds of tiny villages, isolated from the rest of the world since the end of the Scourge. The quiet, self-reliant people of these villages emerged from their kaers determined to recreate the peaceful, ordinary lives of their forebears. Both their experiences in the kaers and the many dangers that still exist in Barsaive have made these villagers fearful and suspicious of outsiders. The

adventurers travel to the village of Hanto, where they discover a band of grim fanatics controlling the town. The adventurers must search for the truth behind the occupation of Hanto and choose whether or not to liberate its people from the invaders' iron grip.

Infected is best suited for three to five Novice (Second to Fourth Circle) adepts of any Discipline. Unlike the previous two adventures, **Infected** does not follow a strictly linear storyline. Instead, **Infected** uses a decision-tree format, which allows the characters to determine the course of the story once they reach the village of Hanto. The encounters set in and near the village provide the gamemaster with all the necessary information to deal with each situation in a variety of ways, and the characters influence the resolution of each encounter. Because this format gives the characters greater freedom to respond to events as they will, the adventure has no single, predetermined resolution.

Shattered Pattern

Shattered Pattern begins in the city of Kratas and takes the heroes to several locations along the border between the Badlands and the Servos Jungle, two of Barsaive's most dangerous regions. The Scourge seems to have wrought special devastation on this area, for, more so than other places, this part of the land still contains many Horrors, Horror constructs, and Horror-corrupted folk. Even the hardiest and best-equipped adventurers had best take care in this no man's land.

Shattered Pattern is best suited for three to five Journeymen (Fifth to Eighth Circle) adepts of any Discipline. As a setting-based adventure, it provides descriptions of several locations and a few events serving as the basis for an exciting story. Each important location in this adventure is described in its own section, along with an overview of the events most likely to occur. All event descriptions include sufficient information for the gamemaster to resolve each situation in different ways, depending on the players' actions. This allows the gamemaster to adapt the adventure to suit his particular group of players.

Blades

Blades is a collection of smaller adventures, intended for a group of three to five adepts of any Discipline at Circles from Journeyman (Fifth to Eighth Circle), up. The **Blades** adventures are short and relatively straightforward, and each forms part of a larger picture. As the characters progress through the **Blades** adventures, they learn the history of a set of magical daggers known as the Blades of Cara Fahd. At the same time, they uncover a serious threat to Barsaive, a threat they become inextricably linked to. This threat grows with each adventure and each thread the characters weave to the Blades.

Ideally, the **Blades** adventures should be spaced between other adventures of a campaign for maximum enjoyment. See the **Blades** chapter on p. 254 for more information on how to run the adventures.

Bond Breaker

In **Bond Breaker**, the players become tangled in the political intrigue surrounding two rival ork scorcher bands as they attempt to learn the Rank One Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The adventure assumes that the players have already found the Blades of Cara Fahd, either through the adventure **Shattered Pattern** or in the course of an adventure of the gamemaster's own design. **Bond Breaker** is intended for a group of three to five adept characters of Fifth to Seventh Circles. The gamemaster should be familiar with the entire adventure before starting it and should pay particular attention to the personal dynamics between the adventure's various gamemaster characters. **Bond Breaker** has various possible conclusions, depending on the choices the players make.

Grave Wisdom

Grave Wisdom takes the characters to the ruins of an ancient shrine to fallen ork heroes, in search of the Rank Three Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The characters must discover the Name of the group of ork heroes who wielded the daggers. They must also perform a Deed—they must build a monument to the Seven Spokes in the Spokes' original home, ten miles away from the Hold of Courage. The adventure is best suited for three to five characters of Sixth or Seventh Circle.

A Traitor's Fate

A Traitor's Fate takes the adventurers from the relative safety of a Barsaivian settlement into the dangerous depths of the Liaj Jungle. The adventure is best suited for a group of three to five players using Sixth or Seventh Circle characters. The particular nature of the characters' quest requires **A Traitor's Fate** to be linear in structure, but the gamemaster should feel free to add encounters and other obstacles to increase the difficulty or complexity of the adventure if desired.

With an Axe in Hand

With an Axe in Hand takes the adventurers to the Tylon Mountains in search of an obsidiman Liferock that they believe holds the Rank Seven Key Knowledge of the Blades—the Name of the Horror that killed the Seven Spokes. The Horror's Name is Betrayer. **With an Axe in Hand** is intended for a group of three to five players using Seventh to Eighth Circle characters.

Pure Liquids

Pure Liquids sends the adventurers to the underground rivers beneath the Tylon Mountains for a confrontation with Betrayer, the Horror that lives within the Blades of Cara Fahd. The adventure assumes the characters already know that the Rank Eight Deed consists of traveling to the spot where Betrayer was slain, and that the Rank Eight Key Knowledge is the means the Seven Spokes used to originally defeat the Horror. The adventure is intended for a group of three to five players using Seventh to Ninth Circle adept characters. As with all of the **Blades** adventures, the gamemaster should be thoroughly familiar with the adventure before running it.

Scaling the Adventures

The adventures in this book are designed to challenge an average party of four adept characters. Should the gamemaster have a larger (or smaller) group, he may want or need to make some changes to the number of opponents presented to retain a challenge for his players. For the most part, this is a simple exercise. Generally, if you want to increase the overall power level of the opposition, the easiest method is simply to increase (or decrease) the oppositions' numbers.

For each additional character above four in the group, increase the number of opponents in the encounter by 25 percent. For example, in the adventure **Grave Wisdom**, p. 283, the characters encounter a pack of four crojen. If the party has five characters, the gamemaster may wish to increase the number of crojen encountered by 25 percent, to five crojen. Each additional character means another crojen is added to this encounter. Conversely, for each character below four in the group, decrease the number of opponents in the encounter by 25 percent. In the example above, a party with three characters would encounter 25 percent fewer creatures—three crojen in this case. This increase or decrease is always at the gamemaster's discretion.

In the case of encounters with single opponents, scaling can be more difficult. This is especially the case with Named gamemaster characters or Horrors. In such situations, the gamemaster may wish to have a couple of minions appear with the adversary, to even up the odds a little. Alternatively, he may simply add or subtract one or two ranks to or from the adversary's abilities, making him or it a little tougher or weaker than presented. Another solution is to increase the gamemaster characters' statistics; increasing an adept's Circle, for example, will give him access to more talents and higher step numbers.

Refer to the **Gamemaster Characters** (p. 219) and **Creatures** (p. 268) chapters of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more guidelines on how to measure and change the oppositions' game statistics to tailor them for your group.

Campaign Information

While each of the adventures in this book can be run standalone, this section shows how to run the adventures as a campaign. As presented, the adventures can simply be run one after another, with suitable interludes that take the characters from the place where a previous adventure ends to where the next adventure begins. For example, the gamemaster could run an interlude adventure after **Mists of Betrayal** that takes the group to Travar, where they can start playing **Terror in the Skies**.

The **Loose Ends** section of each adventure offers several suggestions on how to deal with the aftermath of an adventure, including hints on how to connect to the other adventures presented in this book. While the increasing power level of the adventures fortifies that they are run in the order presented, gamemaster could scale the adventures differently if they want to run them in a different

order. For example, gamemasters who want to start their campaign with the events of **Infected** could scale that adventure's opposition down to suit their groups' power levels. See **Scaling the Adventures**, p. 10, for more information on how to do this.

The notable exception to this is **Blades**, as the adventures presented in that chapter should be run in the order presented, but can also be spaced between other adventures in a campaign. The **Running Blades** section on p. 259 of the **Blades** chapter contains more information on how to do this. Refer to the **Adventures and Campaigns** chapter on p. 97 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more advice and guidelines on customizing published adventures.

A Note on Continuity

While all of the adventures contained in this book are revised versions of adventures originally published for the FASA edition of the **Earthdawn** game, they haven't been updated to the current timeline (see the **How It Came To Pass** chapter on p. 21 of the **Player's Compendium**). As written, all of the adventures take place before the return of the Therans, as described in **The Theran Behemoth** on p. 31 of the **Player's Compendium**, and lead up to the events that followed afterwards. The following sections describe how these adventures connect to the overall plot, and contains advice that should help gamemasters to adjust the background of the adventures if they want to play them just prior to or with the current timeline (1510 TH).

Mists of Betrayal

Mists of Betrayal can be run as written. The return of the Therans didn't change much in the northern regions of Barsaive, and the Blood Wood, as well as Parlainth, were largely unaffected by the events outlined in the **How It Came To Pass** chapter on p. 21 of the **Player's Compendium**.

Terror in the Skies

While the presence of *Triumph* has some impact on the general airship and river trade in Travar, it doesn't affect the adventure itself and can be run as written.

Infected

Some of the characters presented in **Infected** played a vital role in Barsaive's history and will continue to do so in future **Earthdawn** products. Gamemasters will find a complete summary of the history and the events that followed in the **Loose Ends** section (see **The Dragon's Daughter** on p. 188 of the **Infected** chapter).

Adapting the basic conflict of the story to a campaign running with the current timeline would require replacing Aardelea with another gamemaster character at the center of the Grim Legion's attention. The reason for this can be virtually anything, as long as it provides mysterious powers, although we advise gamemasters not to use the *Book of Blue Spirits*.

For an interesting story twist, the replacement character could have found a Horror-cursed item (like the Flydrop Coat; see the **Horrors** chapter on p. 437 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**) and pose a real threat to the village of Hanto, which would also make the Grim Legion appear in a different light.

Shattered Pattern

This adventure offers the characters a way to establish contact with the great dragons and their minions, who play a subtle role in the ongoing politics of Barsaive. The story of Tyrlaan and the theft of Icewing's clutch of eggs is not connected to the main path of historical events, so the adventure can be run as written. One notable consideration is the Theran presence at *Triumph*, which is likely to have an impact on the events happening between Kratas and the Dragon Mountains. The Throalic soldiers might be opposed by Theran soldiers snooping around, which is likely to result in a skirmish or two. While this is an interesting addition to the plot, it might divert the group's attention from the main story. The easiest solution would be to relocate the opening of **Shattered Pattern** to Urupa instead of Kratas to avoid any kind of Theran interference.

Blades

The adventures presented in this chapter assume that the Ork Nation of Cara Fahd has not yet been re-established (see **The Rise of Cara Fahd** in the **How It Came To Pass** chapter on p. 32 of the **Player's Compendium**). While the adventures can mostly be run as written, the unpleasant side-effects of the Blades of Cara Fahd can have a strong impact on the welfare of the young nation, and even destroy it if the characters get in contact with Krathis Gron and other tribe chieftains. For example, if the characters are in Claw Ridge while a meeting between the chieftains takes place, Betrayer's influence might be enough to spark distrust and open hatred between them, endangering their continued cooperation.

If they learn that the heroes possess the Blades, Krathis Gron and her advisors will try to get the characters to either join Cara Fahd or give up the Blades. If they join, Krathis lets them keep the daggers, but assigns an ork "mentor" to closely watch non-ork characters to make sure they have the interests of Cara Fahd at heart. If they give up the Blades, Krathis Gron offers them to the top eight contenders in a tremendous contest of strength, magic and loyalty to Cara Fahd, making the winners Cara Fahd's new Protectors. If the characters give away the Blades while they are still Horror-tainted, Betrayer works his corruption through Cara Fahd's defense forces, and by the time war comes around, Cara Fahd may experience the same ignominious death it did last time. Eventually, new ork heroes will seek the source of the curse and destroy it—and perhaps the player characters, too.

While the characters are unlikely to give the Blades away until they have resolved their quest, the orks do not necessarily know of the curse—which can lead to all kinds of unforeseen (but interesting) developments. For example, a group of orks hired by Krathis Gron might steal the Blades from the characters, and Krathis could herself become cursed by weaving a thread to one of the daggers...

Mists of Betrayal

Sometimes we trust too much. As Name-givers, that is our nature. One should not fight nature.

• Ganabe Mistrunner, Ork Shaman •

"Feed me, elf!"

The voice seemed to be coming from everywhere at once, but the blood elf knew that only he heard it.

"Feed me now," the voice repeated, growing more insistent.

"I don't have time for you now."

"Your time is mine, impudent fool. Now feed me, lest you feel the lash of my anger."

As always, the rune-covered pendant around Kalourin's neck had begun glowing with the insistent pulse of magic even before the Horror spoke to him. The abomination took a perverse pleasure in calling him at unexpected times, regardless of the risks it posed for both. This time the elf feared the Horror's call would make him late for the Queen's meeting.

"I must go, Horror. I will attend to you later."

"You will feed me when I demand it. Contact the slaver and have him bring me my feeding."

Kalourin stepped toward the door. Late for the Queen's assembly or not, he would suffer far more if someone discovered that one of Queen Alachia's Blood Warders was in league with a Horror. He hurried over to a small thatched hut, cast a quick glance up and down the street, then entered.

"Warder Kalourin ..."

"Be still, Trebor," the warder told the hut's lone resident. "I have no time for pleasantries. Go and find the Theran slaver and tell him the Horror desires its feeding."

"Yessir, right away sir," the elf said.

"And remember, Trebor, if anyone sees you, we will both die."

"Yessir."

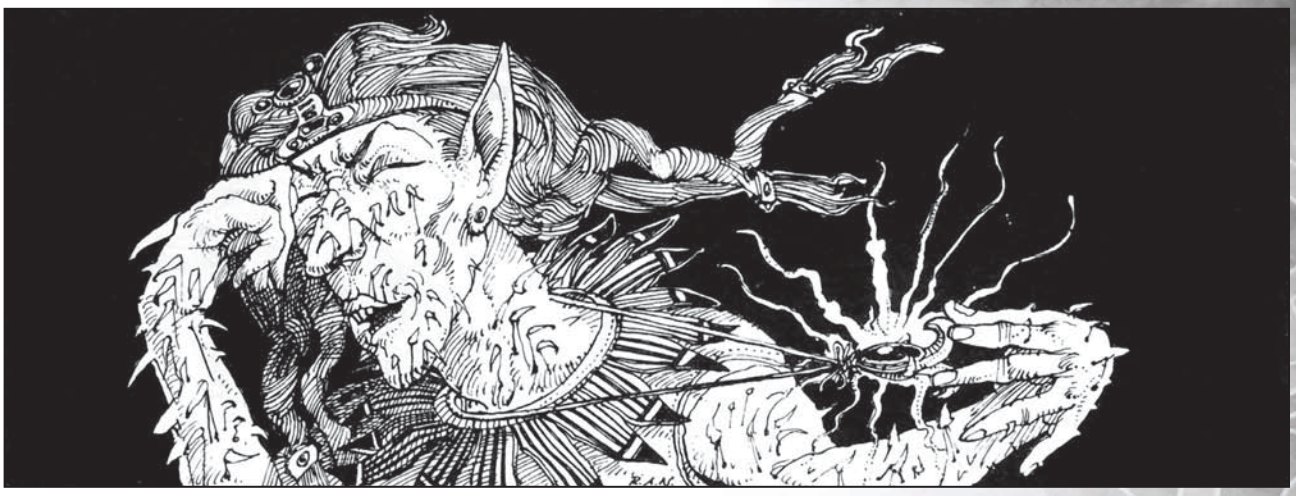
Kalourin left the hut and hurried to the Queen's residence, rushing past the grim-faced guards who stood outside the thick vine walls of the palace. The Blood Warder entered the Great Hall and found the other warders had already taken their places. He sighed with relief when he realized the Elven Queen herself had not yet arrived; Alachia was an impatient woman, and when she summoned her Blood Warders she expected them to jump. Those who did not sometimes found themselves left to die in the pit outside the palace, surrounded by the rotting corpses of others who had tempted the Queen's displeasure. Ah, but soon you'll no longer need fear the ire of the insane old hag, he told himself. Only a little longer, Kalourin, old boy, and you'll be taking your rightful place on the throne.

"All hail Alachia, the Beautiful and the Terrible, Protector of Blood Wood, Ruler of All Elvenkind," intoned one of the royal guards at the doorway.

The warders kneeled as the Queen entered, and Kalourin felt a mix of disdain and regret as he watched the figure before him. Clad in a gown of white blossom petals, Alachia seemed to glow in the eerie emerald light that shone through the leafy palace roof. Even the tiny thorns that covered her alabaster skin and the scowl on her face could not hide the radiant beauty that had inspired tales of the Elven Queen far beyond the borders of Blood Wood. At one time Kalourin had even felt the Queen's lithe body, writhing with impatient desire, against his own. Once, he had believed he would someday rule at her side. That childish dream, however, died the day he found himself barred from the royal bedchamber.

When he realized that Alachia viewed him no differently than any other of her countless consorts, his ardor turned to hatred. Soon he viewed the Queen's entire court with disdain as well—the kowtowing elven nobles that surrounded her and the other Blood Warders, always eager to please their sovereign like so many lap dogs.

He even began questioning the Queen's strict prohibition against unauthorized contact with outsiders. What he



had once considered a prudent precaution against foreign threats, he now saw as a foolish, immature reaction to Barsaive's ostracism of Blood Wood. When the elves' wooden kaer failed during the Scourge and they sought the magical protection provided by the Ritual of the Thorns, few of them considered how outsiders would react to the sight of their mutilated bodies. The ever-growing thorns would protect them from the Horrors, and that was all that mattered. But when the outsiders reacted with revulsion and fear to the so-called blood elves, the Elven Court foolishly declared that it did not need the foreign barbarians anyway and virtually closed the borders of Blood Wood. Although this decision made Alachia's power nearly absolute within the Wood, Kalourin realized she was not invincible. When he later encountered the Horror, he realized he'd discovered the outside ally he needed to usurp the throne and humiliate Alachia, "the Beautiful and Terrible," as she had humiliated him.

"Rise and face your Queen," Queen Alachia said, as she sat on a throne of woven rose bushes. "We have summoned you all here because we have heard disturbing rumors, rumors of a Blood Warder dealing with outsiders."

A murmur rose from the group as the warders voiced their indignation at this blasphemy.

"Silence!"

The murmur faded even more quickly than it had arisen.

"You all know the Elven Court will not tolerate unauthorized dealings with outsiders, nor will it tolerate slander that divides and weakens us. We wish to know the source of these accusations, so that we may decide whether they are true and bring swift retribution against any who would betray the Elven Court."

The room seemed to grow even more still, and Kalourin found himself nearly overpowered by the sickly sweet fragrance from the thousands of roses that lined the walls of the Great Hall. For one insane moment he was certain he had been discovered and considered confessing his crime and begging the mercy of the Court, when a voice broke the silence.

"Your Majesty, I fear I am the source of these rumors," said the warder called Takaris.

The Queen merely watched the elf for a moment.

"Continue, Warder Takaris."

"Your Majesty, I ... I believe Warder Kalourin's involvement with outsiders exceeds the boundaries of normal prudence and threatens us all," the warder stammered.

Noting Takaris' nervousness, Kalourin guessed that he lacked evidence to support his accusation. The little upstart had undoubtedly been spying on him, trying to learn something damning, when the rumors reached the Queen. Realizing that he might be able to turn the proceedings against Takaris, Kalourin seized the offensive.

"Warder Kalourin, do you wish to reply?" the Queen asked.

"Your Majesty, Takaris speaks truly when he says I associate with outsiders. However, he exaggerates the extent of my contacts and the threat they pose to the Elven Court. The mistake is certainly understandable, as Warder Takaris is known to be overcautious in his thinking."

"Overcautious?" Takaris blurted out, unable to control himself. "You have such nerve. How can one be overcautious regarding our relations with the outer world?"

Kalourin turned away as the Queen acknowledged Takaris' words with a slight smile.

Takaris continued his attack. "Your actions could cause great conflict between us and the other peoples of Barsaive. We shall see whose actions are the most unwise, my caution or your ..."

"And what actions are these?" Alachia asked, her voice taking on a harder edge. "Are our warders involved in matters that might jeopardize our Court? Could it be that we have given all of our warders too much power and freedom? To what actions do you refer, Takaris? We warn you to think carefully before you answer."

Takaris shuffled his feet uncomfortably. He had no intention of exposing Kalourin until he had evidence of the warder's wrongdoing, but this meeting had forced his hand. Although the Queen disdained rumormongers in her court, she would avoid publicly disciplining one of her Blood Warders if given a choice.

Takaris realized his only chance to survive this with his position intact would be to apologize to Kalourin.

"Perhaps ... perhaps my conclusions were premature," Takaris mumbled.

"Oh, really?" Alachia asked in mock surprise. "Then why, pray, were you so vehement a few moments ago? What could possibly have filled your speech with such anger?"

Realizing that he had won, Kalourin stepped forward.

"If I may, Your Majesty, it could be that Warder Takaris, in his impetuousness, was perhaps a tad… overzealous? Perhaps his zeal to defend our Wood seized his tongue before his brain could act?"

The Court tittered and snickered. Takaris clenched his fists so tightly that the thorns on his fingers bit into his palms and drew small droplets of blood.

"Yes, Majesty, that must be the reason," Takaris said through gritted teeth. "Forgive me for wasting your valuable time. And forgive me, Warder Kalourin, for any trouble my reckless accusations may have caused you."

Alachia's expression changed again, her face taking on the aspect of the kind, reflective ruler. "There now, all is well. Truly, our warders should be able to resolve their differences among themselves and perform their duties without regard to their personal feelings. And while we look dimly on the spread of dissension in our Court, we shall show mercy to Warder Takaris. He shall hereby refrain from casting unfounded aspersions on any Blood Warder, lest he draw the wrath of the Elven Court. And all of you would do well to remember that we, your sovereign, have granted you the freedom you enjoy to pursue your goals. And should your actions ever jeopardize the Court or the elven race, we will not hesitate to take back what we have granted."

With that, Alachia dismissed the warders. Within minutes Takaris was back in his opulent chambers, barely able to contain his rage at failing to expose Kalourin as a Theran sympathizer and slavemonger. He paced the room, muttering bitterly to himself. Suddenly he stopped, his attention caught by an unopened scroll, apparently delivered during the warders' meeting.

The simplicity of the scroll's exterior marked it as a message from the outside world, obviously of little consequence. As the Blood Warder charged with overseeing all contacts with the outer world, the task of reading such useless correspondence fell to Takaris. He absentmindedly picked up the scroll, then dropped it with a start as the document began squirming in his hand. In moments the plain scroll had turned into an exquisitely detailed parchment. Intrigued, he unrolled it and began to read.

Still filled with anger at his recent failure, Takaris almost crumpled the beautiful parchment and cast it aside, but then a slow smile crept across his face. A plan began to form in his mind, and he decided this Hiermon would have his *sanguil*. In exchange for a small favor, of course.

To whom it may concern in the Court of the Elven Queen,

I am Hiermon, a Wizard by disposition, and I wish to offer you an arrangement of trade. Within the confines of Blood Wood—and only in the Wood—grows a plant called sanguil in your language and blood ivy in ours. I seek a specimen of this blood ivy for certain experiments I am conducting. I realize this is not a welcome intrusion, so please understand that I am willing to pay handsomely for the plant. I most humbly request that you relay this message to your Queen. I ask also that you grant me the favor of an expeditious reply. I await word from you in the hope that it will be favorable.

May peace and beauty be forever yours,

Hiermon of Haven

Plot Synopsis

The threads that weave this tale begin in Barsaive's ancient days, just before the coming of the Horrors. Hundreds upon hundreds of years ago, the magicians of the mighty Theran Empire unlocked the secrets of the Books of Harrow and learned of the coming Scourge. To safeguard the life of the world, they created the Rites of Protection and Passage, powerful magical protection against the ravages of the Horrors. The Therans offered their magic to the cities, towns, and villages of Barsaive in exchange for allegiance to the Empire. In dread of the terrors to come, many—but not all—accepted this bargain.

When Theran emissaries traveled to the Elven Court in Wyrm Wood, the elven Queen Alachia defied Thera and refused their aid. Proud and willful, she bade her Warders devise a magical shield against the Horrors that would serve the elves alone. Obedient to their sovereign's will, the Queen's magicians built a shelter of elemental wood and earth. As the corruption of the Horrors darkened the fair land of Barsaive, the Elven Court closed its kaer and settled down to wait for the four centuries of the Scourge to pass.

Whether through some flaw in the elven magic or the sheer power of the Horrors, the elven kaer began to fail a mere two hundred years after its sealing. Desperate to protect the besieged Elven Court, the Queen's Warders devised a hideous solution. Knowing the Horrors' need to inflict the pain and suffering on which they fed, the Warders chose to drive them off by inflicting never-ending agony upon themselves. Through a terrifying ritual, the Warders brought forth thorns from within the very bodies of the elves of Wyrm Wood. The Ritual of Thorns saved the elves from the Horrors, but at a terrible cost. To escape the Horrors' corruption, the elves of Wyrm Wood embraced a twisted mockery of life worse than the fate they had feared. The once-fair Wyrm Wood became Blood Wood, Named for the drops of blood that continually seeped from the elves'

thorn-pierced skin. The Elven Court, once a place of grandeur and power in Barsaive, became a dark, twisted place of corruption, betrayal, and deception.

In the days following the end of the Scourge, the Queen's Blood Warders managed the affairs of the Elven Court. Various factions within the court wished to re-establish ties with the outer world, but Queen Alachia would hear nothing of such ideas. Though many of those who opposed her met death at her command, the young Blood Warder Kalourin escaped the Queen's wrath. Silent and crafty, he sought to build his power by secret correspondence with the Theran Empire. He sent messages to Thera through Fegis Kul, a slaver who plied his evil trade near Blood Wood, gathering slaves for the Therans.

Now begins the adventure of the heroes of this tale. Journeying across Barsaive, they happen upon the village of Tureem, sorely beset by a pair of giant spiders. In defeating these loathsome creatures, the adventurers find a mysterious, magical amulet. To learn its nature and mayhap use its power, the adventurers travel to the village of Haven, built on the ruins of the Forgotten City of Parlainth. There they seek the Wizard Hiermon, who can tell them the amulet's secrets.

Hiermon the Wizard gladly agrees to unlock the amulet's mysteries in return for a service. He requests that the adventurers travel to Blood Wood to deliver a magical treasure to the Blood Warder Takaris. Having become an enemy of Blood Warder Kalourin after learning of his treacherous contact with Thera and having suffered humiliation at his hands before the Queen, Takaris has sworn revenge against him. The Wizard Hiermon unwittingly offers Takaris the perfect vengeance by asking for *sanguil*, or blood ivy, a plant that grows only in Blood Wood. As his price for the plant, Takaris asks for the Everliving Flower, an ancient elven artifact lost in the ruins of Parlainth. The adventurers agree to deliver this artifact to Takaris and bring back the blood ivy. Takaris intends to buy back his Queen's favor with the Everliving Flower and to use the adventurers to expose Kalourin's alliance with Fegis Kul.

The adventurers begin the long, overland journey to Blood Wood, trailed by Theran spies who wish to know of the treasure from Parlainth. Highwaymen paid by the spies attack the adventurers, but the bold heroes beat them back. Reaching Blood Wood after many trials and much travail, the adventurers come face to face with elven guards loyal to Kalourin. Kalourin and his guard escort the adventurers to Queen Alachia's wondrous palace, curious to know what business these strangers would have with Kalourin's enemy, Takaris. Unknown to the adventurers, Kalourin is in league not only with the Theran slaver, but also with a Horror called the Mist.

For many a year, the Mist fed its hunger for suffering on the helpless people of Akarem, a small village near the edge of Blood Wood. Needing more victims, the Horror entered Blood Wood and met the elf Kalourin. Penetrating Kalourin's dark thoughts, the Horror uncovered his dealings with the slaver Fegis Kul and sensed a ravening thirst for power. With the swiftness of a heartbeat, the Horror entered the elf's mind and offered him the power he sought—for a price. In exchange for victims brought to Akarem by

Kalourin and Fegis Kul, the Mist swore to give Kalourin magical knowledge and gifts beyond mortal ken. Hungry for power, Kalourin sealed the unholy pact with blood magic, and Kalourin's sigil became its symbol. Through an amulet that bears this symbol, Kalourin tied himself to the Horror. The Mist also demanded that Kalourin guard the area surrounding the village, so that no adventurers would learn of its existence and come to slay the Horror. Kalourin ordered blood elves to guard Akarem, but Blood Warder Takaris questioned his action. Keeping a close watch on Kalourin, Takaris learned of Kalourin's ties with Fegis Kul, but his attempt to bring Kalourin's treachery before Queen Alachia came to naught. Lacking enough evidence, Takaris dared not speak too loudly against Kalourin. Humbled by his rival before the Queen, Takaris vowed to take revenge.

As part of his plot against Kalourin, Takaris greets the adventurers and tells them that the blood ivy has yet to be gathered. Praying their patience, he tells them that in further exchange for the blood ivy, they must find the slave trader Fegis Kul.

The adventurers track the Theran slaver into the dark heart of a patch of forest near Blood Wood. Elves bearing the sigil of Kalourin travel with the slaver and his captives, guarding him from harm and them from rescue. Passing through a strange mist, unknown to them as a sign of the Horror, the adventurers come upon the cursed village of Akarem and its ruined kaer. Here, the adventurers discover that the people of Akarem and the newly brought slaves have been taken over by a Horror in league with Kalourin and Fegis Kul. Their discovery, alas, comes too late. Kalourin's blood elves ambush and capture the bold heroes, throwing them into a specially prepared hut in the village to await the Horror's tender mercies.

The adventurers escape from their prison, but only by destroying the Horror can they escape from the village. With courage befitting the great ones of legend, the adventurers search the kaer for the Mist and defeat it in a titanic battle. Alas for Barsaive, they do not destroy it, though it seems they have. Their victory drives the Horror from Akarem, freeing the village's people to die in peace after years of false life in thrall to the Mist.

Returning to Blood Wood, the adventurers bring Takaris word of Kalourin's alliance with not only the Theran slaver, but also with the Horror. Their courage in carrying out their task earns them the blood ivy from Takaris. Well pleased with the news they have brought him, Takaris arranges for the band of heroes a rare audience with the Queen. He bids them tell her of Kalourin's perfidy, but Kalourin disappears before his sovereign's wrath can fall on him.

Bearing the Wizard's blood ivy, the adventurers return to Haven, with no more to mar their journey than a meeting with an arrogant band of ork scorchers. They find Hiermon unlike himself, seemingly touched with lunacy. As the adventurers present the blood ivy, Kalourin reveals himself, along with the Theran spies who followed the adventurers from Haven. Angered by his downfall and lusting for vengeance, Kalourin attacks the adventurers with the Therans' aid. The Mist, seeing its own chance for vengeance, comes forth from the elf's amulet, slaying Kalourin as it does so. The fearsome Horror turns its wrath against the bold adventurers who drove it from the village of Akarem.

The adventurers fight a terrible battle and destroy the Horror, ridding the world of its corruption. A grateful Hiermon, released from Kalourin's evil hold by the elf's death, gives the adventurers their amulet and shares with them the secrets he discovered.

Adventure Hook

As an alternative opening to the adventure, the gamemaster may have the characters encounter another group of adepts by the roadside. They look as if they have just been in a fight, and half of them are severely wounded and unconscious, the rest are dead. While examining the survivors, one of them opens his eyes and mutters a word of warning. A moment later a group of bandits jumps them from behind cover, taking them by surprise. Although the bandits outnumber the characters, their leader overestimates his men's abilities—many of them are still wounded from their previous fight with the other group of adepts.

After the fight, the characters should care for the wounded adepts, who ask them to take over their contract with the citizens of Tureem, as they are incapable of doing so themselves. If none of the wounded adepts survives, the characters can find a letter from the people of Tureem asking for the help of some heroes. In this case, the characters won't be surprised when meeting Turan (see **Meeting Turan** on p. 17).

Arrival in Tureem

This section describes the village of Tureem and its residents, giving the player characters a feel for daily life in Barsaive. In this encounter, the characters are mistaken for adventurers hired to destroy hostile creatures that are troubling the village.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach the village, read the following:

As the sun sinks low in Barsaive's western sky, you reach the small village of Tureem. Still a half-day's walk from the bustling town of Haven, you choose to stop in the village to rest before being

on your way with the dawn. Like any sane group of travelers, you seek safe shelter before nightfall. Though strangers to you, the people of this tiny village might give you shelter in a barn or a loft. If fortune favors you, a kind heart may even give you a meal, strangers though you are.

As you stride into Tureem, the villagers tumble from their houses into the well-worn dirt streets. They smile and wave in greeting, some even holding up babes to watch you pass by. Many gaze at your weapons and armor, nodding and passing knowing looks. You find their welcome strange; it seems unnatural that strangers should greet strangers as friends in such times as these... You hunch into your traveling cloaks and gaze at the road ahead. This village unnerves you. You only want shelter and a bite or two, and the morning will see your swift departure from this strange place.

Before you looms a building whose signboard reads "Common House" in almost every tongue of Barsaive. Emblazoned across the bottom are a frothy mug, a plate of food, and a bed. Your stomachs empty, your throats dry, and your bodies aching from days of walking, you make the only choice you can, despite your secret fears. You decide on this one night you will eat honest food and slumber in honest beds, though it cost you life or soul.

When the characters enter the Common House, read the following:

A fair crowd fills the tap room of the Common House, drinking, eating, carousing, and gambling. As you enter, many of the revelers look up at you. You expect frozen silence, but it never comes. Far from being wary or fearful, the people smile in welcome. For all they know, you might bring with you the corruption of the Horrors, and yet they smile and bid you good evening. Are they mad or simply a village of fools, that they show strangers such dangerous kindness?

Before you can speak, an aproned dwarf approaches with a gleam in his eye. "Good welcome to you," he says. "The village overseer will come soon. If you will do me the honor of sampling my food and spirits at the finest table in the House, I will count you good friends. And my friends, gentle strangers, need pay no coin." He lets you make no answer, but calls over his shoulder. "Malisa! Brynwar!"

Two barmaids step forward, such beauties as mere mortals rarely see. They lead you to a round table of polished oak in the corner nearest the kitchen. You have the best view of the tap room and the warmth of the kitchen to soothe your cold bones. Smiling sweetly, the barmaids set down foaming mugs before you, then skip to the kitchen to fetch your food.

Themes and Images

Play up the sense that the village expects the group. Drinkers and gamblers in the tap room may shoot expectant glances at them, or smile and nod. The adventurers should find this behavior unsettling, even creepy; in these troubled days, few people in Barsaive welcome strangers. After all, they could be Theran spies, controlled by Horrors, or brigands out to rob the town.

Behind the Scenes

The village of Tureem has seen more than its share of trouble in the past few weeks. A pair of giant spiders—thought by the villagers to be jehuthras—is nesting in the forest just outside the village. The creatures have attacked travelers going to and from Tureem, and have also killed a few villagers. The overseer of Tureem, a man Named Turan, anxious to rid his village of the marauding spiders, has hired a group of adventurers to come to Tureem to hunt down the creatures. Unknown to him, however, that unfortunate group met with a messy and ignominious end on the open road.

By chance, the player characters arrive at the village close to the time that the other group should have shown up, and the villagers mistake the characters for Turan's hired men. For this reason, the villagers show them an unusually warm welcome, and the proprietor of the Common House gives the characters free food and drink.

Meeting Turan

After the characters have spent a few minutes eating and drinking in the Common House, an older man with an air of authority passes through the room and approaches them. Once within earshot of the characters, he addresses them, saying:

"Welcome to Tureem, friends. I am Turan, overseer of this village. Your arrival is timely; the beasts have attacked another band of travelers. We can bear this no more! If you kill these creatures, sixty silver pieces each are yours. My sorrow is that the fee is so low, but we can afford no more with our all but empty coffers."

This offer should confuse the characters; they have no idea what Turan is talking about or why he seems to know them. If they tell Turan that they are not the adventurers the village is expecting, he will be puzzled, but will offer them the job anyway. The group Turan hired should have arrived two days ago, and so Turan feels that he has waited long enough for Tureem's deliverance. If the characters do not explain the mistaken identity, Turan presumes that they are indeed the heroes he sent for.

If the characters ask Turan for details of the task they are to perform, read the following:

"For many weeks, monsters have terrorized our village and all who try to leave or enter it. Twice they have entered Tureem, attacking citizens during the night. We are but a small village; we have no militia, and can scarce defend ourselves against this evil. Some of us have tried, but they lacked strength and had little magic. Sadly, they all perished in the attempt. If you track down the monsters and destroy them, we will pay you in good silver.

"The attacks have all taken place to the west of the village; we believe the creatures have nested there. We know little of them, but some villagers claim to have seen the shadows of huge, spider-like things lurking on the village outskirts."

If the characters agree to the terms, Turan will make arrangements for them to stay at the Common House. The village will pay the cost of the characters' lodging.

Negotiating with Turan

Players who wish to negotiate the terms will find that task difficult. No matter what kind of persuasion the player characters try, Turan will make only two additional concessions: he agrees to pay the group half the fee now and the other half when they destroy the giant spiders, and he agrees to let them buy whatever they need from his store and from Graka, the village healer, at half-price.

Village of Tureem

The player characters may decide to explore the village of Tureem in search of supplies and gear for their upcoming adventure. Following are brief descriptions of some of the significant places and people in Tureem.

Common House

This two-story structure has rooms for travelers, as well as a tap room serving food and drink. Because the Common House is a cheap inn (see **Services** in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 453 of the **Player's Compendium**), it normally costs 1 silver piece to rent a room for one night and 1 silver piece per meal, but the player characters are not required to pay this. The doors to all the rooms have security locks. The inn's proprietor, Tergal, is a dwarf who helped the village rebuild after its people emerged from their kaers eight decades ago.

Graka's Hut

Graka the ork is the village healer. Her small cabin is cluttered with all manner of healing elements: plants, powders, salves, ointments, and so on. A skilled healer (she is a Rank 3 Physician, Step 8/2D6), Graka feels compassion for the truly ill or seriously wounded, but has little patience with those she considers malingerers or hypochondriacs. Her services cost 10 silver pieces per visit—or half that if the player characters negotiate with Turan—and she sells all types of healing aids (see **Healing Aids** in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 450 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Turan's Everygoods

The village overseer also owns the village's only mercantile. Turan's Everygoods sells mundane items of all sorts, such as clothing, lanterns, bedrolls, tents, and so on, but no weapons, armor, livestock, or magical items.

Eeeng's Livestock

A fast-talking windling, Eeeng specializes in horses and pack animals. Always trying to get the best end of the deal, he often exaggerates the quality of a mount. Eeeng has three human assistants who do the muscle work while he bargains with customers. Brun, one of Eeeng's stronger assistants, doubles as the village blacksmith.

In addition to selling livestock, Eeeng boards them; travelers can shelter their animals for 3 copper pieces per night.

Rumors in Tureem

During the characters' stay in Tureem, they have the chance to overhear rumors about the surrounding region.

Adventure Hook

Once the group has figured out that they were mistaken for Turan's mercenaries, they may want to find out what happened to them. Since Turan mistakes the party for the sellswords, they should have a similar racial composition to the party, but need not be adepts, or have the same Disciplines. It is up to the gamemaster whether this group was killed en route or merely delayed.

The trail could lead to other locations in the adventure. For example, this group could still be on a dangerous mission in Parlainth. Alternatively, they could have stopped at the Midland Trading Post to resupply and rest before heading to Tureem. The mercenaries may even want revenge on the party for stealing their mission and silver, making them unexpected enemies ...

The gamemaster must determine which of these rumors are true and which are false.

"Someone saw a dragon south of these parts not too long ago. Theran airship, too. I hear tell the Therans are renegades, and the dragons call them friends."

"You go to Haven, you watch yourselves. Can't hardly walk out a door without stumbling over a Theran."

"I know you'll not believe this, but I've heard tell that the Elf Queen in yon Blood Wood has a taste for human lovers…"

Troubleshooting

At this point, the only way the players can disrupt the adventure is by declining Turan's offer. Should they do so, Turan will press them for their reasons. He will ask about the group's destination and purposes, and try to convince them that they can find the fame, money, magical knowledge, experience, chances to do good deeds, and so on in Tureem.

Going Hunting

In this encounter, the characters hunt down and confront the giant spiders. In the creatures' lair, they find a mysterious magical amulet.

Setting the Stage

When the characters are ready to follow Turan, read the following:

Turan leads you through the village, stopping at its western outskirts. He points out the westward road, and swears he will go no further. His face is pale as ice, and he flicks sharp glances in every direction. The crack of the smallest twig might send him shrieking back into Tureem, and you with him. Only the promise of silver and glory can make you set foot across the village bounds. The road is little more than a footpath, overgrown with tough vines and jagged-edged leaves, leading into a forest so thick that the keenest eye cannot pierce its darkness.

A few hundred paces down the winding path, the forest seems to close around you. Your hearts in your dry throats, you look back toward the distant safety of Tureem. But the woodland has swallowed the village. Tureem cannot call you back. Glory, you remind yourself. Sixty silver pieces and undying glory. You shiver, wishing that some word other than "undying" had crossed your thoughts. Heroes or no, your fears rise to choke you. Still you go on, step by step by step. Each step draws you closer to finding and destroying the creatures that plague Tureem. Unbidden, your hands clench around your weapons as you walk forward.

Themes and Images

In this encounter, fear of the unknown should almost overwhelm the characters. Where most travelers in Barsaive merely suspect that its forests and jungles conceal monstrous creatures, the characters know for certain that unknown but horrible creatures lurk nearby.

Behind the Scenes

The giant spiders' lair is located half a mile from the village. Turan leads the characters to the village boundary where the creatures entered and attacked the citizens. A well-worn path runs westward from the village, twisting and turning through dense, 2-yard thickets of vegetation. In order to find the creatures, the characters must track them through a virtual jungle.

Tracking the Giant Spiders

Following the giant spider tracks requires a Tracking (7) Test. A successful result shows that the tracks begin at the village outskirts and wind their way north and west through the forest toward a small copse.

The tracks lead ever deeper into the jungle-like tangle

of plants, and so at least one player character in the group must make two more successful Tracking (7) Tests in order to stay on the trail. If a Tracking Test fails, the characters lose the trail and must return to the place where they last found clear tracks to try again. If the characters succeed in tracking the giant spiders, they discover the creatures in their lair.

The Lair

The giant spiders' lair lies within a small group of trees. Scattered among the tree roots are cocoons of silk with desiccated corpses of humans, dwarfs, orks, and an occasional scrap of cloth or leather remaining sticking out. The giant spiders have woven two sticky silk webs among the tree trunks to trap intruders to their lair. The spiders themselves lie hidden in the brush 3 to 5 yards from the webs.

If a player character makes a successful Perception (9) Test, he notices the silk webs. On a Good or better result (14 or more), he sees a giant spider leg sticking out from the foliage. Characters who fail to notice the webs become stuck in them, and the gamemaster makes a Step 8/2D6 Strength Test to generate the Strength value of the web. A character must meet or exceed this number on a Strength Test to break out of the web.

As soon as any of the characters are caught in the spider webs the giant spiders charge the characters. If none of the characters fall into the web traps, make a Perception Test for the pair of giant spiders against the lowest Dexterity step among the characters to see if they notice their approach. If any characters are stuck in the web, the giant spiders will spit their paralytic venom at them, hoping to immobilize them to make meals of their victims later. They will attempt to bite any characters that close in on them, especially those that are not caught in webs.

Giant Spiders (2)

DEX: 5 **STR**: 5 **TOU**: 7
PER: 4 **WIL**: 5 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 5
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (2): 7
Damage:
Bite (3): 8

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 5
Social Defense: 5
Physical Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 39
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 31

Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 8

Combat Movement: 36/26*
Full Movement: 72/52*

* The second value is the creature's climbing Movement rate.

Powers: Climbing S (2): 7, Poison (SD 7; Paralysis; Damage 9), Spellcasting (5): 10, Venom (4): 9

Legend Points (2): 200

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Approximately 6 to 7 feet in length, giant spiders are similar in size and appearance to jehuthras (a type of Horror construct), but thankfully have none of the special powers that make jehuthras such terrifying opponents (see the **Horrors** chapter on p. 452 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for information and special rules on these Horror constructs). Regardless, giant spiders are still very dangerous creatures.

Rules

If a target falls unconscious from a spider's venomous spit, the spider encases the victim in a thick cocoon and feeds on the victim at its leisure. A cocooned victim who awakens may free himself without making any tests.

Web Trap: To detect a giant spider's web, which is strong enough to entangle even Name-giver-sized victims, a character must make a successful Perception (9) Test. Whenever a character stumbles into a giant spider web, the gamemaster determines the web's Strength value by making a Step 8/2D6 Strength Test. To free himself from the web, the character must make a successful Strength Test against the web's Strength value. Giant spider webs are large enough to ensnare up to three human-sized targets.

Amulet of Dirac

Within the creatures' lair lies an amulet, which the characters will find easily if they look around either before or after encountering the giant spiders. Though the characters do not realize it, they have found the Amulet of Dirac, a finely wrought silver starburst on a silver chain. The starburst is stained a deep crimson, and the stain does not wash off. If the characters use astral sight or the Astral Sense spell to investigate the amulet, they discover that it is magical. The amulet has a Spell Defense of 14. For a description of the amulet's thread ranks and Key Knowledges, see the **New Magical Treasures** chapter on p. 342.

Back in Tureem

Once the characters have killed the giant spiders, they return to Tureem to claim their reward and find Turan waiting for them. He pays them the silver he owes them and thanks them in the Name of the whole village. Turan tells the characters that they may stay in Tureem for as long as they please, though he does not offer to pay their way.

If the characters show the amulet to Turan or to anyone else in the village, no one remembers having seen either the amulet or a traveler wearing it. If the characters ask who might help them identify the amulet, Turan tells them about the Wizard Hiermon, who lives in the Old Neighborhood in the town of Haven. Turan extols Hiermon's great wisdom and recommends that the player characters seek him out. He tells them to give Hiermon his good greeting.

TROUBLESHOOTING

In this encounter, one or more of the characters might die fighting the giant spiders. To avoid killing off the characters in the first fight, the gamemaster should keep careful

track of how much damage each character takes, and then try to manage the encounter so that none of the characters suffer fatal wounds. The gamemaster may have to fudge the amount of damage done to a character, or choose not to allow the giant spiders to attack a character who has taken a level of damage too near his Unconsciousness or Death Rating.

If the characters seem disinclined to travel to Haven, inform the players that studying the amulet will be much easier if they get assistance from an expert instead of trying to find out its secrets on their own.

Haven

The characters arrive at the town of Haven, where the Wizard Hiermon lives. After finding room and board, they attempt to learn his whereabouts. Unknown to the characters, Theran spies watch their every move in Haven, becoming particularly interested when they inquire about how to locate the Wizard.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach Haven, read the following:

Before you stands Haven, perched at the southern end of the ruins of the Forgotten City of Parlainth. Crowded and bustling, the little town seems to exist simply to aid and succor those foolhardy enough to explore Parlainth's shattered ruins. At the sight of the town, your hearts beat faster. Here seems to lie all the life of the world, in the shadow of ruined Parlainth's ancient magic. Here lives the Wizard who can give you a taste of that magic…if he wants to.

As Turan bade you, you travel across the town toward the Old Neighborhood. The Name makes you laugh; a scant decade since its building, and yet men call it old. As you walk through the streets, beings from all the Name-giving races jostle you as they scurry from place to place intent on private business. Those who notice you regard you with suspicion; despite the numbers of strangers who pass through its gates, Haven remains wary of outsiders. Vendors watch the passers-by, half with suspicion and half with interest. A stranger may bring unknown hazards, but he also may bring custom. Merchants hawk their wares, criers exhort you to their taverns, and beggars plead for copper or silver. Food vendors, money changers, jewelers, fortunetellers, weaponsmiths…all manner of sellers line the streets, calling for custom. Rival questors of the Passions Thystonius and Chorrolis, recognizable by their unusual garb, form swirling lines of color in the crowd.

You slow your steps, then stop to gawk. But only just for a moment, lest you betray yourselves as peasant bumpkins. A small pack of orks and dwarfs stagger across your path and away down a side street, bearing two bleeding comrades and one seemingly lifeless. No doubt they fell afoul of the dangers of Parlainth, you tell yourselves, suddenly feeling world-wise by comparison.

Adventure Hook

Upon arriving in Haven, the characters witness the return of an adventuring party that endured heavy losses. One of the dead adventurers is placed in the cool cellar of the tavern that the characters are staying at, awaiting burial. Some time later, while the characters are enjoying food and drink, the tavern-owner bursts in, crying the corpse is gone! Everyone fears the poor soul has been returned to unlife, perhaps as a cadaver man or some other monstrosity, and escaped through the backdoor.

The residents of the Old Neighborhood begin hunting for the missing corpse, advising every guest to join them for their own safety. The characters find the undead adventurer at the same time his former comrades do—they are reluctant to kill their old friend and try to talk the characters out of it. While the debate goes on, the undead character is in a confused state, its mind changing from that of a normal Name-giver to a mindless killing machine, threatening—then attacking—everyone.

Regardless of what the characters do, someone will have to find out who or what is behind the reanimation of the corpse…

Themes and Images

Haven resounds with bustle and noise. The streets are crowded with visitors and vendors shouting for customers at the tops of their lungs. Besides the food vendors, money changers, and so on, Haven attracts experts at valuing treasures, though some may be charlatans. If he wishes, the gamemaster may let the players get distracted briefly by one of these "honest gentlemen."

The Old Neighborhood looks and feels only slightly older than the rest of Haven. Eight sturdy buildings cluster along both sides of its single street, looking venerable by comparison to the rest of the town.

Behind the Scenes

Following is a brief description of Haven's Old Neighborhood, including its best-known establishments. The descriptions provide only the information needed for this adventure.

Old Neighborhood

Haven's Old Neighborhood, the town's oldest district, was built by merchants who founded their establishments five years after the troll Torgak built the first inn in the Forgotten City of Parlainth.

For the purposes of this adventure, the primary buildings in the Old Neighborhood are as follows:

- Loak's Legacy, an excellent inn
- Brenula's Arms, an armory
- Hiermon's residence, an apartment in the upper floor of Brenula's Arms
- Agramen's Import/Export Company, a caravan trading company run by men who spy for the Theran Empire
- Dag's Allgoods, a general equipment emporium

Even though Haven has a small population (about 1,000 Name-givers make their homes here), its reputation as an adventurers' town brings merchants into it with frequency. When purchasing goods in Haven, the base Difficulty Number used for Trading Tests is 6, equivalent to that for a city (see the **Trading** skill description on p. 249 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Loak's Legacy

Loak's Legacy is Named in honor of its late owner, Loak Ironfist, a retired adventurer. His statue, or something that looks like it could be, stands in the dining room near the bar. The three-story inn has adjoining stables in the rear. Occupying the bottom floor are the kitchen, bar, dining room, and private meeting rooms. The two upper floors contain bedrooms, including a communal sleeping room. Accommodations cost 8 silver pieces per night, and each meal costs 4 silver pieces. Individual drink prices average 1 silver piece.

The vast dining room has two hearths, a long bar with padded wooden stools, and several long tables with benches set along each side. Loak's has no small, private tables; instead, customers belly up to one of the long tables and rub elbows with their fellow patrons. During the day, the dining room does a modest business; at night, the place gets a little rowdy, with guests bragging about what they have recently found or killed in Parlainth's ruins. Brawls often erupt, especially if a patron challenges another's story. For those who desire a little privacy, one of the three private rooms adjoining the dining room can be had for 10 silver pieces. In each of these rooms, up to ten people can sit and enjoy their dinner in peace and quiet.

The communal room on the third floor contains plenty of bedrolls and sleeping furs. Guests pay 1 silver piece for the privilege of staking out a spot on the floor overnight. Needless to say, security in the communal room is non-existent.

Brenula's Arms

Presided over by Brenula, a female ork expert at repairing weapons and armor, Brenula's Arms is Haven's best-known smithy. Brenula normally sells weapons and armor with an Availability Rating no greater than Unusual (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 432 of the **Player's Compendium**). As she sees it, however, quality armor and weapons earn the wearer a measure of respect.

Hiermon's Residence

The rooms above Brenula's shop belong to the Wizard Hiermon, Brenula's personal friend. He has lived in these apartments for ten years and filled them with the clutter one might expect in a magician's dwelling. Old books, mysterious crystals, alchemical implements and the like abound. The characters can find Hiermon's residence by asking around; everyone knows where he lives and will direct the characters to Brenula's Arms. For more details about the Wizard, see **Visiting Hiermon** on p. 26.

Agramen's Import/Export

In this compound of low-slung buildings, the human Agramen organizes his caravans, stores his wares, and runs his business. Caravans are constantly arriving with goods departing for points all across Barsaive. Many adventurers and mercenaries congregate here, seeking employment.

Unknown to the good people of Haven, the prosperous Agramen is a Theran sympathizer. His two chief assistants, Tural and Alkor, also do most of the spying for the

Empire, and even commit an occasional assassination. For more information regarding Theran activity in Haven, see **Theran Spies**, below. A good caravan organizer needs an efficient network of informants to find out whether any worthy adepts are in the vicinity who might want to make a few coins. Agramen's network will let him know if the characters stay in Haven for more than two hours.

Dag's Allgoods

Run by Dag Orksbane, a retired dwarf Warrior, this shop specializes in everyday items, adventuring gear, and various potions and charms, many of them supplied by Hiermon. The bad-tempered Dag always looks and talks as if he wants to bite someone's head off, but since his retirement he has not been known to harm a soul.

Theran Spies

Agramen runs a ring of spies and informants who ferret out anything and everything of potential interest to Thera. Because of Haven's close proximity to the city of Parlainth, the former Theran provincial capital of Barsaive, the Therans make a point of monitoring the activities of adventurers within the ruins of the Forgotten City. Agramen also hires bands of mercenary adventurers to search the ruins of Parlainth for ancient Theran treasures.

Besides keeping tabs on explorers in Parlainth, Agramen's spies keep close watch on activities in Haven, particularly the arrival of adventuring groups from other parts of Barsaive. Agramen has standing orders from his Theran superiors to report anything of particular note or value taken from Parlainth.

Two weeks prior to the characters' arrival in Haven, the Wizard Hiermon hired a group of adventurers to search a particular area of Parlainth for a unique treasure dating from the pre-Scourge days of Theran rule. Hiermon now has the treasure, but Agramen has not yet discovered its identity. His henchmen, Tural and Alkor, are currently occupied in ferreting out that secret. For details on the treasure, see **Visiting Hiermon** on p. 26.

Agramen

A middle-aged human, Agramen dresses lavishly and has the look of smug satisfaction that comes from a well-fed, well-dressed, financially secure life.

The owner of Agramen's Import & Export Company in the town of Haven, Agramen is an expert caravan organizer and shrewd businessman. He lives in a splendid townhouse close to his business, where he has hidden away at least 4,500 silver pieces in a secret vault in his cellar.

Though born in Barsaive, Agramen is a Theran sympathizer and frequently offers his business premises to the Therans when they require a discreet base of operations. Fearless in the marketplace, Agramen is a physical coward, and prefers to avoid combat by turning suspicion and blame away from himself in dicey situations.

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Strength (9): 4/D6
Toughness (11): 5/D8
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (12): 5/D8
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 3
Social Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 30*
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 4/D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 22*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 20
Full Movement: 40

Skills

Artisan:
Acting (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Barsaive Geography (3): 9/D8+D6
Caravan Trade Routes (4): 10/D10+D6

General:
Animal Handling (4): 9/D8+D6
Bribery (5): 12/2D10
Conversation (4): 11/D10+D8
Evaluate (3): 9/D8+D6
Etiquette (3): 10/D10+D6
Forgery (2): 7/D12
Haggle (7): 14/D20+D4
Read and Write Language (7): 13/D12+D10
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Theran, Troll, T'skrang
Slough Blame (3): 10/D10+D6
Speak Language (7): 13/D12+D10
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*,

Theran, Troll, T'skrang
Streetwise (4): 10/D10+D6
Trading (7): 14/D20+D4

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)
Dagger (Damage 6/D10; Range 9–15–18)
Absorb Blow Charm (2 Damage Points)
Belt Pouch
Embroidered Robe
Embroidery Tools
2 × Healing Potions
Traveler's Garb
Wealthy Traveler's Garb
Writing Kit

Loot

70 silver pieces (belt pouch), 4,500 silver pieces (secret vault in cellar of house)

Legend Award

75 Legend Points

Tural, Third Circle Human Swordmaster

A small, wiry, Theran-born human, Tural has quick eyes and a glib tongue. A Third Circle Swordmaster, Tural fancies himself an accomplished warrior and ladies' man. He serves the Theran Empire as much because it pays well as out of any sense of loyalty. Employed as a spy and enforcer by Agramen, Tural excels at what he does.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (8): 4/D6
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 8
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 33* (54)*
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 6/D10**
Unconsciousness Rating: 25* (43)*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.
** Tural knows the Wound Balance talent.

Combat Movement: 28
Full Movement: 56

Karma Points: 15
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Avoid Blow[D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Durability (7/6) (3): 3
First Impression (4): 10/D10+D6
Heartening Laugh (1): 7/D12
Karma Ritual (3): 3
Maneuver[D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons[D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Riposte[D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Taunt (3): 9/D8+D6

Throwing Weapons (3): 9/D8+D6
Wound Balance (2): 8/2D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:
Acting (1): 7/D12
Dancing (1): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Court Dancing (1): 6/D10
Theran Politics (1): 6/D10

General:
Animal Handling (3): 7/D12
Bribery (1): 7/D12
Disguise (3): 8/2D6
Flirting (4): 10/D10+D6
Lock Picking (3): 9/D8+D6

Read and Write Language (3): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, Theran
Seduction (4): 10/D10+D6
Speak Language (3): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, Theran
Streetwise (3): 8/2D6
Tracking (3): 8/2D6

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17)
Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Broadsword (Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
2 × Hawk Hatchets (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 24–40–48)

Absorb Blow Charm (2 Damage Points)
Adventurer's Kit
3 × Booster Potions
Disguise Kit
Thieves' Picks and Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Riding Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

60 silver pieces

Legend Award

245 Legend Points

Notes

Tural possesses the human racial ability of Versatility.

Alkor

A muscular human in his late thirties, Alkor has a full head of brown hair and a lush brown beard. Unlike Tural, Alkor serves the Theran Empire wholly and sincerely. As he is not an adept, Alkor relies more on brute force than cunning to get the job done.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (18): 7/D12
Toughness (18): 7/D12
Perception (7): 4/D6
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (6): 3/D4

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 5
Physical Armor: 7
Social Defense: 4
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 42
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 12
Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34

Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Skills

Artisan:
Wood Carving (1): 4/D6

Knowledge:
Creature Lore (1): 5/D8
Theran History (1): 5/D8

General:
Animal Handling (3): 8/2D6
Hunting (3): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8
Missile Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8
Read and Write Language (3): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, Theran
Speak Language (3): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, Theran
Wilderness Survival (3): 7/D12

Equipment

Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Two-Handed Sword (Damage 14/D20+D4; w/scabbard)
Hand-Axe (Damage 11/D10+D8)
Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)
Longbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 60–120–240)
Quiver (w/20 longbow arrows)

Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tools
2 × Healing Potions
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Riding Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

30 silver pieces

Legend Award

170 Legend Points

Settling In

Once the characters arrive in Haven, they will likely want to find room and board. They may also want to roam about the town before finding Hiermon. As stated earlier, anyone they ask about where to find Hiermon will direct them to Brenula's Arms.

Once they are ready to visit Hiermon, go to the next encounter, **Visiting Hiermon**, below.

Rumors in Haven

During the characters' stay in Haven, they may hear rumors about the local region as well as the legend of Loak Ironfist. The gamemaster must determine which of these rumors are true and which are false. An abbreviated version of Loak's legend is given below, and the gamemaster should make every effort to present it to the characters during the game.

"Nay, the Elven Court is none so tranquil as they would have others believe. The Blood Warders who serve the Queen scheme and intrigue against each other as though they were Therans; and the Queen allows it, as long as their bickering weakens only themselves and not the Elven Court as a whole. Within those bounds, the Warders do as they will."

"You travel to Blood Wood? Beware the highwaymen, strangers. Not a traveler between Haven and Blood Wood has met them and survived with his purse intact."

"I have heard a tale so dark and terrible, I can scarce believe it. Know you that an elven Blood Warder, perhaps more than one, has joined with the Therans? It seems the lure of foreign hire can extract a spark of evil from anyone these days..."

"Them elves in Blood Wood hate dwarfs and obsidimen worse than poison. Any they catch in Blood Wood, they string up and skin alive."

"Hiermon lives at Brenula's. I don't like visiting her. She's that strange way of looking at people. Really strange, like she looks straight through you. Better watch out."

"I heard that one of the groups that went to Haven a week ago was found dead. Apparently, they were ambushed on their way back, and a magic item mentioned in their journal was missing, but nothing else. Seems whoever did this knew exactly what he was looking for."

"Hiermon? That guy is so incredibly old that you wouldn't believe it if I told you. They say he uses some sinister magic to prolong his life. Others say he's in with the Horrors, but I doubt that."

The Legend of Loak Ironfist

Keldys Tul, the leader of the scouting party that found Loak in Parlainth, took over the Silver Scorcher Inn and re-Named it Loak's Legacy in honor of the ork hero. If the adventurers choose to stay at Loak's Legacy in the Old Neighborhood while in Haven, they may hear the legend of Loak Ironfist.

"Loak Ironfist explored the ghostly ruins of Parlainth after it returned to the world, shortly after the end of the Scourge. After long years of harrowing exploits and narrow escapes, he retired from adventuring and opened an inn called the Silver Scorcher.

He spent the next years as a successful innkeeper, until the day he chose to share tales of his exploits in the ruins of Parlainth with a band of young, green adventurers staying at his inn. Doubting Loak's claims of having explored Parlainth, they dared the ork to return to the Forgotten City and bring back proof that he had gone there.

A defiant Loak took the dare and re-entered the ruins. Several days later, a scouting party found him in Parlainth, turned to stone. To this day, no one knows how Loak Ironfist met such a terrible fate. The scouts brought Loak's body back to Haven and the inn, and set him up near the bar."

Troubleshooting

Little can go wrong in this encounter. Its main purpose is to introduce the characters to Haven and the Old Neighborhood and to let them settle in.

Visiting Hiermon

In this encounter, the characters meet with the Wizard Hiermon, who offers to identify the amulet in exchange for the team running an errand to Blood Wood.

As payment for the 2 weeks' time and considerable energy he will spend in penetrating the amulet's secrets, Hiermon asks that the characters take a treasure from Parlainth to Blood Wood, then bring him back a rare plant.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach Brenula's Arms, read the following:

A stone's throw away stands Brenula's Arms, the weapon and armor smithy to which Haven's good citizens directed you. 'Tis here that the Wizard Hiermon dwells. It seems well-favored enough, large and well cared for. You walk across the packed-earth street and dismount, offering silent petition to the Passions that you have chosen rightly in coming here. As you enter the shop, an ork woman greets you. She wears fine clothing, and looks upon you guardedly. For a fleeting moment,

Adventure Hook

Countless adventurers have tried to discover the events that led to Loak's petrifaction, with no success. Most shops in Haven that sell maps of Barsaive also peddle maps of Parlainth's explored areas, including the spot where Loak's stone body was found. The characters might easily acquire such a map and venture into the ruins of the Forgotten City to find the truth behind the legend of Loak Ironfist.

The gamemaster may devise any number of plausible storylines. For example, Loak may have encountered a creature or Horror that turns its victims to stone or triggered an ancient Theran ward trap. If the characters can discover the manner in which Loak was turned to stone, they may even be able to reverse the process and bring the legendary hero back to life.

it seems she is looking not at you, but into you.

"Good greeting," she says. "Brenula of Haven, at your service. How may I aid you?"

Themes and Images

Like all merchants in Haven, Brenula strikes an uneasy balance between welcoming a stranger's coin and fearing the dangers a stranger may bring. Her close scrutiny should unsettle the characters a bit; they may even feel she is judging them. Play up the feeling of caution, as if a single wrong word or action might get them thrown out.

Behind the Scenes

In addition to running her shop, Brenula also helps the Wizard Hiermon by intercepting those who seek him and allowing only those whom she trusts to meet with the Wizard. To help her in this task, Hiermon has given Brenula a blood charm that enables her to detect Horrors or those corrupted by them. As the characters approach Brenula, she uses the charm to check them out. The gamemaster makes a Step 5/D8 Detect Influence Test for Brenula, as if she were using the talent of the same Name (see p. 178 of the **Player's Compendium**); Brenula takes 1 Strain Point of damage for each test she makes.

When the characters ask about Hiermon, Brenula tells them to wait while she tells the Wizard of their request to see him. She then passes through a heavy curtain that serves as a door into the back of her shop, heading upstairs to see if Hiermon wishes to receive visitors.

Before Brenula returns, the gamemaster should have the characters make a Perception Test against a Detection Difficulty of 18 if they are not actively looking to see if they are being watched, or a Detection Difficulty of 12 if they are keeping an eye out. If any character's test succeeds, he notices a windling hovering near the entrance to Brenula's shop. The windling, a spy Named Sijura who works for Agramen, is watching Hiermon, hoping for a lead on the whereabouts or nature of the treasure Hiermon took from Parlainth. If any character attempts to approach the windling, he flies away and disappears into the crowds.

Brenula

Attributes

Dexterity (12): 5/D8
Strength (12): 5/D8
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (7): 4/D6
Charisma (8): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 5
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 31*
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 23*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Skills

Artisan:
Craft Armor (3): 8/2D6
Craft Weapon (3): 8/2D6
Craftsman; Blacksmith (4): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Ancient Weapons (1): 6/D10
Horror Lore (1): 6/D10

General:
Evaluate (3): 8/2D6
Haggle (4): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (3): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (3): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*
Speak Language (3): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*
Trading (4): 8/2D6

Equipment

Belt Pouch
Detect Influence Blood Charm (see Notes, below)
3 × Craftsman Tools
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Loot

10 gold pieces

Legend Award

55 Legend Points

Notes

Brenula possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

Detect Influence Charm: Detect Influence blood charms are crafted from crystal. Implanting the charm causes the character 3 permanent Damage Points. For 1 Strain Point of damage, the character may make a Detect Influence Test, as per the talent of the same Name (see p. 178 of the **Player's Compendium**), to determine if the target is Horror-tainted. If the character knows the Detect Influence talent, he gains a +1 bonus to his test. The character may make only one test per round.

Commentary

Brenula is the female ork who owns Brenula's Arms. She is not an adept, but is an expert craftsman and repairer of weapons and armor.

Sijura

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12
Strength (4): 3/D4
Toughness (7): 4/D6
Perception (16): 7/D12
Willpower (11): 5/D8
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 11
Initiative: 7/D12
Spell Defense: 9
Physical Armor: 3
Social Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 27
Recovery Tests: 1
Wound Threshold: 6
Knockdown: 3/D4
Unconsciousness Rating: 18

Combat Movement: 16/36✦
Full Movement: 32/72✦

✦ The second value is the character's flying Movement rate.

Skills

Artisan:
Acting (2): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Haven Lore (3): 10/D10+D6
Theran Politics (2): 9/D8+D6

General:
Bribery (2): 9/D8+D6
Conceal Weapon (2): 9/D8+D6
Detect Trap (2): 9/D8+D6
Disarm Trap (2): 9/D8+D6
Disguise (1): 8/2D6
Fast Hand (1): 8/2D6
Forgery (1): 8/2D6
Lip Reading (2): 9/D8+D6
Lock Picking (2): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (2): 9/D8+D6
Picking Pockets (3): 10/D10+D6
Read and Write Language (2): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Theran
Silent Walk (3): 10/D10+D6
Speak Language (3): 10/D10+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Theran, Windling
Streetwise (3): 10/D10+D6
Surprise Strike (2): 5/D8
Throwing Weapons (2): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)
2 × Windling Daggers (Damage 4/D6; Range 6–10–12)
Cloaksense Brooch
Disguise Kit
Thieves' Picks and Tools
Traveler's Garb
Writing Kit

Loot

6 gold pieces

Legend Award

70 Legend Points

Notes

Sijura possesses the windling racial abilities of Astral-Sensitive Sight, Flight, and Increased Physical Defense.

Commentary

Sijura is one of Agramen's more useful cronies—a windling sympathetic to Thera. Agramen takes frequent advantage of the windling's size and racial Flight ability, using him to spy on the activities of others.

For these services, and for his loyalty, Sijura is paid well by the Empire.

Adventure Hook

This hook assumes Hiermon already knows the characters. The Wizard contacts the characters and meets them at his house in Haven. He tells them that he overheard a conversation at Loak's Legacy, regarding an old Theran villa southeast of Haven. The house was the summer residence of a Theran noble before the Scourge, when Parlainth was still the capital of the province. The house is rumored to contain a complete map of pre-Scourge Parlainth, magically placed on a large section of the house's inner wall.

Hiermon believes that the map might still be there, protected by the magic used to create it. He wants the characters to find the villa and draw a detailed copy of the wall, in return for a generous payment. It's up to the gamemaster how difficult the journey to the villa is. Many dangerous creatures lurk in the countryside of Barsaive, as do Horror constructs from nearby Parlainth. Apart from that, the characters should have no trouble in finding the ruins of their target destination, which is located three days southeast of Haven. All the walls are collapsed, as is the roof, and everything is overgrown with moss and fungus. The map on the wall can still be found, but it is far from complete.

The villa could be the lair of one ore more dangerous creatures. Or a group of Horror-created cadaver men—the previous inhabitants of the villa and its neighboring houses, which still lurk in the ruins—attack the group. And then there are the people that talked about the map while Hiermon listened, who aren't exactly happy about the characters exploring the villa. Again, the gamemaster decides who these people are: Theran sympathizers, fellow adventurers, or even Horror cultists? Regardless of who they are, they certainly have their own plans for the ancient map...

Meeting Hiermon

When Brenula returns, read the following to the players:

You hear the sound of heavy footsteps on the stairs. A moment later, Brenula reappears. "Hiermon would speak with you," she says, beckoning you to follow.

Up the winding stairs you tread, then through a wooden door into the Wizard's study. This odd room of his is dimly lit, full of the musty smell of old books and molding parchment mixed with the sharp scent of spilled herbs and minerals. A frail old man, his bent body seeming all but lost in his fine, flowing robes, sits in a chair with embroidered velvet cushions that nearly engulf him. As your eyes meet his, he speaks, his voice as rich and sonorous as the ringing of a bronze bell.

"I am Hiermon. What business have you in my house?"

Amulet of Dirac

Once the characters explain who they are and what they want, Hiermon will ask to see the amulet. After examining it, he says:

"Aye, I can divine its purpose for you, but only by spending much time and strength. As I advance in years, friends, these things have become ever more precious to me. I can plumb the amulet's secrets, but know that my work comes at a price. To learn the knowledge hidden in this amulet will take perhaps a fortnight. If you undertake a brief journey for me to fetch a certain thing of which I have need, the knowledge shall be my payment for your services.

"I seek a rare plant, blood ivy by Name, that grows only in Blood Wood. Ah, I see by your faces that you have heard somewhat of that magical, wondrous, accursed place. I have spoken with the Elven Queen Alachia and Blood Warder Takaris, chief among her advisers. Takaris cannot send one of his servants to Haven, so I must go and claim the plant myself or hire some brave adventurer to go in my stead. These old bones, I fear, cannot make such a journey. If you agree to go on my behalf, I will give you the knowledge of this amulet in exchange. I can give you fresh mounts, to make the journey swifter, as well as a letter of credit to buy what you will for the journey at Dag's or Brenula's. Nothing too extravagant, mind; I have no hoard of gold to spend, only a sum of silver such as might give comfort to any honest man.

"You will travel to Blood Wood, deliver a certain treasure in payment for the ivy to Blood Warder Takaris, and return to Haven with the plant. 'Twill take eighteen days on horseback to reach the wood, over untraveled paths that may hold some danger. Still, you need not fear too greatly; that you have traveled in safety to Haven speaks well of your strength and cunning. Such dangers as there are, you have surely met on other journeys.

"What say you, friends? Shall we clap hands on the bargain?"

Hiermon's Terms

Because Hiermon so desperately wants the blood ivy, he is willing to pay the characters generously for helping him get his hands on it, over and above agreeing to study the amulet. In exchange for the adventurers running his errand, Hiermon will do the following:

- Study the amulet, and share what he learns with the characters upon their return.
- Arrange for the characters to have horses for the journey, which the characters must return in healthy condition.
- Give each character a letter of credit, good for 150 silver pieces' worth of equipment at Brenula's Arms and Dag's Allgoods.

Hiermon also gives the party a letter to be delivered to the Elven Queen or to Takaris, instructing the Blood Warder to give the blood ivy to the characters upon receipt of payment. Finally, he gives them a small rune-stick that serves as a safe-conduct pass through Blood Wood for the one who possesses it. Takaris sent the stick to Hiermon to allow the Wizard's emissaries to enter the wood.

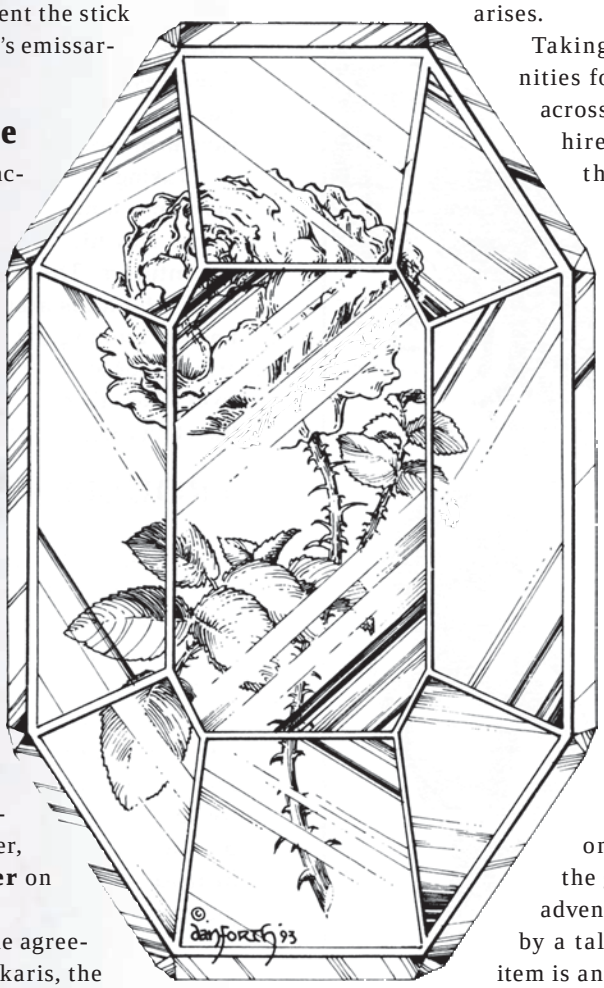
Hiermon's Treasure

The treasure that the characters must deliver to Blood Wood is the Everliving Flower, long thought lost in the ruins of Parlainth. A rose encased in an enchanted crystal box to preserve its life forever, the Everliving Flower has a deep green stalk, crimson thorns, and lustrous black petals that glisten in the light.

The Everliving Flower is an ancient item fabled in elven lore. Hiermon obtained it from a band of adventurers whom he hired to explore the area of Parlainth in which the flower might be found, promising them that they might keep anything else they stumbled over. For more information on the Everliving Flower, see **Meeting a Blood Warder** on p. 43.

According to the terms of the agreement between Hiermon and Takaris, the characters are to bring the treasure to Blood Wood and exchange it for blood ivy. Once the characters agree to take on Hiermon's errand, he gives them the treasure. The characters can take a glance at the Everliving Flower before Hiermon closes the chest. Once closed, the chest is magically locked—the Difficulty Number for attempts to open the box is 21.

Additionally, the chest is protected by a magical ward trap (see **Traps** in the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 110 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**), which activates if anyone other than Hiermon, Blood Warder Takaris, or the Elven Queen opens it, causing Step 21/D20+D10+D6 damage to the opener. Mystic Armor protects against this damage. The Flower is unharmed by the trap.



Prying Eyes

Once the characters have spent more than two hours in the neighborhood, or as soon as Agramen's Theran spies see them entering or leaving Brenula's shop, Agramen sends the windling spy Sijura to keep an eye on the characters (see **Meeting Hiermon**, p. 26).

Agramen knows that Hiermon has obtained a mysterious treasure from Parlainth and that the Wizard has dealt with elves of Blood Wood interested in acquiring Theran treasures and artifacts from the ruins of Parlainth. Once Agramen learns that the characters are preparing for a long journey westward, he deduces their destination. He orders his best human spies, Tural and Alkor, to shadow the adventurers and to slow them down if the opportunity arises.

Taking advantage of all the opportunities for mayhem on a long road trip across Barsaive, Tural and Alkor will hire a band of highwaymen to rob the adventurers. Through contact with a scout for this band, who lurks around the common room of Loak's Legacy looking for likely victims, Tural and Alkor arrange for an ambush a few days' journey down the road. They themselves tail the adventurers overland, traveling roughly two hours behind the characters.

Troubleshooting

Attempts to negotiate with Hiermon will not prove fruitful. He is already offering the characters generous compensation for the trip to Blood Wood, and any attempts to squeeze more out of him will only irritate him. If necessary, the gamemaster should remind the adventurers that two weeks' research by a talented Wizard into an esoteric item is an expensive proposition and that annoying said Wizard with unreasonable demands is extremely unwise.

If the characters can convince the Wizard that they deserve a better deal, Hiermon will increase each character's letter of credit to 200 silver pieces and offer to teach any Wizards in the group a few new spells.

Cross Country

Not a true encounter, this section describes the characters' preparation for the journey to Blood Wood, starts them on their way, and gives new **Earthdawn** players an overall impression of travel in Barsaive.

After completing their preparations, the characters embark on their 700-mile journey westward to Blood Wood.

Setting the Stage

When the characters are ready to begin their preparations, read the following:

Bearing the Wizard's letter of credit, you begin preparations for the long journey to Blood Wood. Not a one among you knows the place, except by strange and awful tales. Uncertain of what awaits you, you fear a little but wonder more. In those moments when your hearts quail before the task ahead, you comfort yourselves with memories of adventures past. You have survived dire peril before. How much worse can the road to Blood Wood be?

Hiermon's letter of credit opens to you all the shops of the Old Neighborhood. Seeing the Wizard's Name, wary merchants smile and rush to offer you the best of their merchandise. Surely you will need nothing on the journey that you cannot buy, for the right price. Every purchase seems to build your courage, your eagerness to face the challenges of the open road. If you could but forget the feeling that unfriendly eyes are upon you…

Themes and Images

During the first part of this encounter, the characters should feel watched wherever they go in town. As in all of Barsaive, strangers in Haven are regarded with caution and not a little suspicion. In this case, however, the characters are indeed under surveillance by Agramen's two Theran spies, Tural and Alkor.

During the second part of this encounter (**On the Road**, p. 32), heighten the feelings of excitement, wonder at new sights and sounds, and fear of the unknown that the adventurers might experience during their journey. Assuming that the group travels during the day and camps at night, as most travelers do, play up the sense that the terrain they travel through brims over with life. When the adventurers camp for the night, emphasize the unfamiliar sounds of dangerous, mysterious, nocturnal predators: scuttling, slithering, far-off howls, and the like.

In addition to fear and wonder, the gamemaster should also convey a sense of the almost dull routine of cross-country travel. The characters' emotions should vacillate between heightened alertness for danger and the possibility that the intimidating stories they have all heard are no more than fireside tales.

Behind the Scenes

Once the characters agree to make the journey for Hiermon, they next must buy provisions and gear and make any and all personal arrangements necessary. These preparations should take about a day to complete, giving the characters plenty of time to find any specific items they may want such as healing aids, blood charms, or special weapons and armor.

Making Preparations

The characters can buy supplies and provisions anywhere in Haven, though the letters of credit Hiermon gave them are good only in the Old Neighborhood. If they buy equipment and supplies from other shops in Haven, they must use their own money.

As the characters browse though the shops of the Old Neighborhood, informants working for Tural and Alkor will shadow them. These people never approach the characters, and retreat swiftly if the characters confront them. Tural and Alkor have instructed their hirelings to avoid contact with the characters at all costs. To handle this aspect of the storyline, the gamemaster should simply tell the players that their characters feel as though unfriendly eyes are upon them. He should not identify the watchers or even say definitely that the characters are being spied upon. After all, local people in most towns in Barsaive watch strangers closely as a matter of course. For all the characters know, their uneasy feelings could be simple paranoia.

The characters will likely stay the night in Haven and make an early departure in the morning. Unless they failed to arrange for lodging upon arrival in Haven, they should not need to make new arrangements. If they do, have them take rooms at Loak's Legacy (see **Haven** on p. 21).

On the Road

Once the characters have completed their preparations and are about to leave town, read the following to the players:

Well-equipped and ready to face whatever unknown hazards lie ahead, you depart the town and strike westward on your eighteen-day journey.

Your way lies over gently rolling fields and hills, thickly strewn with low brush and copses. The land spreads out before you like a fertile patchwork of varying greens; you can even see the dark lines of forests. A clear path cuts through the shrubs and trees, and your mounts find easy footing on the trail. So narrow is it that for long stretches of time you must travel single file.

The sun-warmed air feels pleasant on your skin, like the light touch of a lady's hand. On occasion, a cool breeze wafts by, rustling the dense undergrowth. Birds flit from tree to tree, and you hear the sounds of small animals scampering through the undergrowth. Flying insects hum in your ears and buzz around your heads; the scent of sun-warmed grasses, leaves, and earth rises around you as you pass.

Nightfall cools the air, making for comfortable slumber. The stars dance overhead in brilliant constellations, glittering like diamonds scattered across a field of midnight blue. A chorus of strange sounds echoes through the night air: far-off, mournful howls and menacing growls closer at hand. Leaves rustle and twigs snap as unseen wildlife scuttles through the undergrowth. Though wary of predators, you nevertheless marvel at the profusion of life; not long ago, none but Horrors bided in this place.

But now you bring it to mind, not all of the Horrors have gone away…

The characters run into no difficulties in this encounter; they find both dangers and aid in the three encounters following. However, the gamemaster should keep in mind that Tural and Alkor are traveling two hours behind the group. Though the two Theran spies take great care to avoid detection by the characters, the gamemaster may choose to let the characters confront the spies. If this happens, the characters will probably kill the two spies, ending their role in the adventure.

Rather than risking the spies' premature deaths (or the characters' demise) in a stand-up fight, the gamemaster might prefer to allow the characters to notice a pair of travelers behind them, but prevent the two groups from meeting each other. In this way, the gamemaster can feed the characters' paranoia without eliminating the spies from the adventure.

Troubleshooting

The trip to Blood Wood takes 18 days on horseback, 28 days on foot. To speed things along, the gamemaster should take every opportunity to provide the characters with horses if for some reason they turn down Hiermon's offer of mounts. Also, the gamemaster may need to remind the characters to care for their mounts during the journey.

Ambush!

In this encounter, taking place on the second day after the characters leave Haven, the highwaymen hired by the Theran spies ambush the characters. Tural and Alkor do not participate in this attack.

Setting the Stage

When the characters are on the second day of their journey, read the following aloud. Gamemasters may want to substitute the Name of the character traveling at the head of the group for the leader:

The second day of your journey draws on, as peaceful as the first. As your mounts amble over the gentle ground, you bask in the pleasant air and the lovely sight of the land rolling westward before you. You marvel at the fears that gripped you in Haven; far from meeting danger at every step, so far you have met only peace and a pleasant landscape.

Ahead looms another thick patch of woodland. Once, you would have feared what might lurk there; but thus far the trees have held only birds, and these surely hold nothing more fearsome. The path leads westward through the little wood. Half lulled to sleep by the sun's warmth, you guide your horses gently into the trees, trusting them to find their way. An arrow buzzes past your leader's ear like an angry hornet, startling you to full wakefulness. It embeds itself in the tree just a few inches in front of your leader's *head. [Gamemaster Note: Substitute the Name of the character traveling at the head of the group for* your leader.*]*

A man steps onto the path, appearing as if from nowhere. You feel a chill, but it is more than just the forest's shade; though you can see nothing, the greenery seems to hide a hundred enemies.

"Consider my first shot a warning, gentles," your accoster announces arrogantly. "If you dare cross me, the second will find someone's heart. My men lie in the underbrush, arrows nocked, and would gladly sink a feathered shaft into any so foolish as to deprive them of their livelihood.

"Drop your weapons, gentles, and empty your purses. For the magicians among you, I give you this warning: my men have arrows aimed at your heads. At any act save giving over your valuables, the offender shall receive a shaft through his skull. If you would live this day, lay down your weapons now!"

Themes and Images

Lull the characters into a false sense of security at first; the highwaymen's attack should shock them out of their sleepy contentment. Though they see only the bandit leader, Sogora Natalyl, the characters should feel surrounded by hostiles. Play up Sogora's arrogance; he sees himself as a gentleman bandit, though that facade disappears the minute the characters fail to obey his commands.

Behind the Scenes

Tural and Alkor hired Sogora and his highwaymen back in Haven to slow the characters down and to find out what they are carrying into Blood Wood. Sogora demands that the characters disarm themselves and surrender all their valuables, including the chest that contains the Everliving Flower. Sogora wants the chest in particular; Tural and Alkor have told him to get it, so that they can send it to Agramen back in Haven.

If the characters comply, Sogora summons his men from the brush to gather the loot. If the adventurers surrender the chest, Sogora immediately attempts to open it. When it resists his attempts, he will interrogate the characters in hopes of discovering how to open the chest. The characters know only that Hiermon sealed the chest in such a way that only Blood Warder Takaris or Queen Alachia can open it. When the characters fail to provide information, Sogora becomes enraged and attacks the nearest character.

Whether or not the adventurers surrender the chest, Sogora finds and reads Hiermon's letter to Takaris. This letter provides the evidence linking Hiermon with the elves that Tural and Alkor wanted Sogora to find.

If the characters refuse to comply with Sogora, the highwaymen attack, only retreating when it becomes obvious that they stand to lose the fight. If a full-scale fight breaks out, Sogora joins the fray until half or more of his band is defeated, at which point he retreats. No matter what transpires, Sogora must escape; he and a band of hired orks will attack the characters at the **Midland Trading Post** (see p. 35). Sogora may also make an interesting recurring villain in the gamemaster's **Earthdawn** campaign.

Sogora's Men

The highwaymen consist of Sogora Natalyl and one highwayman per player character. If the adventurers try an attack, the highwaymen open fire, eventually moving into melee combat range.

The highwaymen are hiding in the brush, but the characters can easily spot them after the first volley of arrows. A character wishing to locate the highwaymen must make a Perception (7) Test. If the test succeeds, the character spots one of his attackers. All of the highwaymen are on the ground, making it easier for the characters to defend themselves. The characters are Blindsided against ranged Attack Tests by highwaymen that they have not yet seen (see p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Sogora Natalyl, Second Circle Human Thief

Sogora leads a band of highwaymen who plague the region between Haven and Blood Wood. Though he fancies himself a gentleman bandit, most who have encountered Sogora regard him as a common thief. Sogora is a Second Circle human Thief.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (11): 5/D8
Perception (12): 5/D8
Willpower (8): 4/D6
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 6
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 32 (47)
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 24 (36)

Combat Movement: 32
Full Movement: 64

Karma Points: 12
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Climbing[D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Durability (5/4) (3): 3
Karma Ritual (2): 2
Lock Picking[D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (2): 9/D8+D6

Picking Pockets [D] (3): 10/D10+D6
Silent Walk [D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Surprise Strike [D] (2): 8/2D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Blade Carving (1): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Caravan Trade Routes (1): 6/D10
Gem Appraising (1): 6/D10

General:
Animal Handling (3): 7/D12
Bribery (1): 7/D12
Disguise (2): 7/D12
Streetwise (3): 8/2D6
Tracking (3): 8/2D6
Wilderness Survival (3): 8/2D6

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17)
Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

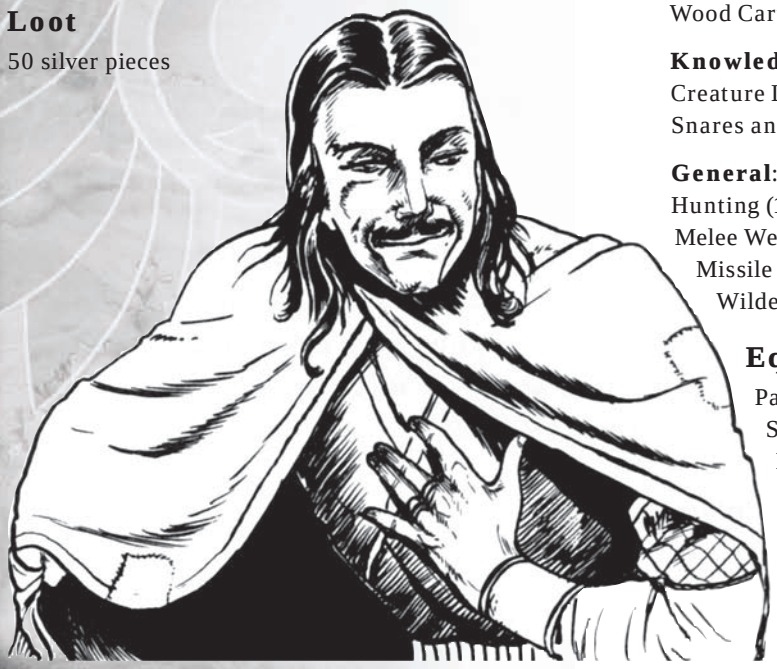
Broadsword (Damage 11/D10+D8)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit
2 × Booster Potions
Carving Tools
Climbing Kit
Disguise Kit
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Riding Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

50 silver pieces



Legend Award

115 Legend Points

Notes

Sogora possesses the human racial ability of Versatility.

Human Highwaymen (2 per Character)

Most of these highwaymen have been following Sogora for just a short time. While generally loyal to him, Sogora is good at keeping his secrets to himself, so interrogating the brigands will not bring forth much in the way of useful information. Aside from Sogora, none of the brigands knew about the ambush in advance.

At the gamemaster's discretion, and only if asked, any survivors will be more than happy to show the characters the location of their camp. Assuming Sogora escaped, he will already have made his way back to the camp and collected his belongings (see **The Highwaymen's Camp**, p. 35, for details).

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Strength (11): 5/D8
Toughness (10): 5/D8
Perception (9): 4/D6
Willpower (8): 4/D6
Charisma (8): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 4
Social Defense: 5
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 31
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 22

Combat Movement: 20
Full Movement: 40

Skills

Artisan:
Wood Carving (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Creature Lore (1): 5/D8
Snares and Traps (1): 5/D8

General:
Hunting (1): 6/D10
Melee Weapons (1): 6/D10
Missile Weapons (1): 6/D10
Wilderness Survival (1): 5/D8

Equipment

Padded Leather (Phys 4)
Short Sword (Damage 9/D8+D6)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
Shortbow (Damage 8/2D6; Range 60–120–240)
Quiver (w/20 shortbow arrows)
Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tools
Felt Cap
Trail Rations (1 week)

Traveler's Garb
Waterskin

Loot

18 silver pieces

Legend Award

45 Legend Points

The Highwaymen's Camp

Sogora and his highwaymen have a camp about two hours walk from where the ambush occurs. If Sogora escaped, he will have made his way to the camp, grabbed his gear and money, and fled. Once they arrive at the camp, and should they decide to pursue him, characters can make Perception (7) Tests to pick up his trail. Sogora is canny, however, and equally at home in the wild as he is in the city. He will use his Wilderness Survival skill to help him forage for food or water, or to find shelter, and will generally do everything in his power to avoid getting caught. The gamemaster is encouraged to use Sogora in his own campaign as an adversary. Gentleman bandit he may be, but revenge against the characters will now be high on his agenda. Sogora makes a reappearance later in this adventure (see **Night Assault**, p. 39.)

Should Sogora have escaped, there will be little to be found in the camp of use to the characters: two deer carcasses and a brace of rabbits hang from a tree, and there are several large waterskins full of water (and one of ale). Tarps have been set up to provide shelter, and a large tent is pitched close to the campfire area. The tent's interior appears to have been ransacked, and there is nothing of value inside. Some burnt paper fragments can be found near the campfire; nothing intelligible can be gleaned from them, however.

Should Sogora have been killed or captured, then he has not ransacked the camp. Inside the tent are Sogora's belongings, plus a purse containing 300 silver pieces, and a letter written to Sogora from someone who signs his Name only as 'A'. The letter is actually from Agramen, and describes the characters in general detail, along with a promise of "an equal amount of silver once you return proof of their demise to me."

Troubleshooting

The greatest potential problem in this encounter occurs if the characters surrender everything to Sogora. Though unlikely, this may happen. If the players seem inclined in that direction, remind them that, first, they are heroes, and, second, surrender means not only losing their possessions, but also reneging on a promise to a powerful Wizard. Such a move is less than wise.

Midland Trading Post

At a point roughly halfway between Haven and Blood Wood, nine days' ride from each, the adventurers come upon the Midland Trading Post. This group of buildings includes a large store where customers can buy, sell, and barter practically anything. At the trading post, the characters can rest, relax, and replenish their supplies if necessary. If the characters stay at the Midland for the night, they will have to rent several of its small rooms in order to accommodate everyone. In this encounter, Sogora and his hired orks launch a second attack on the characters at the inn (see **Night Assault**, p. 39).

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach the outpost, read the following:

As evening draws nigh on the ninth day of your journey, you come across a cluster of trees and stone buildings set between the hills. Small knots of people walk to and fro among the buildings, some packing wagons, some loading saddlebags, and some tying horses and exotic mounts at hitching posts. Among the war horses and riding horses, you spy a few thundra beasts.

The sound of voices reaches your ears; you hear haggling, shouts of welcome, and conversation in all the tongues of Barsaive. A breeze from the west brings the aroma of freshly cooked food. The scent reminds you how much you long to sup on meat rather than trail food, to sleep on a bed other than the hard, cold ground, and to bathe away the road-grime of these past nine days.

The Outpost

An elf Named Keris Briarthorne established the Midland Trading Post many years ago as a rest area and trading compound, envisioning himself as the master of a major trade route between Parlainth and Blood Wood and the cities and towns to the south. Unfortunately, the great trade route never materialized, though the trading post did turn a small profit from its modest business. Disillusioned, Briarthorne sold the entire complex to an obsidiman Named Gurt (see **Residents**, p. 36).

The Midland Trading Post consists of the **Midland Tavern**, the **Halfway Boarding House**, a **Smithy**, and **Gurt's Store**.

Halfway Boarding House

The inn is the trading post's largest building. Its rooms can house up to fifty travelers, and many more could sleep in the tavern's common room by the fireplace. The common room is in the middle of the building, and most of the guest rooms are in the southern wing. A few cheap rooms and the staff living quarters are in the northern wing. A small steam bath is located in the inn's basement. It is warmed by a large heating stone, which is sprinkled with scented oils and water. Guests may use it for a modest additional fee. The inn's lodgings are equivalent to a merchant inn (see **Services** in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 453 of the **Player's Compendium**).

The stables of the boarding house have two enclosures: one for larger animals, such as horses, stajians, and thundra beasts; and a second for sheep and chickens. The smaller animals belong to the trading post, and the larger stalls are reserved for animals accompanying the caravans or other travelers.

The Midland Tavern

Drekken, the female ork maintaining this tavern, has outfitted all the mugs with spikes. They aren't stored on a shelf; instead they are simply tossed at the wall behind the bar. These mugs serve as Drekken's secret weapon against cheeky windlings: she uses them to pin the impertinent little creatures to the wall. Her Throwing Weapons skill is highly refined; so far, she's only seriously hurt a couple of windlings, and that was years ago. Drekken has perfected her technique since then. For more information on Drekken, see **Residents**, below.

Food and drink at the Midland Tavern is priced normally (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 454 of the **Player's Compendium**). Drekken loves good music, and often lets troubadours perform in exchange for food and drink.

Smithy

The dwarf Orias Shatterforge (see **Residents**, below) maintains a small smithy at the trading post. The workroom is covered, but open in the direction of the stables. Two employees deal with day-to-day tasks, such as re-shoeing horses, making nails, and the like. Orias lives below the forge in a room he built himself, although he rarely allows visitors into his private quarters.

Gurt's Store

The obsidiman Gurt runs a large store that stocks nearly everything one might need on a long journey. Gurt trades with the caravans and with the local orks for grain and other supplies. Gurt always has a little something special hiding under the counter for particularly discriminating customers. His store sells all manner of items, including used weapons and armor at a 10 percent discount from the market price (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 432 of the **Player's Compendium**). For more information on the obsidiman, see **Residents**, below.

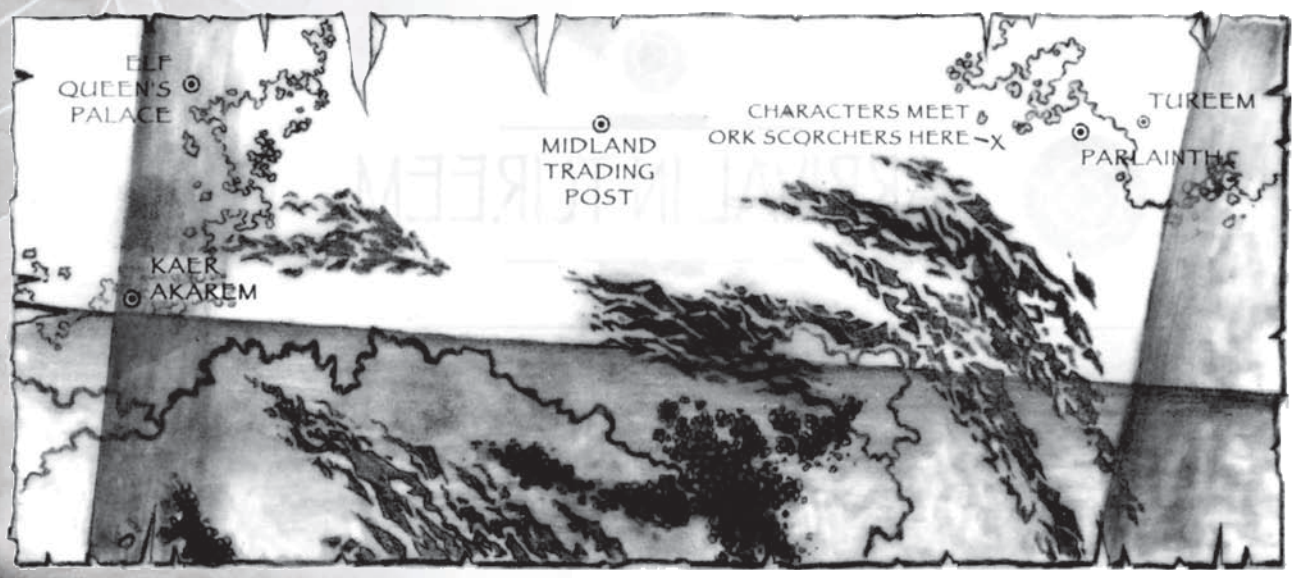
A small graveyard lies behind Gurt's store. Three former employees and an Illusionist Named Kinkandere have been laid to rest there. When the moon shines especially brightly, a row of runes seems to dance in the air over Kinkandere's grave. These runes appear to be a ghostly reflection of the moonlight and they are accompanied by nearly inaudible ringing. No one knows the significance of the runes; if they meant something to Kinkandere, he took their secret to his grave.

Residents

The following Name-givers are the Midland Trading Post's heart and soul. The ork guards, a few hirelings, and the post's owners form a small community in the wilderness. Game statistics are not given for these characters, as they should not be used as opponents.

Gurt

A shrewd and savvy trader, Gurt personally supervises the day-to-day operations of the large store and drives a hard bargain. Gurt's skin is a dark grey marble color, with



just a hint of green. The obsidiman once followed the path of the Troubadour, but his abilities are fading. When no other Troubadour is present, he'll often play songs on his large harp to liven up the atmosphere.

Drekken

Gurt employs a female ork Named Drekken to run the inn, serving as bartender and bouncer. The ork also ensures peace and order at the outpost. Toward criminals, she administers justice as she sees fit. She also permits the occasional tavern brawl, as long as the inn suffers no excessive damage and the fighting involves neither magic nor edged weapons. Naturally, everyone present in the tap room at the time of the brawl must help pay for minor damages, lest Drekken start living up to her nickname, Legbreaker. Drekken has been known to take part in these brawls, but asking her about that could set off her *gahad*.

Orias Shatterforge

Orias Shatterforge, a male dwarf, runs the smithy/livery. Orias was once an outstanding Weaponsmith. Now he takes care of the smithy and the stables, and trains dogs and falcons on the side. Orias is no longer interested in adventures or long journeys. He grew up in the Scytha Mountains and often watches the sun set over the far-off peaks of his homeland. He is still interested in legends concerning powerful weapons. He sought the sword Purifier (see p. 38 for an **Adventure Hook**) his entire life and may have a lead or two about the sword's whereabouts.

Travelers may purchase animals here, or have them traded, shoed, and cared for as their masters conduct other business or spend the night. In addition to various steeds, Orias also sells dogs and falcons. To stable a mount costs 3 copper pieces per night; feed costs 5 copper pieces per night (see the Mounts Table in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 457 of the **Player's Compendium**). For an extra fee, Orias will also make minor repairs to characters' weapons and armor.

Flitz

Despite his diminutive size, this windling takes care of the outpost's lodgings. Flitz can read a guest's needs with a single glance, and he often cheerfully accommodates even the most unusual requests. Like his companions, Flitz is getting on in years and has hired several assistants to help him run the boarding house.

Guards

About a dozen orks guard the Midland Trading Post. Gurt pays well, and the guards protect the outpost from wild creatures, criminals, and other rabble. They listen to Drekken when she's around, but they don't hesitate to dish out their own swift justice when needed. Fresh riders arrive to relieve the guards every few days. These orks belong to a larger tribe that rides the surrounding plains, and they ride thundra beasts or stajians. The guards dye their hardened leather armor a dark green and paint their faces in earthen tones. Gurt's guards use the same game statistics as the **Ork Raiders** on p. 39.

Employees

The handful of human employees of the Midland Trading Post do the cooking and cleaning, serve the guests in the inn, clean the rooms, and take care of the caravans and the stables.

Themes and Images

A busy oasis in the midst of a wilderness, the trading post plays host to beings from all the Name-giver races of Barsaive. The noises of commerce fill the air: iron ringing on iron as horseshoes are made at the forge, the low hum of conversation, the sound of carousing spilling out from the inn's taproom, the snorts and stamps of overburdened pack animals, and so on.

Behind the Scenes

The Midland Trading Post is now the lone oasis in the plains, offering the only civilized rest stop for the few caravans that travel this route. The current owners rebuilt the trading post a few years ago with the help of some hired craftsmen. The outpost's wooden buildings are nestled amongst a few trees. Larger caravans pass through about every ten days. At other times, small groups of travelers and adventures may drop by.

Every few days, a group of the outpost's guards is relieved from watch duty, and about a dozen orks descend on the tavern. Brawls frequently break out on those evenings.

At the Midland Tavern

Because the Midland Trading Post lies in an area with a respectable amount of traffic, beings of all of Barsaive's Name-giver races frequent the Midland Tavern's tap room. On any given evening, the party can meet ork nomads, questors, caravan trading parties, and others. The tap room is also a good place to pick up a rumor or two (see below). The gamemaster must determine which of these rumors are true and which are false.

The Midland Tavern is also a good place to find cheap muscle. Out-of-work mercenaries and adventurers often hang around the inn, most looking for honest or semi-honest employment.

"Funny stories we hear, sometimes. In the past four weeks, two crazed people came a-wandering from the north, babbling about a village that appeared and then vanished into a magical fog."

"Keep a sharp eye out for Theran slavers, friends. I hear the road is thick with the villains."

"Go south'ards, if ye seek adventure! I'm tellin' ye, a great dragon lies that way. A great treasure

Adventure Hook

Legend says that when the Horrors first began to appear in Barsaive, King Varulus I, by then old and dying, commissioned the forging of a magical sword to defeat the creatures. He gathered together master Weaponsmiths from among his own people, the elven court, the troll-moots, and other groups: the sword he fashioned was Named Purifier (see the **Magical Treasures** chapter on p. 203 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). It is said that the balance of the blade shifts to accommodate the wielder, so that a troll might use it as easily as a windling. It is also said that Purifier burns with red fire when used against a Horror. Other legends say that the blade can kill a Horror with one blow. Still other tales relate that the mere presence of the blade near someone corrupted is enough to cure the person and cast out the Horror. Nearly every hero of the age before the Scourge is reported to have used the blade, and so no one knows what became of it, or if it really existed.

The current owners of the Midland Trading Post adventured together for many years before retiring here. The dwarf Orias researched many of the legends surrounding the sword Purifier throughout his adventuring career. An Illusionist Named Kinkandere helped him on occasion, but liked to tease the dwarf when he knew more than him. Kinkandere recently died of old age and was buried in a small graveyard behind Gurt's store. On certain nights, when the moon shines especially bright, a row of runes appears dancing in the air over the Illusionist's grave. These runes appear to be ghostly reflections of the moonlight and are accompanied by nearly inaudible ringing. Orias believes that the runes hide a clue about the sword's whereabouts. The dwarf is no longer interested in adventures or long journeys, so he approaches the characters to see if they want to find out what the runes mean.

If the characters accept and manage to decipher the runes, they find out that they form a single word: Gra'Vakk. This is the name of one of the largest kaers in the area. The kaer's ruins are only a day's journey from the Trading Post, amidst the rolling plains. Gra'Vakk's population consisted entirely of orks, and all efforts to limit the population's growth failed. Overcrowded just decades after the kaer closed its gates, it had to re-open and send two-thirds of its inhabitants on a journey to Scytha and Throal. Unfortunately, the re-opening allowed a Horror to enter unnoticed. As the Horror's influence grew, it began playing with the orks' *gahad* and ultimately doomed the kaer. No one knows the whereabouts of the Horror or the ultimate fate of the kaer's inhabitants, as none of them (not even their remains) have ever been found.

While the ancient ruins seem to be devoid of life, investigating the central cavern of Kaer Gra'Vakk reveals the grave of Brelarch, an ork Horror Stalker (see p. 174 of the **Name-giver's Compendium**). The hero was buried there sometime after the Scourge, and murals near the grave depict Brelarch wielding a rusted sword against an overwhelming horde of Horror constructs. Opening the grave will turn up Brelarch's bones, but no sword. Did the ork hero really wield the ancient blade? And if he did, where is it now? The group might choose to investigate Brelarch's legend and take up the search for Purifier—if they manage to avoid the wrath of the ork tribe who put Brelarch to rest here and watches over his grave in reverence to one of their greatest heroes...

it keeps in its lair: a treasure to give ye riches an' power to equal the King of Throal 'imself!"

"'Tisn't the Theran slavers alone that you need watch for. I hear the t'skrang by the Serpent River are buying slaves from the Therans for their own foul purposes."

"Blood Wood's a funny place. Standoffish, like, but now some of the thorny elves are looking outside o' their greenwood. Seems they want trade wi' the rest o' Barsaive. Me, I wish they'd keep to themselves. Gives me the willies just to hear tell of 'em."

"Take great care in Blood Wood. They say travelers have only to lay eyes on a blood elf and they fall in love with the creatures, losing their minds to the elves' beautiful corruption."

Night Assault

The Theran spies Tural and Alkor, along with the highwayman Sogora, arrive two hours after the characters and go to the Midland Tavern in search of their quarry. Once the spies discover that the characters are staying at the Halfway Boarding House, they rent a room to keep the characters under surveillance. Meanwhile, Sogora hires a group of orks to raid and attack the characters during the night, hoping to cripple or even kill some of them and steal the chest in the confusion. The assault comes long after the characters have gone to sleep.

Sogora instructs the orks to split up, with one group diverting the trading post's guards and the other hitting the characters' rooms at the same time, dispatching the occupants as quietly as possible while Sogora rifles through the characters' belongings. Besides searching for the chest they are carrying, Sogora will actively look for clues as to the nature of the characters' journey. Game statistics for the orks appear below. Sogora's statistics are given in the **Sogora's Men** encounter on p. 33.

If the adventurers defeat more than half of the nighttime raiders, the survivors attempt to retreat. One survivor rushes off to tell the Theran spies what has happened. If any raiders are captured and successfully interrogated, they will tell the characters who hired them.

Sogora waits for the hired orks to deal with the characters before entering their rooms. If it looks like the orks stand to lose the fight, Sogora retreats to inform Tural and Alkor of the failure. Though irritated, the spies make no further attempts to attack the characters at this time. Instead, they will continue to follow the characters toward Blood Wood. If the adventurers ask other Midland patrons about the orks who attacked them, they learn only that they hail from a local tribe of raiders known to sell their services cheaply.

Ork Raiders (8)

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 **Initiative**: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 6 **Physical Armor**: 5
Social Defense: 5 **Mystic Armor**: 1

Death Rating: 32 **Recovery Tests**: 2
Wound Threshold: 8 **Knockdown**: 5/D8*
Unconsciousness Rating: 24

* The character knows the Wound Balance skill

Combat Movement: 24 **Full Movement**: 48

Skills

Artisan:
Tattooing (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Caravan Trade Routes (2): 7/D12

General:
Melee Weapons (2): 7/D12
Wound Balance (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17)
Padded Leather Armor (Phys 4)

Hand-Axe (Damage 9/D8+D6)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8 **Strength** (12): 5/D8
Toughness (11): 5/D8 **Perception** (10): 5/D8
Willpower (13): 6/D10 **Charisma** (9): 4/D6

Adventurer's Kit
Tattooing Tools
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Waterskin

Loot

3 silver pieces

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Notes

The character possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If the players show no interest in stopping at the trading post for the night, the gamemaster should feel free to manipulate events to make them change their minds. For example, a horse might throw a shoe, a sudden downpour or thunderstorm may blow up, or threatening creature noises from the terrain beyond the trading post may frighten the characters into staying.

CARAVAN OF DEATH

One day away from Blood Wood, the characters stumble upon the remains of a caravan, apparently destroyed by some type of fearsome creature. Though this encounter does not relate directly to the storyline of the adventure, it is included to expose the players to situations common when traveling across Barsaive.

This encounter also suggests a subplot that may lead to another adventure later in the gamemaster's campaign. For more information on using elements of **Mists of Betrayal** in future adventures, see **Loose Ends** on p. 70.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the characters approach the remains of the caravan, read the following:

Traveling ever westward, you are little more than a day's ride from Blood Wood. Brush-covered hills rise around you, hiding the Passions-only-know what dangers. A breeze from the west carries the smell of burning wood toward you; above the crown of the nearest hill, a plume of smoke scars the sky. As you draw closer, the sounds of wildlife diminish.

You round the hill's curve and arrive at the source of the smoke. Before you lie four wagons, all destroyed. A massive blow from some vast, dread, unknown hand splintered one. Two other wagons are smoldering; the fourth lies overturned and broken, its goods scattered across the dusty path. Flies buzz around the burning, mangled carcasses

of sixteen horses. Beyond the horses—bold heroes or no—you flinch from the gruesome sight.

The corpses of the merchants and their guards lie strewn among the wreckage, blood seeping into the earth around them. Some of the dead are burnt so badly that you can see no faces, nor tell what race they are or whether they be men or women. Others lie torn to pieces, partly devoured for all that you can tell. Still others, left whole and unmarked in death, wear faces frozen in their final terror. And everywhere, everywhere you hear the buzzing of flies.

Despite the beauty of the day and the warmth of the air, standing before this carnage you feel a creeping chill.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Death, death, and more death. Something huge and angry waded through this caravan, effortlessly ripping it apart and setting fire to wagons and men. The only sound in the awful stillness is the buzzing of the flies on the corpses.

BEHIND THE SCENES

This caravan has been utterly destroyed; the characters can find no salvageable wares or weapons. The one-sided battle occurred a scant two hours ago, when the Horror Named Duaga descended upon the luckless traders. The Horror lives to the south, about two hours away on horseback or three hours on foot.

A successful Perception (10) Test reveals a trail of three-toed, claw-like footprints leading south. An Excellent result further reveals that the thing that left the footprints is at least 7 feet tall. Though the Horror Duaga is not related to

the main storyline of the adventure, the gamemaster can find a description of the Horror and its lair in the **Loose Ends** section on p. 73.

As stated in the overview, this encounter is included to add atmosphere and to demonstrate to new players some of the perils of traveling in Barsaive.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The adventurers should not track the Horror at this time. If they locate the Horror's tracks and wish to battle it, the gamemaster should hint strongly that if the creature slaughtered an entire caravan, a small band of adventurers might find that surviving the encounter is a doubtful prospect at best. The gamemaster might want to give a hint to the players that they don't know how far the tracks go.

If they decide to follow the tracks, he can just let them walk on and on and on until they return to the adventure. Also, heading off to fight the Horror means traveling in the wrong direction, delaying the characters' arrival in Blood Wood. If the characters feel obliged to seek out and destroy the Horror, suggest that they do so after they have completed their current task.

BLOOD WOOD

In this encounter the characters enter Blood Wood, the forest home of the blood elves. The dense woods are filled with many mysterious things, both wondrous and terrible. The player characters, however, will only pass through a small part of the wood.

ADVENTURE HOOK

Amidst the charred or still burning remains of the caravan carts, the characters find a small chest the size of a jewelry case. It appears undamaged, and is in fact both magically reinforced and secured with a magical lock. Once opened, the characters find the personal effects of one of the merchants: several unobtrusive pieces of jewelry, a sewing kit and spare buttons, shaving utensils and a writing kit. Next to that, it contains a traveling journal and a small box holding a beautiful ring.

The journal details how the merchant bought this ring in Haven and that he had intended to present it to his fiancé as her wedding ring on his next return to Throal. The characters are free to do whatever they want with this, but sparing a day or two on their next visit to Throal to find the young woman and bring her news from her late fiancé as well as the ring might earn them the favor of Astendar.

As they enter the Wood, a party of blood elves accosts them; these elves serve Kalourin, the Blood Warder in charge of Blood Wood's perimeter defenses.

SETTING THE STAGE

A vast forest that can only be Blood Wood lies before you, its borders lost to your sight. Great trees seem to brush the sky, their interlocking leaves and upper branches weaving a tapestry of deep green through which weak sunlight can barely enter. Despite the dimness, underbrush grows thick on the ground, ready to trap the foot of an unwary mount or walker. The cool green shade should invite you to rest, but instead you feel unease.

The growing things of this ancient forest are strange to your eyes; in all your travels, you have seen no such plants as these. Though your eyes tell you they are but foreign plants, you sense a subtle wrongness as you gaze at them. Birdsong and the proud humming of insects fill the air; you hear the sounds of woodland beasts, many unfamiliar. As in the woodland ambush on the road some days ago, you sense unseen and hostile eyes all around you.

Entering the wood, you catch the pungent scents of sap, pollen, and moist earth. Underneath it all lies the rank smell of rotting leaves. Underfoot, the ground is soft and spongy, carpeted with dead leaves and decaying plants. You move slowly forward through the trees, caught between wonder at the wood's unexpected beauty and the growing sense of wrongness. You find yourself straining to see beyond the outward beauty to catch a glimpse of the subtle corruption that you pray is only in your mind.

As you watch Blood Wood, you fancy that it watches you as well. Leaves whisper in a passing breeze: they seem to say, "Leave this place, leave this place."

You have traveled for no more than two dozen heartbeats when a band of elves appears around you. Their unearthly beauty takes your breath away, yet you can hardly bear to look at the thorns that pierce every inch of their smooth skins. Their looks both repel you and draw you in a way you do not understand. The elves bear swords and wear armor made of woven, living plants. On their armor is a symbol that you recognize; the runestick Hiermon gave you as a safe-conduct through Blood Wood bears a similar sign.

The elf most terrible and beautiful, seemingly the leader, strides forward and stops a few paces from your band. If he embraced you, his blood-stained thorns would impale you at the heart. He favors you with the cold gaze of a king facing an unworthy enemy.

"What is your business in Blood Wood, outsiders?" he demands. To your ears, his voice is harsh music. You gaze at him, struck dumb as if

by enchantment. Behind him, his elven followers take a tighter grip on their swords.

Themes and Images

Blood Wood contains strangeness upon strangeness. Regardless of their experience or knowledge of such things, none of the characters have ever seen most of the plants in Blood Wood. Though lovely beyond words, the mysterious woodland is cursed and full of anguish. The characters should feel unnerved by the combination of beauty and corruption that pervades Blood Wood and everything in it.

Behind the Scenes

The characters have run across a guard patrol whose members report to Blood Warder Kalourin; their armor bears his sigil. Once the characters present Hiermon's runestick to the elves, the patrol leader waves his hand and the dense vegetation parts like the biblical Red Sea to form a path leading directly to the palace.

The elven leader warns the characters not to stray from the path. "If you keep to it, no elf shall challenge or harm you. But you must be wary of the creatures that stalk the wood. From such as they, the path cannot protect you."

If the characters attack the elves, let the fight happen. If it looks as if the characters may be killed, the gamemaster should send a second party of elves to halt the fight, ask who the strangers are, and bring them directly to the Queen's palace upon the mention of Takaris' Name. Should the characters step off the path, they will find travel conditions difficult, especially for the horses. The gamemaster might send groups of thorn men or other fearsome things to attack them until they wise up and return to the path. Hopefully, the characters will not need further lessons.

If the Theran spies are still tailing the adventurers, they enter the woods shortly after the characters do. If they inform the guard elves that they work for Agramen, the guards send a messenger to inform Blood Warder Kalourin of the spies' arrival. Kalourin will send word back to the spies, instructing them to wait near the point where the characters will emerge from the wood. Once the characters leave Blood Wood, the spies are instructed to resume tailing them, reinforced by a group of six blood elves loyal to Kalourin.

Blood Elves (6)

Attributes

Dexterity (17): 7/D12
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Initiative: 7/D12
Spell Defense: 9
Physical Armor: 2
Social Defense: 10
Mystic Armor: 5

Death Rating: 36
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 10
Knockdown: 6/D10*
Unconsciousness Rating: 28

* The character knows the Wound Balance skill

Combat Movement: 36
Full Movement: 72

Skills

Artisan:
Wood Carving (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Botany (1): 7/D12
Creature Lore (1): 7/D12

General:
Hunting (1): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6
Missile Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6
Wilderness Survival (1): 7/D12
Wound Balance (3): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Fernweave (Phys 2; Myst 3)
Short Sword (Damage 10/D10+D6)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Elven Warbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 70–140–280)
Quiver (w/20 warbow arrows)

Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tools
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Loot

7 silver pieces

Legend Award

90 Legend Points

Notes

The character possesses the blood elf racial abilities of Low-Light Vision, +1 Spell Defense, +1 Social Defense, Armor Restriction, Pain Resistance, and Reduced Recovery Tests.

Armor Restriction: All armors except fernweave must be modified for blood elf thorns. Wearing unmodified armor causes painful tearing of the elf's thorns and a Harried penalty for as long as it is worn (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 408 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Pain Resistance: Blood elves can sustain one Wound more than normal before incurring Action Test penalties (see **Wound Effects** in the **Combat** chapter on p. 403 of the **Player's Compendium**). They are also immune to the effects of spells and magical powers that rely on pain to incapacitate their victims, such as the Pain spell (see the description in the **Nethermancy Spells** chapter on p. 351 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Reduced Recovery Tests: A portion of a blood elf's natural healing ability must be devoted to healing the constant bleeding caused by his thorns. Thus, blood elves have one less Recovery Test per day (see **Health Ratings** in the **Creating Characters** chapter on p. 47 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Commentary

These are the members of the blood elf border patrol.

Troubleshooting

If the characters attack the patrol, the player characters may refuse to stop fighting even after the reinforcements arrive. They may also try to make their way through the woods without following the path; if they attempt this, they get hopelessly lost. If they happen to find the palace by sheer luck, the elves guarding its grounds will take them prisoner.

Denizens of Blood Wood do not take kindly to uninvited guests. If this happens, the elves disregard any of the adventurers' attempts to explain, even if they display Hiermon's rune-stick. To get the adventure back on track, the gamemaster should bring Blood Warder Takaris onto the scene to straighten things out.

Meeting a Blood Warder

The characters arrive at Queen Alachia's palace and meet with Kalourin, who attempts to learn the reason for their presence in Blood Wood. Before he can do that, however, Blood Warder Takaris arrives. He informs the characters that before he can give them Hiermon's blood ivy, they must fulfill one more errand: tracking down a Theran slaver.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach the Elf Queen's Palace, read the following:

The charmed path leads you to a vast clearing. Standing at its edge, you gape in dumbstruck wonder at the sight before you. Six trees, of greater size than any giant, hold between them a beautiful palace. The trees support its walls of woven vines and leaves, and also seem to cradle it as if it were a precious, lovely child. Its greenery shining more lustrous than gold, more dazzling than fine gemstones sparkling in sunlight, the famed palace of the Elf Queen Alachia stands resplendent and proud before you. Handsome elven lords and ladies, their beauty both marred and enhanced by the thorns that pierce their flesh, stroll across the greensward. Clad in fine raiment, they move with an arrogant grace. Delicate music, its eerie loveliness seeming not of this world, drifts from the palace windows. Honey-sweet and full of longing, it beckons you onward.

A band of twelve blood elves blocks your way, swords raised and eyes hard with suspicion. "Halt,

and state your business here!" one demands. His voice is half melody and half malice, frightening yet sweet music to your startled ears. "No stranger may behold unbidden the palace of the Beautiful and Terrible Queen Alachia, She Who Rules All Elvenkind!"

Themes and Images

Alachia's palace is the seat of elven power in Blood Wood, and even some elves in the outer world give the Elven Queen a certain respect and deference. The characters should feel appropriately awed and overwhelmed by the beauty and terrible majesty of the palace.

The palace elves speak in formal, sweeping statements brimming with Queen Alachia's praises. Toward outsiders, they behave with blatant arrogance.

Behind the Scenes

No matter what credentials the characters show, the palace guards refuse them passage. The characters' best course of action is to tell the guards who sent them and on what errand, at which point the elven guard commander sends one of his warriors into the palace and commands the characters to wait. Several minutes later, Kalourin comes out to greet the adventurers. When Kalourin appears, read the following to the players:

After some time has passed, a tall elf emerges from the palace. By his lordly walk and rich clothing, he is no mere guard. In singsong Sperethiel almost too swift for the ear to follow, he addresses the guards. They bow and part ranks, allowing you to pass. The elven lord awaits your approach, smiling. As you draw near to him, you see that he wears an amulet bearing the symbol you saw on the armor of the elven guard patrol; indeed, a symbol very like the one carved into the runestick you carry. He inclines his head a finger span toward you, less a bow than a gesture meant to emphasize his courtliness and breeding at your expense.

"Well met, gentle strangers. I am Kalourin, Warder to Her Gracious Majesty our Queen. I regret that Warder Takaris cannot meet with you as yet; in token of his esteem, he has asked me to greet you in his stead. If you will follow me, I shall guide you to the appointed meeting place. You may wait there in comfort for Warder Takaris."

You dismount from your horses, and as if by magic an elven guard appears to lead them away toward the stables. As you follow Kalourin through the Elven Queen's palace, the beauty of it nearly overwhelms you. Elven lords and ladies, resplendent in their terrible, anguished beauty, spare you a momentary glance before resuming their discussions of matters far beyond your ken. Their voices weave a gentle harmony that fills the air with spoken music as you pass.

Ushering you into a comfortable chamber, Warder Kalourin bids you sit. Gladly you comply, eager to rest your travel-weary bones on the sumptuously cushioned chairs. A servant enters, seemingly called by your mere presence, bearing crystal goblets brim-full of elven wine of a vintage fine beyond your dreams or experience. Having seen to the comfort of all, Kalourin takes a goblet and joins you in a ceremonial drink.

Talking with Kalourin

Kalourin has intercepted the characters in the hope of discovering why they have come to see his rival, Takaris. While they wait for Takaris, Kalourin will ask the characters why they have come to Blood Wood to meet his fellow warder. If the characters brought the chest into the palace with them, Kalourin inquires about its contents. Though he hopes to uncover information he can use against Takaris in the future, he does not wish to arouse the characters' suspicions, and therefore keeps his questions subtle.

Kalourin's guards may have warned him of the characters' arrival before they reach the palace grounds. If the Theran spies Tural and Alkor followed the characters to Blood Wood, then Kalourin definitely knows in advance of the characters' presence, though not the reason for it.

If the characters ask about the symbol on their rune-stick and Kalourin's amulet, he identifies it as the sigil of his office and tells them that it is on the guards' armor and the rune-stick because his duties as Blood Warder include guarding Blood Wood from intruders. He refuses to comment on the subtle differences between the sigil on the rune-stick and that on his amulet and the blood elves' armor.

Enter Takaris

When Takaris enters the room, read the following to the players:

In the midst of your convivial conversation with Kalourin, another elf enters the room. He wears rich court dress much like Kalourin's, but bears no amulet. For a heartbeat, Kalourin looks startled, but swiftly recovers his poise. "My friends, allow me to present your host, Warder Takaris."

Takaris favors Kalourin with a chilly glance, seeming to dismiss him as of no account. He turns to you and speaks, his face and voice as gracious as natural elven arrogance allows. "Well met, gentlefolk. I am Takaris, Warder to Her Gracious Majesty the Queen. I understand you have brought payment for sanguil *from the hedge-Wizard Hiermon of Haven. May I see it?"*

The characters should have the treasure chest with them, and offer it to Takaris at this point. Before he moves to open it, he orders Kalourin away to attend to his duties. Though noticeably angered by this dismissal, Kalourin has no choice but to leave.

Once Kalourin has left the room, Takaris turns to the chest, casts his Dispel Magic spell, and opens it. Upon seeing the Everliving Flower within, he openly shows his delight. If the characters can see the Everliving Flower, they notice that its petals have turned from black to a deep crimson. After Takaris opens the chest, read the following to the players:

"And so the Everliving Flower returns to its rightful place… But I prattle on, and you will want your payment. I regret that matters of the Elven Court have kept me busy, and I have yet to gather the blood ivy for your Wizard friend. My gracious sovereign has charged me to find the truth of a dreadful rumor, one that threatens the very safety of our beloved wood. I fear I have had time for little else. If you wish to stay and wait, you are most welcome, though you may wait some while.

"I see by your faces that you do not like this offer. Yet I see no other way… unless you aid me. You despise slavers, do you not? I can see the love of freedom in your faces, the noble luster in your eyes. My friends, the rumor of which I spoke concerns a slaver, a Theran, by Name Fegis Kul. It is said that he and his motley band of followers raid near Blood Wood, tainting our land with their filthy trade. If you will, find me out the truth of this rumor. Leave Blood Wood and travel to the southeast, and find him if he exists. I have heard that some elves of Blood Wood are among his slaves; if this be so, I desire you to free his wretched captives. His possessions and money you may keep for your pains. I shall be free to gather the blood ivy in your absence, and you shall have it of me upon your return."

Considering the offer with care, you hesitate to answer. Takaris dislikes this delay; when next he speaks, his voice carries the edge of threat.

"If you refuse me, I fear you must go back to Hiermon empty-handed… if you can find your way out of the wood. Many a luckless traveler has lost his way, and few who do so see sunlight again." He watches your faces with narrowed eyes, then smiles in satisfaction at what he reads there. "Do we have a bargain?"

Unknown to the characters, Takaris wants them to track the slaver in order to bring him hard evidence of Kalourin's trafficking with the outside world. With such evidence in hand, Takaris can at least disgrace his rival Blood Warder, and perhaps even have him executed for treason.

The characters should agree to help Takaris for many reasons, among them the fact that killing them would take little effort on his part. Also, only by helping Takaris can they get the blood ivy and give it to Hiermon in exchange for the Key Knowledges hidden in the amulet they left with him. Should the characters refuse the assignment, they will find it difficult to leave Blood Wood. Elven guards, thorn men, and evil trees and plants bent on stopping or even killing intruders combine to present the characters with a lethal obstacle course. If they escape Blood Wood but return to Haven empty-handed, Hiermon will angrily

demand the return of his mounts and the equipment purchased with his letter of credit. The characters will have ruined their reputations in Haven, and dare not show their faces there for months to come.

If the characters choose to try stealing the blood ivy, remind the players that Takaris is one of the Queen's Blood Warders and can call on all the resources of the Elven Court to stop them. The palace grounds are crawling with guards who will not hesitate to apprehend the characters at the slightest suspicion of wrongdoing. The characters have no idea where to find blood ivy or what it looks like and would waste valuable time searching for it. Any attempt at theft is likely to get the characters killed.

The Everliving Flower

When Blood Warder Takaris opens the chest containing the Everliving Flower, he may tell the characters the legend behind that magical treasure. An abbreviated version of the legend is given below, and the gamemaster should make every effort to present it to the characters during the game. If the characters ask about the change in the flower's color, Takaris cannot explain it.

According to the legend, elves of the kingdom of Shosara crafted the Everliving Flower centuries before the Scourge as a gift for the Elven Queen Failla at Wyrm Wood. The elven artisans obtained a rose from the gardens that had once blossomed near the Queen's Palace in Wyrm Wood and enchanted it so that it would live forever as a symbol of elven culture's immortal, unchanging nature. They crafted a magical crystal box and placed the ensorcelled flower inside it, to ensure the rose's safety.

Before the Shosaran elves could deliver the Everliving Flower to Queen Failla, however, it disappeared. Years later, tales from the Theran provincial capital of Parlainth claimed that the Therans had taken the treasure and hidden it within the city. When Parlainth succumbed to the Scourge, many believed that the Everliving Flower had been destroyed along with the city. Thanks to the efforts of the wizard Hiermon and a band of hired adventurers, it has at last been delivered to its rightful place at the Court of the Elven Queen. Many elves believe that those whose skin is pierced by the thorns of the Everliving Flower will be granted eternal life. To this day, however, none have discovered a method of opening the crystal box.

Leaving Blood Wood

If and when the characters consent to perform Takaris' errand, he will order a band of blood elves to lead the characters safely out of the woods. In order to return safely, the characters must follow that same path back to the palace. Takaris will also give the characters provisions for two days; he believes the errand should take no longer. The gamemaster should remind the characters to take the runestick with them; they will need it to pass through Blood Wood when they return.

Troubleshooting

Most of the problems that might arise in this encounter are described above, including attempts to steal the blood ivy. If the players are reluctant to run Takaris' errand, the elf may offer equipment to them that they can use on the mission and keep afterwards. Takaris might supply them with a number of healing potions and Kelia's antidotes (one or two per character, at the gamemaster's discretion).

The players might also decide to attack either of the Blood Warders. The gamemaster should strongly discourage such actions; gratuitous violence tends to get heroes killed. If they insist on being foolhardy, the gamemaster should pit them against the full might of Blood Wood. In addition to an unlimited number of blood elf soldiers, the players will face adepts of virtually all Disciplines and of any Circle the gamemaster chooses. The characters will die; if they complain, remind them that anyone foolish enough to take on staggering odds for no good reason deserves to get killed.

Search for a Slaver

The characters find the Theran slaver Fegis Kul heading into the forest near Blood Wood, traveling with a party of slaves and an armed escort. Though Takaris knows that Fegis Kul is Kalourin's ally and hopes to undermine Kalourin's influence by publicly exposing this fact, he is unaware of the whole truth behind Kalourin's pact with the slaver.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach Blood Wood's southwestern border, read the following:

The sun is setting as you reach the southeastern border of Blood Wood. The forest casts its long, cold shadow on the grassy plain before you. You try not to watch the shadow grow dimmer, try not to watch the light leave the air. Though you can hold to your bargain with Hiermon no other way, at this moment no fate seems worse than searching for a mysterious Theran slaver near Blood Wood after nightfall. You have learned that the nights of Barsaive hold unknown but deadly perils.

The guides that Blood Warder Takaris sent with you point toward the southeast, where lies your path. As one guide speaks, you wonder if it is pity you see in his eyes.

"The slaver band you seek has been seen southeast of Blood Wood, between the wood and the Serpent River. We know not how many slavers there are, so be wary. Mark you this spot well before you depart; when you return to Blood Wood, you must enter the wood here. Should you enter elsewhere, you will face deadly peril. May the Passions send you victory."

The guides depart into the forest, which eagerly swallows them. You turn your weary gaze to the southeast, spying out the land through which you must travel. Like the terrain between Blood Wood and Haven through which you have already traveled, the grassy plain to the southeast gives way to patches of ancient woodland dense with undergrowth. Anything might hide there: brigands, creatures, even Horrors. Even more so than fear, exhaustion numbs your bones. Only the promise of rewards to come makes you take another step.

Themes and Images

The vast expanse the characters must cross should seem to stretch for thousands of miles, making the task more daunting than it already is. Faced with increasingly difficult demands, the characters should feel all but overwhelmed by weariness and discouragement.

Upon leaving the woods, the characters feel disoriented, as if their minds and bodies have been abruptly snapped back into synch with the world around them.

Behind the Scenes

The slavers are near Blood Wood, traveling along a northwesterly road that leads to Blood Wood's southern edge. Having recently gathered a number of slaves, they are bringing them to the village of Akarem, to feed the Horror that makes its home there.

After three hours of travel, the characters come to a branching road that heads toward Blood Wood and spy the slavers on it. The slavers are traveling toward the adventurers and will be within earshot in ten minutes. When the characters first find the branch road, the gamemaster should have each player make a Perception (7) Test for his character. On a successful result, the character hears the slaving party approaching from the southeast.

The characters can hide in the forest and watch the slavers go by or meet them on the road. Confronting the slavers will likely get the characters captured, if not killed, so hiding and watching represents the players' best option.

Fegis Kul's Slaver Band

The slavers are traveling to the village of Akarem, located near Blood Wood. Just over two dozen slavers and their leader, Fegis Kul, travel with three wagons, each pulled by four horses. Two of the wagons, little more than cages on wheels, hold the slaves. Each slave wagon is locked, requiring a successful Lock Picking (9) Test to open.

Wagon one contains six human males, three dwarf males, and four ork males. Wagon two contains females: five humans, two elves, four dwarfs, and two orks. The two elves in the second wagon are not blood elves, but elves from nearby villages. They know nothing of Blood Wood or those who dwell within it. The third wagon serves as Fegis Kul's personal quarters, where he eats, sleeps, and conducts business. Built entirely of wood, it has a locked door and a few windows. To pick this lock requires a successful Lock Picking (10) Test. Inside the wagon are a bed, a table, and two chairs.

In addition to the four-horse teams that pull the wagons, the slavers are also mounted on horses. Fegis' slaver band consists of trolls, orks, and humans. If the characters attack and defeat the slavers, continuing along the road will bring them to the village of Akarem, guarded by blood elves loyal to Kalourin. Go to **Village of Mists** on p. 49.

Human Slavers (10)

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Strength (12): 5/D8
Toughness (10): 5/D8
Perception (9): 4/D6
Willpower (8): 4/D6
Charisma (8): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 4
Social Defense: 5
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 31
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 22

Combat Movement: 20
Full Movement: 40

Skills

Artisan:
Body Painting (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Creature Lore (1): 5/D8
Path and Trail Lore (1): 5/D8

General:
Animal Handling (3): 7/D12
Melee Weapons (2): 7/D12

Equipment

Padded Leather (Phys 4)
Hand-Axe (Damage 9/D8+D6)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
Whip (Damage 8/2D6)

Adventurer's Kit
Bandanna
Painting Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Riding Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

12 silver pieces

Legend Award

45 Legend Points

Ork Slavers (3)

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Strength (12): 5/D8
Toughness (11): 5/D8
Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 4
Social Defense: 5
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 32
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 5/D8*
Unconsciousness Rating: 24

* The character knows the Wound Balance skill.

Combat Movement: 24
Full Movement: 48

Skills

Artisan:
Tattooing (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Creature Lore (1): 6/D10
Snares and Traps (1): 6/D10

General:
Animal Handling (2): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (2): 7/D12
Tracking (2): 7/D12
Wound Balance (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Padded Leather (Phys 4)

Short Sword (Damage 9/D8+D6; w/scabbard)
Quarterstaff (Damage 7/D12)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
Sap (Damage 6/D10)

Adventurer's Kit
Leather Gloves
Tattooing Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
Woolen Hat (Fez or Turban)
2 × Waterskins

Riding Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

3 silver pieces

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Notes

The character possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

Troll Slavers (2)

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (20): 8/2D6
Toughness (20): 8/2D6
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (12): 5/D8
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 5
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 44
Recovery Tests: 4
Wound Threshold: 13
Knockdown: 8/2D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 36

Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Skills

Artisan:
Craft Armor (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Armor Lore (1): 6/D10
Creature Lore (1): 6/D10

General:
Animal Handling (2): 7/D12
Climbing (2): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (4): 10/D10+D6
Throwing Weapons (4): 10/D10+D6

Equipment

Piecemeal Armor:
Hide Breastplate (Large; Phys 2; Myst 1; Init 1)
Spiked Shoulder Plate Mail (Small; Phys 3; Init 2)

Troll Sword (Damage 14/D20+D4; w/scabbard)
Troll Dagger (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 9–15–18)
Net (Size 6; Range 6–10–12)

Adventurer's Kit
Climbing Kit
Craftsman Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Granlain:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Large Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

12 silver pieces

Legend Award

140 Legend Points

Notes

The slavers possess the troll racial ability of Heat Sight.

Attacking the Slavers

If the characters choose to attack the slavers, they will have a tough fight. Because the slavers greatly outnumber the characters, they may well defeat them.

If this happens, the slavers take the characters prisoner rather than killing them, toss them into the slave wagons, and hand them over to the Horror in Akarem. Go to **Inside Akarem** on p. 51.

Following the Slavers

The slavers leave a clear trail, and fortunately move much more slowly than the characters. If the characters follow the slavers, they will notice that their quarry is making for the eastern edge of Blood Wood. As the slavers pass the characters, the adventurers hear Fegis Kul talking. To understand the Theran's words, a player must make a Perception (8) Test. If the test succeeds, the character hears Fegis say, "We must arrive swiftly. The Warder will brook no delays."

Unless the characters attack the slavers, they can easily follow the band until they arrive at the village. At that point, go to the next encounter, **Village of Mists**, below.

Troubleshooting

If the characters attack and defeat the slavers, they may think they have finished their errand for Takaris and decide to return to Blood Wood. If this happens, they will miss the story's central element: the alliance between the Theran slaver, the Blood Warder, and a Horror. To make sure that the characters learn about the village of Akarem and Kalourin's involvement with the Horror that inhabits it as well as the slaver, the gamemaster should either dissuade the characters from attacking the slavers or else have the slavers capture the characters.

Village of Mists

In this encounter, the characters come upon the village of Akarem, located in a small patch of forest just outside Blood Wood and guarded by blood elves loyal to Blood Warder Kalourin.

A Horror called the Mist controls the village, feeding on the suffering of slaves captured by Fegis Kul. The characters enter the village, only to be captured by the slavers and a band of Kalourin's blood elves.

Setting the Stage

The following text assumes that the characters follow the slavers into the village. If they do not, the gamemaster will need to alter the text to suit the situation.

The road leads you into a thick forest, as forbidding as Blood Wood. Ahead of you, the slavers leave the road and strike northward into the dense woodland. Despite the fear that threatens to choke you, you follow your quarry into the pool of darkness between the close-clustered trees. The darkness stretches onward forever, and with every step you take your spirits sink lower and lower. After an endless span of heartbeats, the darkness ahead seems to lighten slightly. Peering through the gloom, you spy two figures standing guard; over what, you cannot tell.

As you draw nearer, moving as slowly as you can to muffle the faint jingle of harness, you see that the figures are blood elves clad much like those who accosted you at the border of Blood Wood. Their armor bears the symbol you saw on Kalourin's amulet. You halt briefly, wondering how best to escape the guards' vigilance. If they see you, they will know you for intruders; yet to pass by them unseen, you must risk losing your way. Suddenly you remember the rune-stick, with its symbol so like Kalourin's sign, and a plan grows in your mind. Boldly, you spur your horses forward.

At your approach, one elven guard steps forward and raises his sword. "Halt and show the sigil of Kalourin!"

Takaris' sigil is only cursorily similar to Kalourin's, as there are individual symbols for each Warder. The runes look similar to the players, but they can spot the differences with a successful Perception (5) Test. The players have to modify the rune-stick to match Kalourin's if they are going to try to get past the blood elves using it; a successful Artisan Skill (6) Test will suffice to carve the modifications to the rune. If the characters show the elves the modified rune-stick, the elves allow them to proceed farther into the forest. Continue reading the following to the players:

You travel deeper into the forest, pleased with the success of your desperate ruse. Tendrils of fine mist rise around you, yet you feel no moisture against your faces. You feel no coolness, either, such as you might expect from natural fog; indeed, the mist feels faintly warm to the touch. Within a scant few heartbeats, the mist grows so thick that you can scarcely see your companions only paces away. It deadens your footfalls, muffles the jangling of your horses' bridles and the rattling of your weapons. You almost cannot hear the sound of your own breathing.

The mist thickens further, until you can see nothing. Neither eye nor ear gives proof of your companions. Are they still near, you wonder, or spirited away by this unnatural fog? From one step to the next, the mist turns bitter cold. The damp chill cuts through clothing and skin, freezing you to the bone.

A few more footsteps bring you out of the cold and mist. As your sight returns, you see the half-frozen but blessedly living faces of your companions. Thankful to be out of the chill, clinging fog, you can scarcely restrain relieved laughter. You look away from your compatriots, and your relief dies.

In the clearing before you, a vast ruin looms out of the shadows like the head of a sea serpent from a benighted ocean. It might have been a citadel, built three full stories above ground. One side of the dark, grim stone edifice has crumbled, exposing the deeper darkness of the interior. A single light burns in a small turret, high atop the roof of the complex. A tiny village cowers in the ruin's shadow, built on and around the rubble of its collapsed wall. The thatched huts look ghostly next to the huge stone ruin, as if it were real and they only illusions. In the faint light of a few, scattered torches, you can see several villagers staring your way. You spy the slaver caravan near the village; to your misfortune, the slavers have also seen you.

Themes and Images

Play up the feelings of uncertainty and confusion, the sense of something unnatural hovering close by. Unknowingly, the characters have entered an area under the control of a Horror. Throughout this encounter, the gamemaster should portray the village as an unnatural, frightening place that the characters should never have set foot in.

Behind the Scenes

The Mist detected the adventurers as they passed into its field of influence, and alerted the slavers to their presence. As soon as the characters enter the clearing, the slavers come at them with weapons drawn, demanding that the characters drop their weapons and surrender.

Surrendering

If the adventurers drop their weapons, the slavers lead them into a hut in the village and lock them inside. Three of Fegis' men guard the hut until daybreak, when the slavers will depart. The slavers do not bother to confiscate any of the characters' belongings; they know better than to tamper with sacrifices meant for the Mist.

Fighting the Slavers

If the characters choose battle over surrender, they have a single advantage in a tough fight: the slavers do not want to kill the characters, and will pull their punches a bit (using the Attacking to Stun combat option; see p. 404 of the **Player's Compendium**). Rather than wanting the characters dead, the slavers want them unconscious, intending to leave them for the Mist to feed upon.

However, what little advantage this gives the adventurers does not last long. During the third combat round, a

band of blood elves working for Kalourin enters the fray on the slavers' side. Depending on how previous encounters have played out, the elves may bring with them Tural and Alkor, the Theran spies from Haven. If the spies are still tailing the characters, they join the attack. If the Therans have given up following the characters, the blood elves arrive without them.

Between the slavers and the blood elves, the characters should lose this fight. Once defeated (and preferably knocked unconscious), the characters are locked inside a specially prepared hut. After they awaken the following morning, they begin to learn the horrible truth of the village and its people. Go to **Inside Akarem**, below. There are six blood elves (see p. 42 for game statistics).

Troubleshooting

The worst potential problem arises if the characters decide to return to Blood Wood instead of following the slavers. As in the previous encounter, such a course of action means that they will miss the main element of the adventure. To prevent this, the gamemaster can either nudge the players into making the correct decision, or allow them to do as they will and then ease the story back on track in some other way. For example, the slavers might capture the characters as they make their way back to Blood Wood, and send them to the village under guard. Or they may encounter the Theran spies from Haven along with Kalourin's blood elves, who capture the characters and bring them to Akarem. One way or another, the gamemaster must get the characters into the village, so that they can discover and destroy the Horror.

Inside Akarem

In this encounter, the characters are trapped within the village controlled by the Mist. During their imprisonment, they learn of the Horror's atrocities and its alliance with Kalourin.

Setting the Stage

If the characters got knocked unconscious in the previous encounter, read the players the following:

You awaken, dizzy and bleary-eyed, lying on a cold, hard floor. Your heads ache, as if giants danced through your skulls in heavy boots. You cast a frantic look around for your companions, but soon regret your hasty movement. The giants go from dancing to leaping and kicking at your skulls, but at least you are all safe for the moment.

With more care this time, you look around the small room in which you lie. Some fifteen paces square, it has a low ceiling and damp-encrusted walls, and the close air smells faintly of rot. Opposite the single, weathered wooden door, you spy a hole in the wall where a few bricks have crumbled away. It is too small for even a windling to climb out of, though it might serve to tell you where you are. The only other gap in your stone-and-wood prison is a tiny window-hole in the doorway, just high enough for a human's eyes to reach.

Without thought, you reach for your weapons, and find nothing. Your captors have left you all else that you carried, for what reason you dare not guess. A gleam from the corner of the room catches your eyes; approaching it with caution, you see that your captors have piled your weapons against the wall.

For the moment you do not question this, but arm yourselves. You need only break through the door and dispatch the guard, and you will be out of this cursed village before another hour passes.

Taking a swift look through the hole in the door, you see no guard outside. It seems your captors either want you to escape, or ... As you finish the thought, a creeping chill comes over you: Or they know that you can never leave this place...

If the characters were captured but not knocked unconscious, read the players the following:

Your captors drag you inside the village and into a small hut made of stone and wood some fifteen paces square. The slavers throw your weapons in after you and lock the heavy, weathered wooden door behind them as they leave. Bruised and battered from the fight, you look around your prison.

The walls and the low ceiling are damp-encrusted, and the close air smells faintly of rot. Opposite the door you spy a hole in the wall where a few bricks have crumbled away. It is too small for even a windling to climb through, and you abandon any notion of using it to escape. The only other gap in your stone-and-wood prison is a tiny window-hole in the doorway, just high enough for a human's eyes to reach.

You retrieve your weapons from the floor and re-arm yourselves. You need only break through the door and dispatch the guard, and you will be out of this cursed village before another hour passes.

Taking a swift look through the hole in the door, you see three guards outside. They stand together in a small knot, talking and joking. Every so often, one of them gestures toward your prison hut and laughs. For the first time, you begin to wonder why your captors left you your weapons...

After reading the appropriate section above, continue with the following:

From the gap in your prison wall you can see villagers, all paying you no heed. As you watch, a knot of people shuffle unwillingly toward the ancient complex looming over the village. As they draw near, you recognize some of Fegis Kul's slaves among them. They pass from your sight, seeming to enter the ruin.

Themes and Images

This encounter should begin as a frustrating, no-win situation and gradually become the characters' worst nightmare come true. Every attempt the characters make to escape the village meets with failure, and their terror mounts as they learn what awful fate awaits the wretched slaves and themselves.

Behind the Scenes

The characters have been locked in a specially prepared hut in the village. Escaping the hut should pose no challenge; to pick the lock and open the door, a character needs to make a successful Lock Picking (7) Test. Outside the hut, however, the characters will run into trouble.

If the characters are conscious when captured and attempt to escape before the slavers leave the village, the attempt will most likely fail. In addition to the three guards posted outside the hut, the Mist uses its magical abilities to seal the door. To open the door, a character must make a successful Dispel Magic (25) Test. Though in place when the characters land in the hut, this lock disappears at daybreak when the slavers leave. The Mist temporarily weakens its magical control over the village boundaries to let the slavers depart; once they have gone, the Mist reseals the village borders and allows the characters to escape the hut in order to toy with them before killing them.

Once the characters escape, they must deal with the village and its residents. The following text describes the village and its people.

Village of Akarem

The village of Akarem is a haunted place. A full century before the end of the Scourge, a Horror called the Mist slithered into the village's kaer and began to destroy those who lived within it. The kaer's desperate defenders fought the thing and gravely wounded it, but only after it had killed most of the kaer's population. Forced to retreat to a safer area within the village's environs, the angry Horror cursed the survivors. The curse made them prone to violence; if the Horror could not kill them, it meant to ensure that they killed each other. The Mist's curse also kept them from replenishing their numbers; in a significant sign of the Horror's corruption, births in Akarem ceased twenty years before the kaer opened.

Controlled by the Mist, the people of the kaer began fighting among themselves. In a great battle, they destroyed one wall of the kaer. This act of violence prematurely opened the kaer to the outside world a full two years before any other kaers opened their doors. As the people staggered outside, they realized that the presence that had invaded their kaer had wrought dreadful changes in them. Though many wished to flee, they could not leave the shadow of the kaer that had once protected them. As time passed, the people realized that they had also ceased to age.

After recovering from its wounds, the Mist returned to the kaer it had corrupted. No longer satisfied with holding one tiny village in thrall, the Mist enshrouded Akarem in a cloak of fog that would trap unwary travelers within the village. Directed by the Mist, the villagers lured travelers to Akarem and sacrificed them to the Horror. Few who passed the village escaped its clutches, and those who did went mad by the time they reached safety. Akarem and its resident Horror captured countless unwitting victims for many years.

After a time, captive travelers ceased to satisfy the Mist. Seeking a way to gather more victims in order to sate its hunger, the Mist entered nearby Blood Wood and met the power-hungry Blood Warder Kalourin from the Elven Court. The Horror offered Kalourin an exchange; if Kalourin would persuade his slaver ally Fegis Kul to provide the Horror with new victims, and also guard the village from adventurers who might slay the Horror, the Mist agreed to grant Kalourin unheard-of magical knowledge and power.

A ghostly place, the village of Akarem has no inn, no shops, no farms or village green. Its few houses are built of stone and other materials salvaged from the kaer. The village forge still operates on occasion, and the surviving villagers have buried their dead in a small, overgrown graveyard. The very air in Akarem seems to exude desolation. Though the Mist stopped the people from aging to keep them from dying, on occasion a villager goes berserk and kills someone. The rest of the villagers then kill him, and bury both victims in the graveyard. It currently holds thirteen graves.

Villagers

Sixty-seven villagers strong, the people of Akarem go about their business with slow movements and a vacant, faraway look in their eyes. They do not age, they no longer require food or water, and they cannot reproduce. The youngest villager appears 20 years old, the oldest about 80. Though capable of speech and thought, the villagers never let outsiders know that anything is amiss. If asked why the outside world knows nothing of Akarem, the villagers simply say that they have always lived here, but that their village is so small that it is easy to overlook.

The villagers cannot die except by accident or murder. The Mist usually prevents them from killing each other, preferring to feed on the agonies of the living. However, when the Mist has not fed well, its mental controls slip just long enough to let someone kill a neighbor in a frenzy. The Mist forces the villagers to dispatch anyone who goes on a murderous rampage, or else suffer a year and a day of excruciating torture.

Questions and Answers

The characters may want to ask the villagers and the newly arrived slaves any number of questions about themselves and about the Horror. The following text offers answers to the likeliest questions.

Talking with the Villagers

If asked how they manage to live, the villagers claim that they sustain themselves by selling True elements, magical artifacts, and other valuables found in the ruins of the kaer to passing merchant caravans.

If asked about the kaer's dilapidated condition, the vil-

lagers explain that a Horror broke in and wreaked havoc during the latter days of the Scourge.

If the characters ask the villagers how long the Mist has controlled them, they say:

"Long before the Opening, the Mist invaded our home and has held us prisoner here for many a year since. Though once the Horror fed on us alone, the caravans began to come with new offerings. Fegis Kul, who brought you here, and the elven Blood Warder bring the Mist new victims whenever it asks. You too will provide it with nourishment."

If the characters ask specifically where the Mist lives, the villagers say:

"The Mist is all about Akarem, but it lives within the kaer."

If the characters want to explore the kaer, the villagers gladly let them. The villagers want the characters to enter the kaer and fall victim to the Mist; once fed, the Horror will temporarily cease tormenting the villagers. If the characters decide to explore the kaer, go to **Kaer Akarem** on p. 54.

Talking with the Slaves

Half of the slaves have already been led into the kaer and consumed by the Horror. The surviving slaves can give the characters the following information: they are all from villages raided by Fegis Kul and his gang, all of their villages lie in the region between Blood Wood and the Serpent River, and a few of the slaves overheard Fegis Kul and some of his men discussing their "arrangement" with Kalourin. Apparently, Kul and his fellow slavers have begun to doubt the elf's trustworthiness.

Leaving the Village

The characters cannot leave Akarem until they destroy the Horror. Every time they seem to put distance between themselves and the village, they see the kaer looming ahead of them. No matter which way they go, the characters travel in a circle. If the characters ask villagers about this phenomenon, the villagers tell them, "None may leave Akarem. All who enter here belong to the Mist."

Treachery!

Late on the first night the characters spend free in the village, the villagers attempt to kidnap them as they sleep, intending to throw them into the kaer. Armed with clubs, torches, saps, and nets, the villagers apologize profusely as they batter the startled characters into unconsciousness. Though prevented by the Mist from answering direct questions, they may drop minor clues to the reasons for their behavior in statements such as the following:

"We have no wish to harm you. We cannot help ourselves."

"Only the Names of the victims change. Time never ends."

"Cold Mist lurks deep in the kaer. It hungers..."

"Your sufferings or ours; we have no choice."

If the characters defeat the villagers and interrogate them, regardless of the result level achieved, the adventurers learn only that the Mist fills the ruins of the kaer under the earth, the Mist must be fed, the Mist is everywhere, and the Mist controls all.

If the characters choose to enter the kaer, go to **Kaer Akarem** on p. 54.

Horror-Controlled Villagers (67)

Attributes

Dexterity (8): 4/D6
Strength (6): 3/D4
Toughness (8): 4/D6
Perception (5): 3/D4
Willpower (7): 4/D6
Charisma (7): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 5
Initiative: 4/D6
Spell Defense: 4
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 5
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 28
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 7
Knockdown: 3/D4
Unconsciousness Rating: 19

Combat Movement: 16
Full Movement: 32

Skills

General:
Melee Weapons (2): 6/D10
Throwing Weapons (2): 6/D10

Equipment

Club* (Damage 6/D10)
Net (Size 3; Range 6–10–12)
Sap (Damage 4/D6)
Torch* (Damage 6/D10; +Step 4/D6 fire damage if lit; Improvised Weapon: –2 to Attack Tests)

* The villagers lack the Minimum Strength required to use these weapons properly, and are considered Harried when attacking (see p. 408 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Loot

None

Legend Award

35 Legend Points

Troubleshooting

Little can go wrong in this encounter. It serves primarily to show the terrible power of the Horrors and the fate faced by many of Barsaive's people. Through this look at the suffering inflicted by one particular Horror, the player characters should begin to understand the devastation a Horror can cause.

Kaer Akarem

This section describes the kaer and its perils, including shadowmants, ghouls, cadaver men, krilworms, and a spectral dancer. All but the spectral dancer are loyal to the Mist and keep the villagers away from the kaer's upper sections. During this encounter, the characters face the kaer's dangers and confront the Mist.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach the kaer, read the following:

Akarem's ruined kaer looms over you in the gloom, defying you to scale its heights. Ring upon ring of black stones make up the kaer's outer wall, many still bearing carved runes that mark wards of magical power. Neither age nor the elements have worn the carvings away. A small, solitary room crowns the black kaer; an eerie light shines from within it. Nowhere else over all the kaer do you spy windows or any other opening in the vast, blank, black walls. As you walk around the kaer, you see the side of it that faces the village. The huge black wall has collapsed, revealing the chambers within as if it were a giant doll's house. From somewhere in the kaer's underground depths, a black marble stairway climbs toward the upper chambers. A better starting place than this you cannot hope to find.

Themes and Images

Despite the collapsed wall, the characters should see the kaer as an imposing, dark fortress with an ominous atmosphere. Call attention to the rubble strewn across the grass from the fallen wall; make the characters wonder if it might not collapse further with them under it.

None of the villagers dare approach the kaer or set foot on the marble staircase, except when bringing hapless victims to the Mist.

Behind the Scenes

Though most Barsaivian kaers were built underground, a few such as Akarem's kaer also have above-ground stories, as a small citadel might. Besides the Horror, the kaer is home to several nasty creatures under the Horror's influence, including ghouls, krilworms, and shadowmants.

Because the dilapidated upper section of the kaer is prone to further collapse, the Mist keeps the villagers away from it. Though the Horror cares nothing for the villagers' well-being, it prefers not to lose its prime source of entertainment to a fatal accident. The Mist will allow the characters to explore all levels of the kaer, however; as long as a few survive for it to torment, the Mist does not care how many characters die from a fall or a rockslide.

Upper Levels

A combination of age and exposure to the elements has all of the doors in the upper section stuck fast. To open any of these doors, a player character must make a successful Strength (6) Test. If the character achieves an Excellent result, he opens the door with enough force to pop it off its hinges. If a character achieves an Extraordinary result, he opens the door, tears it off its hinges, and loosens the surrounding stonework. If this happens, each character within three yards of the door must make a successful Dexterity (6) Test to avoid falling masonry. If any character fails this test, he suffers Step 7/D12 damage. No armor protects against this damage.

The upper section of the kaer contains the following areas (refer to the **Kaer Map** on p. 55):

Grand Stairway

This huge black marble stairway is covered with dust and debris. Two beautifully carved gargoyles, each three feet tall and strikingly lifelike, perch on the newel posts at the ground floor. In front of the staircase stands a massive, freestanding black marble archway, beyond which the stairway continues downward into the catacombs. It also extends upward to the kaer's roof, with openings branching off for each floor.

The first character to set foot on the stairs sets off one of the Mist's magical defenses. The gamemaster makes a series of Spellcasting Tests for the Mist against the Spell Defense of each of the characters. If any of the tests are successful, the affected characters suffer the effects of a Fog of Fear spell (see the **Nethermancy Spells** chapter on p. 351 of the **Player's Compendium**).

(1) Guard Barracks

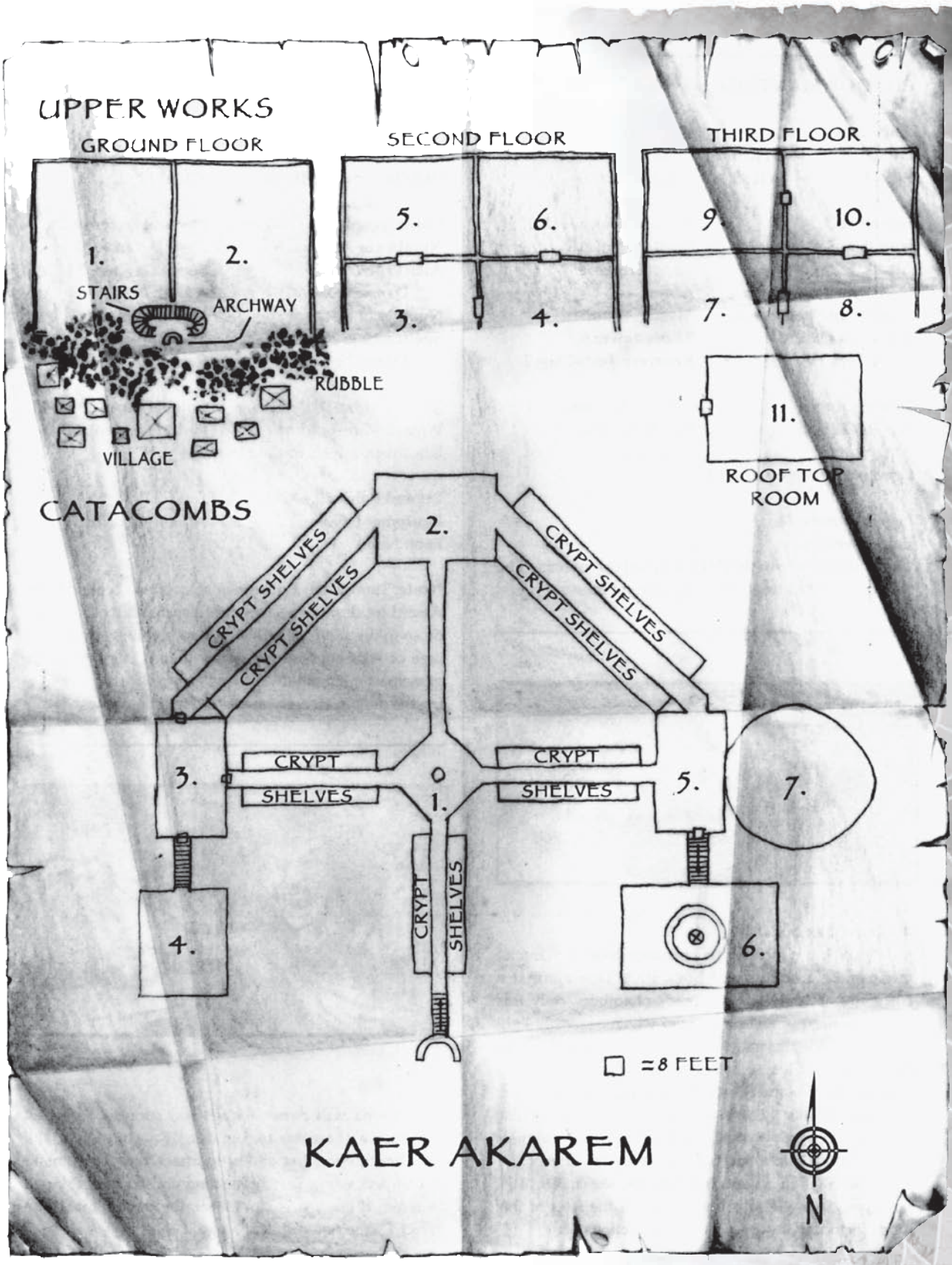
Dozens of old wooden bunks are stacked haphazardly in the room's corners. A few vermin scuttle underfoot, startled by the characters' entrance. Dust and cobwebs lie thick across every surface.

(2) Reception Hall

Faded murals on the north wall of this large, airy chamber show members of Barsaive's various Name-giving races building the kaer as storm clouds gather on the horizon. Splintered chairs and tables and smashed crockery litter the floor. Rusting rings set in the walls show where torches were once set; the stone behind them is blackened from centuries of fires. Despite the chamber's size, the air feels musty and heavy.

(3) Blasted Room

Whatever function this room once served has been obliterated by a long-ago disaster. Skulls and bones lie scattered everywhere, amid scorched and crumbled stone. Its



south wall gone, the chamber gapes open to the unfriendly sky. A character making a successful Evidence Analysis (10) Test deduces that a battle took place in this room, leading to the collapse of the kaer's entire south wall.

A closed door with a rusty lock leads to the shrine (5). To open it, a character must make a successful Lock Picking (10) Test. A second door leading to another room (4) is barricaded from within, but the characters can reach that chamber by stepping around the crumbled south wall.

(4) Barricaded Room

Fire pits and rusted iron tools identify this room as a smithy. The door in the west wall that leads to the blasted room (3) has a huge iron bar wedged across it.

Seventeen corpses in rotting leather armor lie piled against the blocked door as if they died at their posts. A door in the north wall is not barricaded.

(5) Shrine

This room is a temple to Garlen, the Passion of Hearth and Healing. Within the shrine is the symbol of Garlen, and a statue of her stands in the middle of the floor surrounded by shriveled flower petals. The door that leads to the shrine is protected by a powerful ward trap, triggered by any being entering the shrine armed. For rules concerning traps, see the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 108 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Ward Trap

Detection Difficulty: 8 **Disarm Difficulty**: 14
Spell Defense: 15 **Trap Initiative**: 28

Trigger Condition: If any being enters the shrine carrying or wielding a weapon, the gamemaster makes a Spellcasting Test (Step 14/D20+D4) for the ward against the Spell Defense of the offending character. If the test succeeds, the ward triggers the spell effect.

Trap Effect: The target must use his next action to put down his weapon. He will leave it there for as long as he remains in the shrine. Treat this effect as a Sixth Circle Illusionism spell (see **Sensing and Disbelieving Illusions** on p. 322 of the **Player's Compendium**).

(6) and (7) Sleeping Chambers

One on the second and one on the third floor, these sleeping chambers for the kaer's residents contain rows of straw pallets and a few lanterns. The straw beds are mildewed and bug-ridden. Room (7) has a door in its east wall.

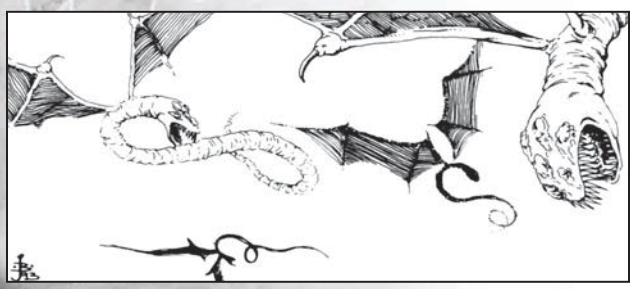
(8) Dining Hall

As in the Reception Hall (2), splintered tables and chairs and smashed crockery lie scattered across this long, rectangular room. Bits of rotting food lie here and there as if flung from dropped plates. Doors in the west and north walls lead out of the hall.

(9) Supply Room

Stuffed with food long since turned to rancid mounds of fungi and mold, this chamber exudes an overpowering stench. The foul smell has attracted a colony of krilworms, which nest in a few cracks in the outer wall.

This room contains several large ovens and cooking pits. Rusted ladles, knives, serving platters, and similar kitchenware lie on the floor or hang from hooks. If the characters search the room, they will find several pounds of coal in a scuttle, a flint and steel, and a jar of oil, all still usable. The mold and fungi growing on the spoiled food have dampened and warped the wood of the door.



Krilworms (10)

DEX: 5 **STR**: 5 **TOU**: 5
PER: 6 **WIL**: 7 **CHA**: 2

Initiative: 6
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (1): 6
Damage:
Bite (1): 6

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 31
Wound Threshold: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: 22

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 5

Combat Movement: 30* **Full Movement**: 60*

* This value is the creature's flying Movement rate.

Powers: Locate Target (2): 8

Legend Points: 45

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Krilworms are nocturnal flyers, traveling in swarms and feeding on large insects and small mammals. Their needle-like teeth drip a foul-smelling substance that many believe to be toxic. They have segmented bodies about 18 inches long, with bat-like wings sprouting near the front. Eyeless, they "see" through six magical divination organs that look like open, running sores. Krilworms have a strange affinity for Nethermancers.

See the **Creatures** chapter on p. 318 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on krilworms.

Kaer Roof

The marble staircase ends at the roof, the surface of which is strewn with debris. Across from the head of the stairs sits a one-room turret with a locked door. Two shadowmants live on the roof, and they will attack if and when the characters turn their backs to them.

Shadowmants (2)

DEX: 5 **STR**: 5 **TOU**: 6
PER: 4 **WIL**: 5 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 7
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (2): 7
Damage:
Stinger (2): 7

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 4
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 35
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 27

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 5

Combat Movement: 32* **Full Movement**: 64*

* This value is the creature's flying Movement rate.

Powers: Low-Light Vision, Poison (SD 8; Damage)

Legend Points: 95

Equipment: None

Loot: Stinger worth D10 × 10 silver pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

Eight feet wide with a five-foot-long tail, shadowmants resemble large, flying stingrays. A shadowmant's outer side is black, its underside dark gray, and its tail ends in a crystalline stinger. Shadowmants have two eyes and a small mouth lined with rows of tiny, needle-sharp teeth.

See the **Creatures** chapter on p. 341 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on shadowmants.

Rules

A shadowmant uses its tail to sting its victims. Once the poison has killed its prey, the shadowmant eats its victim.

Poison: The shadowmant's virulent poison resists the effects of talents or healing aids with a Spell Defense of 8.

(11) Rooftop Chamber

To pick the lock of the chamber door, a character must make a successful Lock Picking (14) Test. Of all the kaer's chambers, only this room has narrow windows, from which a ghostly light streams. Inside the room lie countless broken weapons and cloven shields, scattered around the skeleton of a warrior. A successful Perception (13) Test reveals that the warrior was a human female. The chamber's eerie glow comes from the spirit of the female warrior, made into a spectral dancer by the Mist.

The characters will also find a map of the kaer in this room, including its upper and lower sections.

Sheena, Spectral Dancer

DEX: 12 **STR**: 7 **TOU**: 14
PER: 12 **WIL**: 13 **CHA**: 9

Initiative: 13 **Physical Defense**: 20
Number of Actions: 1 **Spell Defense**: 15
Attack: NA (see text) **Social Defense**: 12
Damage: NA (see text) **Physical Armor**: 0
Mystic Armor: 8

Death Rating: 67 (91) **Recovery Tests**: 6
Wound Threshold: 19 **Knockdown**: 7
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 48* **Full Movement**: 96*

* This value is the Horror construct's flying Movement rate.

Powers: Durability (4), Spellcasting (8): 20, Willforce^{T} (8): 21

Spells: Spirit Dart 15 (23 with Willforce)

Legend Points (2): 1,570

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Undead creations of the Horrors, spectral dancers are individuals who possessed considerable charisma and social skill in life. They appear as phantoms of the bodies they once inhabited. See the **Horrors** chapter on p. 455 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on spectral dancers.

At the gamemaster's discretion, Sheena is friendlier than most spectral dancers and will attempt to dance longer and with multiple characters before attacking them with her Spirit Dart. Otherwise, only one character at a time may dance with Sheena. The gamemaster can also have the characters make Horror Lore (8) Tests, or use other appropriate Knowledge skills, to realize this is a spectral dancer and that they can help her by joining in her dance; though they likely won't know the cost of such kindness.

When Sheena stops dancing, read the following to the players:

The female phantom now appears as real as any living being. A human woman of great beauty faces you, clad in gleaming chain mail. A smile lights her lovely face, and she speaks in a voice like music.

"My blessing upon you for your courage and compassion. You have brought me happiness and released me from the Horror's torment. In token of my thanks, I give you the key to your salvation.

"The Horror Mist, who made a phantom of me, lies hidden deep in the catacombs. To free suffering Akarem from this Horror, you must defeat it in combat and take the essence of its remains with you. Place the remains upon the altar of Garlen,

defender of home and hearth, in my grandmother's favored shrine. Light the forge nearby and speak the village's Name. These acts will free the village, and abate the Horror's curse forever.

"May the Passions that guide us all ever keep their hands upon you."

Her final words hanging in the air, the spirit fades away, taking the room's ghostly light with her.

If the characters choose to attack Sheena outright, they will likely die in the attempt. The gamemaster should discourage them from such an action, because by dancing with her they gain valuable information that might save their lives.

Underground Level

As the characters descend to the underground section of the kaer, read the following to the players:

On the ground floor of the kaer towers an arch of black stone, from which hangs skulls on frayed ropes. Beyond the archway, the black marble stairs disappear downward into the gloom. As you peer down the stairway, straining to see past the curtain of darkness, a breeze rushes up to meet you, laden with the cloying scent of decaying flesh. From far away under the ground you hear water dripping, the squeaks of scavenging rodents, and the low, mournful wail of the wind through the fearful chambers that lie below.

The passageways in the lower section are one yard wide wide and two yards high, with arched ceilings. Only windlings are small enough to walk down them side by side; everyone else must walk single file. Occasional humanoid bones stick up from the packed earth of the passage floor.

Unless otherwise stated, the catacomb walls have burial shelves carved into them, on which lie the bodies of residents of the kaer. Depending on their status while living, the bodies are alternatively mummified, wrapped in shrouds, or placed in caskets. Only the very wealthy lie in caskets, as the villagers brought few such items into the kaer. A few shelves contain nothing more than dust and scattered bones.

The kaer's underground section contains the following areas (refer to the **Kaer Map** on p. 55).

Archway

A result of 7 or better on an appropriate Knowledge or Artisan Skill Test reveals that the archway is a mere 80 years old, obviously not part of the original kaer. Made of the same black stone used to build the kaer, the arch is decorated with a score or so of humanoid skulls.

Only by passing through the archway can the characters reach the catacombs.

(1) Central Chamber

From this high-ceilinged room, passageways branch out in the four cardinal compass directions: north, south, east, and west.

In the center of the room stands a black basalt obelisk with the following words carved on its surface:

"Built with the grace and blessing of Garlen, Passion of Hearth and Healing. May her power protect us all."—Kedru Al, First Lord of Kaer Akarem"

Books and scrolls line the chamber walls, testimony to the accumulated knowledge of the kaer's residents. Sadly, the ravages of time have reduced these treasures to heaps of rotting paper.

(2) Burial Room

Frescoes along the chamber walls show the various methods of interment used by residents of the kaer. Brittle rolls of dried-out bandages; pots of musty, dried herbs once used for mummification; dust-covered shrouds; and a dozen ceramic jars meant to contain the internal organs of the deceased stand on shelves located throughout the room. Two huge, carved stone slabs stand in the middle of the floor, the sides of which are decorated with runes and symbols.

Grooves cut into the top of each slab display reddish-brown stains. Four packages of dissection tools lie on the slabs, all opened. One package contains a full set of tools; the other three are missing a few sharp implements. A successful Evidence Analysis (14) Test indicates that the tools were used recently. A successful Perception (7) Test reveals evidence of numerous bipedal creatures, probably humanoid, walking around this room.

Just as the characters make these discoveries, or are about to leave the room, a Horror-driven pack of ghouls attacks them.

Ghouls (3)

DEX: 5 **STR**: 4 **TOU**: 6
PER: 4 **WIL**: 3 **CHA**: 5

Initiative: 5
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (2): 7
Damage:
Claws (4): 8

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 5
Social Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 4
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 36
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 4

Combat Movement: 22
Full Movement: 44

Powers: Poison (SD 10; see text)

Legend Points: 140

Equipment: None

Loot: 3D6 silver pieces, taken from tombs and victims.

Commentary

Ghouls are undead creatures created by the arcane magic of the Horrors. See the **Horrors** chapter on p. 451 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on ghouls.

(3) Granary

Dry and small, this room contains moldering sacks of grain. The south door is locked; to open it, a character must make a successful Lock Picking (9) Test.

(4) Wine Cellar

A short flight of slick stone steps leads to this small, cool room. To keep from slipping down the steps, a character must make a successful Dexterity (4) Test. If the test fails, the character takes Step 4/D6 damage from falling down the stairs. No armor protects against this damage.

Once the kaer's wine cellar, the room now contains little more than smashed bottles. The contents of the few remaining whole bottles have long since turned sour.

(5) Water Collection Chamber

This room holds a dozen five-gallon, ceramic water jars. Murals on the wall show kaer residents collecting water outside the kaer. In the center of the chamber, two spigots carved in the likeness of open-mouthed gargoyles spew water into basins three feet wide and two feet deep. Each basin has a drain, which cycles the water uphill to the kaer's water source (6). A secret door in the eastern wall (Detection Difficulty 12) leads to the Mist's chamber (7). The mural that hides the secret door shows a huge, fire-breathing creature about to attack the kaer. Camouflaged in the creature's painted mouth is a one-inch diameter hole, through which the Mist billows when exiting its chamber. See the **Mist's Room**, (7) below.

(6) Water Source

A short flight of stone stairs leads up to this chamber. As the characters climb toward it, they hear water flowing and the air becomes cooler and damper. At the head of the stairs, a locked and warded door bars the entrance. To open the door, a character must make a successful Lock Picking (10) Test; picking the lock does not remove the ward. Writing carved into the door reads:

"Water supply. Entry forbidden."

Ward Trap

Detection Difficulty: 12
Disarm Difficulty: 16
Spell Defense: 16

Trap Initiative: 22/D20+D10+D8

Trigger Condition: The gamemaster makes a Step 16/D20+D8 Spellcasting Test for the ward against the Spell Defense of any character who passes it. If the test succeeds, the trap triggers the spell effect (see below).

Trap Effect: Triggering the trap sets off a Suffocating Paste spell (see the **Elementalism Spells** chapter on p. 295 of the **Player's Compendium**) with an Effect step of 16/D20+D8.

Inside the chamber is a huge fountain made of four carved gargoyles standing back to back, facing each point of the compass. Water gushes from their mouths into a marble-lined pool 6 yards wide and 1 yard deep. Mystical runes are carved into the edge of the pool all around its circumference. A successful Read and Write Magic (9) Test reveals that these runes conjure water from the elemental plane. The water is cool, refreshing, and perfectly safe to drink.

(7) Mist's Room

Newer than the rest of the kaer, this chamber contains only a pile of skulls 3 yards high and 4 yards in diameter. These bones are all that remain of the countless victims that the villagers of Akarem have lured into the Mist's clutches. On the back wall of this room, carved into the stone, is the symbol that the characters have seen on Kalourin's amulet and the armor of his guards. This symbol represents the alliance between the Horror and the Blood Warder.

Unless the characters begin disassembling the skull heap, the Mist does not appear; the Horror simply waits to act until the adventurers leave the chamber. As the characters depart, the Mist seeps from the center of the skull heap, wafts through the hole in the wall of the **Water Collection Chamber** (see (5) above), becomes corporeal, and silently attacks the character unlucky enough to bring up the rear. The Mist will try to eliminate the characters one by one, keeping each new victim unaware of the death of his comrade. The Mist will follow the characters to see how they react to the undead that are to come.

The gamemaster must play the Horror as an intelligent being. It has not stayed alive for hundreds of years by making stupid moves. The Mist will bide its time, waiting to strike until it has the maximum advantage.

If the characters sort through the heap of skulls, they can find 338 silver pieces, two healing potions, a last chance salve, an aquamarine worth 500 silver pieces, a suit of crystal ringlet armor, a crystal raider shield, a dwarf sword, a trispear, an elven warbow, a dwarf winternight cloak, and the Staff of Akarem the Mage Builder (see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 343). It will take the characters more than two hours to remove all the loot from the Mist's lair. Sorting through the skull heap, however, is likely to cause the Mist to appear, become corporeal, and attack the characters. For the Mist's game statistics, see the **Cast of Characters** section on p. 76.

Sudden Attack

As the characters travel through the catacombs, they pass pairs of corpse shelves (marked with an 'X' on the Catacombs map). The shrouded bodies on each of these marked shelves are actually cadaver men, animated by the Mist. As the characters pass each spot indicated on the map, the cadaver men grab them.

Cadaver Men (4)

DEX: 4 **STR**: 6 **TOU**: 7
PER: 4 **WIL**: 6 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 4 **Physical Defense**: 6
Number of Actions: 1 (4; see text) **Spell Defense**: 6
Attack (3): 7 **Social Defense**: 11
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 0
Claws (3): 9 **Mystic Armor**: 1

Death Rating: 39 **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 11 **Knockdown**: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 18 **Full Movement**: 36

Legend Points: 150

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Cadaver men are undead constructs created by the Horrors from the bodies of the dead. See the **Horrors** chapter on p. 448 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information on and special rules for cadaver men.

Defeating the Mist

Because the Mist has established a link with Kalourin that will prove vital in the last act of the story, the characters cannot destroy it in this encounter. They can, however, damage it severely enough to drive it off. If they manage to defeat the Mist, it dissipates onto the astral plane, leaving behind a small crystal sphere. No matter how hard they try, the characters cannot shatter the sphere.

When the Mist takes damage equal to its Unconsciousness Rating, read the following to the players:

Sorely wounded by a final, mighty blow, the Mist's skeletal face contorts in pain and shock. As the glow in its eyes begins to fade, the Horror lets out a hideous shriek. Its misty body seems to collapse, gaining solidity as it shrinks. Slowly, apace with its body's collapse, the skull-like head crumples. As the last echo of the Horror's scream fades, the Mist dwindles into a smooth crystal sphere the size of a man's thumbnail.

Performing Sheena's Ritual

To perform the rite that Sheena requested of them, the characters must take the crystal sphere, place it on the altar of Garlen in room (5) on the second floor, p. 56, then light the smithy's forge in the adjacent room (4), p. 55. The characters must then utter the village's Name, "Akarem."

Once the characters have completed the above tasks, read the players the following:

The word "Akarem" echoes around the shrine. It does not fade, but grows louder and louder until you must clap your hands over your ears to protect them. Rising into the air, the crystal sphere on the altar begins to spin wildly, shooting beams of light like arrows in random directions. More and more shafts of light it sends, until at last it blazes with the steady golden glow of the sun's tiny, vibrant heart. Around you, the kaer begins to shake. The south wall of the shrine crumbles to dust, allowing you to see the land surrounding the kaer. Far below you, the villagers begin to run toward the kaer, showing the first signs of true emotion you have yet seen. Some slipping to their knees in their eagerness, they begin to ascend the black marble staircase. Like an enchanted thing, it stands steady as a rock, unswayed by the quaking earth.

With every step up the black staircase, the villagers age a little. Passing the shrine, they continue upward. As each of them reaches the roof, his body crumbles to dust. The villagers farther behind, watching the transformation from below, begin to weep; not in fear or terror, but with rapture. As each climbs higher, a look of contentment crosses his face as if a great weight has been lifted from his shoulders. One by one, the people of Akarem pass before your eyes into old age, death, and nothingness.

The last of the villagers, a woman of middle years with the bearing of a leader, turns to you and smiles through the tears that stream down her cheeks. "The village of Akarem thanks you for your brave deeds. For the first time since we left the kaer, we may know the sweet release of death. The Horror you vanquished kept us tied to an unnatural mockery of life, unable to eat, drink, sleep, love, laugh, or cry. You have given us back our souls, that we may die in dignity and peace. I ask but one last thing of you, who have given us so much; do not let the world forget Akarem. Tell them of our sufferings, that they may look upon us with compassion. Farewell, and may the Passions ever look with favor upon you."

With a jubilant laugh, she turns away and runs up the stairs, aging with every swift step. As she steps onto the rooftop, her withered body bursts into a flare of golden light and vanishes.

The kaer begins to shake again, black stone blocks half a man high tumbling from the crumbling exterior walls. The interior walls crack and buckle; not ten paces from you, a square foot of the floor collapses. Your senses sharpened by sudden fear, you make your way with best speed toward the marble stairs.

The characters have not destroyed the Mist, merely driven it back into astral space. Using the Horror mark it placed on Kalourin to keep track of the elf, it will re-enter the physical world through Kalourin's amulet to destroy the characters.

Picking its moment, the Mist will wait until Kalourin is ready to enact his own revenge against the characters, at which time it will join him. The process of re-entering the physical world will kill Kalourin, but the Horror will gladly pay that small price to avenge itself on the characters.

Leaving the Kaer

Unscathed by the collapsing of the kaer around it, the black marble staircase offers the easiest way out. Unfortunately, the adventurers are most likely at the shrine or the forge, and much of the kaer's structure between those rooms and the stairs has crumbled away. The characters can either jump for the staircase or climb down the kaer's collapsing walls.

Jumping from the shrine or the forge to the stairs requires a successful Dexterity (12) Test. If the test fails, the jumping character falls four yards to the ground and takes appropriate damage (Step 10/D10+D6 ; see **Falling Damage** on p. 107 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). To climb down the unstable side of the crumbling kaer, a character must make a successful Climbing (15) Test. If the test fails, the character falls four yards to the ground and takes appropriate damage (Step 10/D10+D6 ; see **Falling Damage** on p. 107 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). No armor protects against Falling damage.

Once the characters are clear of the ruins, read the following:

You stagger away from the dying kaer, throwing yourselves to the ground at a safe vantage point to catch your breath. Behind you, the kaer collapses with a thundering roar, raising a cloud of black dust and burying Akarem's huts in the rubble. As the dust settles, the mist begins to thin. For a moment you feel dizzy and your sight blurs. As it clears, you see before you a most welcome sight: the open road, a few dozen paces to the south.

You head toward it, giving thanks to the Passions that you have survived to accomplish your errand. A brief return to Blood Wood to collect the blood ivy, and you may claim the payment that awaits you in Haven.

Taking your first step onto the road, you hazard one final glance back at the ruins of Akarem, committing to memory the scene of your triumph. You shall have quite a tale to tell…

The characters should return to Blood Wood to report on the activities of Fegis Kul. By now, they should also know that Kalourin was involved with the Horror as well as the Theran slaver.

Fegis Kul and his slavers have left the area in search of new captives. For more information about using Fegis Kul and his men in subsequent adventures, see **Campaign Ideas** in the **Loose Ends** section, p. 72.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The first potential problem faced in this encounter is the death of some or all of the characters. Spreading damage and attacks out amongst all characters in an effort to keep them alive may help, but with the shadowmants' and ghouls' poison attacks, this plan could backfire and result in all of the characters dying from poison.

Bear in mind that a ghoul's poison, if not resisted, inflicts 54 Damage Points to its victim! A shadowmant's poison doesn't act in the same way, but, if not healed will kill an affected character in a short amount of time. Assuming characters survive the poison attacks, there is still the matter of the cadaver men and the Mist itself. The gamemaster should expect at least one character to die, if not more, but should be ready to modify creatures' dice rolls and tactics to ensure that at least some of the party lives.

Another potential problem arises if the characters kill Sheena the spectral dancer, or otherwise fail in their attempts to complete a dance with her. If Sheena is killed, the gamemaster will need to come up with an alternate method of providing the characters with the information on her ritual. If the characters fail to perform Sheena's ritual, but succeed in beating the Mist and causing it to escape to the astral plane, the village remains intact and the Horror will return the next day.

Gamemasters may consider letting the characters escape the cursed village before the Mist returns, but should give them the sense that they have left vital business unfinished. In this case, the characters should receive no Legend Points for defeating the villagers or the Mist in battle, though they may earn Legend Points for other creatures slain.

Kalourin's Last Gambit

The characters return safely to Blood Wood, where thorn men loyal to Kalourin ambush them.

Setting the Stage

When the characters set out towards the Blood Wood, read the following:

Tired but triumphant, you set out toward the northwest, making for the place at which you departed Blood Wood. After the terrors and triumphs of the past few days, your thoughts turn longingly toward the Elven Court, the palace with its sumptuous rooms, and perhaps a flagon or two of good elven wine. Remembering only the beauty and comforts, you forget the subtle danger of the wood's strange magic and the unease you felt within it.

The journey from ruined Akarem to the border of Blood Wood passes without incident. Perhaps the Passions have taken pity on you and cleared your way; or better still, perhaps the powers of darkness fear to confront you lest they share the fate of the Mist.

No matter the reason, you are grateful for it. The vast, cool, green dimness of Blood Wood rises before you on the horizon, looming closer with your every step. As you draw near the giant trees, your pace slows; their terrible majesty still takes your breath away. The strange cries of animals from somewhere deep within the green gloom, the sight of leaves and flowers to which you still can put no Name, and the heady sense of power lying thick as honey over the woodland combine to inspire your fear and awe. As you approach the place from which you left, the ferns and undergrowth part before you as if in reverence. Setting aside half-fearful wonder, you set foot firmly on the spongy soil of the magically cleared path and begin to follow it through the trees.

Themes and Images

Though Blood Wood remains an unsettling place, the characters should feel overpowering relief in returning to it after the terrors they faced in Akarem. As much as possible, lull them into a false sense of security. Strange animal noises might give way to beautiful music, soothing despite its otherworldly quality, or the scent of some pleasant flower might briefly overcome the wood's characteristic faint smell of rotting leaves. Drop no hint of the coming ambush; let the attack come as a nasty surprise.

Behind the Scenes

Having felt the loss of his Horror-granted magical abilities, Kalourin knows what the characters have done and hates them for it. He also knows that they will return to Blood Wood to claim the blood ivy from Takaris. Fearing that they will expose his treacherous dealings with the Horror, Kalourin has prepared a nasty welcome for them. Once the adventurers have traveled a good way into the woods, have each player character make a Perception (18) Test. If any character's test succeeds, he senses something wrong.

After a player character makes a successful Perception Test, read the following:

A passing breeze rattles branches along your path, making the leaves whisper. As the breeze dies away, you hear the strange and unwelcome sound of loudly rustling plants, as if they are giving chase.

If the characters look behind them, read the following:

Dismayed, you watch as the plants that made way for your passage move to close the gap behind you, hiding the path beneath their glossy leaves. They move up to your very heels, as if herding you forward.

Give the players time to react to this odd phenomenon, roleplaying their surprise and confusion. If too much discussion begins to slow the action, continue with the following text. Otherwise, when the player characters decide to continue onward, read the following:

A sharp whistle splits the air as a slender, flying thing misses [insert name of leader]*'s cheek by a finger span, imbedding itself in a nearby tree. It is a spear, its haft still quivering from the impact. Before you can draw breath, the surrounding woods come alive with spears, hurtling straight toward you!*

The spear was thrown by one of the thorn men sent by Kalourin to ambush the characters. Once the thorn men have thrown their spears, they rush the characters and engage them in melee combat.

After four combat rounds, the thorn men suddenly crumple lifeless to the ground. A patrol of blood elves on a routine perimeter patrol, none wearing Kalourin's armor, heads toward the characters and orders them to sheath their weapons and follow. If the characters display the rune-stick, the elves disregard it. For this elven patrol, use the game statistics given for the blood elves in **Blood Wood**, p. 42.

Allied with neither Kalourin nor Takaris, these blood elves escort the characters to the Queen's palace to face judgment for trespassing. Go to the next encounter, **Back to the Palace**, below.

Thorn Men (1 per character)

DEX: 5 **STR**: 6 **TOU**: 6
PER: 5 **WIL**: 5 **CHA**: 5

Initiative: 6
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (1): 6
Damage:
Spear (7): 13
Unarmed (3): 9

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 13
Physical Armor: 9
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 36
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 28

Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 7

Combat Movement: 18
Full Movement: 36

Karma Points: 2
Karma Step: 4

Powers:
Aid Summoner (1)
Detect True Element (1)
Manifest (1)
Tiger Spring [T] (1)
Astral Sight [T] (1): 6
Engulf (1): 6
Manipulate Element (1): 6

Legend Points: 85 + 55 for spear

Equipment: Thorn Man Spear (see text)

Loot: None

Commentary

Thorn men are animated bundles of thorns with rudimentary intelligence. Vaguely human-like in appearance, they stand roughly 6 feet tall and weigh 60 pounds. Blood Warders summon these wood spirits to help protect the Blood Wood's borders. Thorn men also guard many settlements and sites within the Blood Wood, including Queen Alachia's palace.

See the **Spirits** chapter on p. 377 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules for thorn men.

Troubleshooting

In this straightforward ambush, the characters risk getting wiped out. If it looks like the characters are losing the fight, arrange for a squad of Takaris' blood elves to come to the characters' rescue before the patrol shows up.

If the adventurers decided to enter Blood Wood at any point other than the one from which they left, feel free to launch thorn men and hostile blood elves at them until they either die in combat or wise up and take the proper path.

Back to the Palace

Upon their return to the Queen's Palace, the characters meet with Takaris and tell him what they have learned. The Blood Warder rewards them by arranging an audience with Queen Alachia, hoping that they will corroborate his accusations against Kalourin.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach the Elf Queen's Palace, read the following:

You stand once more before the Elven Queen's magnificent palace. The Palace Guard, resplendent in their richly decorated uniforms, eye you with mixed arrogance and suspicion, but offer you no challenge this time. As before, the beauty of their clothing and faces coupled with the dreadful thorns that mar their smooth skins ought to repel you, but strangely does not. Elven lords and ladies of noble bearing and terrible beauty stroll along the greensward and the palace balconies, paying your insignificant selves no heed. The leader of

your armed escort enters the palace, returning moments later with Blood Warder Kalourin. His stern looks bode no welcome this time; instead, his dispassionate stare shows tight-reined anger. He speaks, his voice brittle and hard.

"So—you return at last. Takaris cannot see you; he bade me make arrangements for your payment and your departure."

Behind Kalourin, you see Takaris emerge from the palace. At the sight of you, he calls out, striding forward as he speaks.

"Greetings upon your safe return, gentle friends! I shall see to your refreshment and then hear your news. Warder Kalourin, I would speak with these outsiders privately. Attend to your duties; I do not require your presence."

Kalourin's face twists in mingled anger, fear, and injured pride. "As you will," he growls. Bowing stiffly, he departs.

Takaris summons two of the guards to take your mounts to the stables. A third guard accompanies you into the palace, following in the Blood Warder's wake. Once within the palace walls, Takaris leads you to the chamber where first you met with him. As before, a servant appears as if in answer to some magical summons, bearing flagons of elven wine. Takaris bids you each take a glass, raising the last one himself.

"So, what news of the Theran slaver?"

Themes and Images

Play up the awe inspired by the Elven Court's royalty, power, and terrifying beauty. From Takaris' Guard to the domestic staff, all the elves react to the common, inferior adventurers from outside Blood Wood with arrogant distaste. This attitude contrasts markedly with Takaris' behavior; with his every word and gesture, he tries to make the characters feel important.

Use Takaris' attitude to heighten the characters' expectations about the richness of their reward.

Behind the Scenes

Takaris wants to hear what the characters have learned about the slaver Fegis Kul, particularly as it relates to Kalourin. When they tell him of the formal alliance between the two, he feigns dismayed surprise. At this point, the characters may also tell Takaris about Kalourin's alliance with the Horror. This information truly shocks Takaris, but also gives him the means to a more satisfying revenge than he had dreamed. If Queen Alachia happened to feel benevolent, mere dealings with a Theran slaver might earn Kalourin no more than loss of status. Dealings with a Horror, however, carry an automatic sentence of death.

When the characters tell Takaris of Kalourin's pact with the Mist, he goes to inform the Queen at once. No matter how much or how little the characters tell Takaris, they make a powerful and dangerous enemy of Kalourin. See **Kalourin's Next Move**, p. 66.

Once the characters have told Takaris everything they wish to, read the following aloud:

Takaris leaves the chamber, bidding you await his return. A curious gaze out the door shows you a pair of guards outside. You wonder briefly if the guards are to keep Kalourin out, or to keep you in. Fortunately for your peace of mind, Takaris returns in the space of a few moments, bearing a large package. His gaze benevolent, he offers it to you. "Your payment, friends: the blood ivy sought by the Wizard Hiermon."

You take the parcel. The weight of it surprises you; you wonder that mere plants should be so heavy. A spicy, herbal smell rises from it, and you see the edge of a dark green leaf peeking out from a corner of the wrapping.

"My thanks for your pains," Takaris says. "'Tis Hiermon's good fortune to employ such able folk." Looking you over appraisingly, he continues. "You have done such good for the Elven Court that I am moved to reward you further. I can offer you a prize rare and precious that few outsiders dare dream of. What say you, friends?"

The prize, of course, is an audience with Queen Alachia. Though he does not say so, Takaris expects that she will question them about Kalourin and they will corroborate his own accusations. If the characters accept their mysterious extra reward, Takaris smiles and tells them to follow him.

Meeting the Queen

Takaris takes the adventurers outside the palace and leads them to a complex hedge maze on the palace grounds. If they ask about the maze, he says:

"The maze safeguards our gracious sovereign lady. The maze changes often, and only Her Gracious Majesty's most loyal retainers know the way through it."

As the characters enter the maze, read the following aloud:

Takaris beckons you into the hedge. Despite the honey-sweet scent of powerful magic that seems to lie heavy on the maze, you have no choice but to follow. Within a scant few paces, you can see nothing but dark, glossy leaves and the glittering cloak that swirls from Takaris' back. You smell the heady scent of roses, but no insects swarm about these unnatural hedges. The path under your feet twists and turns and turns again, until your heads turn dizzy with the effort of remembering from whence you came. At last you emerge into a clearing, from which rises a tower of gleaming white stone akin to alabaster. A balcony juts out from the tower, seeming to hang weightless from the glimmering walls. You stand under the balcony, gazing upward. At last, a figure steps onto the balcony and looks down at you.

The woman on the balcony seems to embody beauty, power, and desire. Of all the wondrous and terrible sights you have seen in Blood Wood, she is the most lovely and most terrible. The thorns that pierce her body only enhance her beauty; though cold and regal, she draws you. You realize that you desire her so fiercely because none dare touch her. Compelled by the unseen power that she wears like a cloak, you kneel to her. This vision of loveliness and anguish can only be the legendary Queen Alachia, sovereign ruler of the Elven Court.

She fixes her chill, regal gaze upon you, meeting each of your eyes in turn. The briefest glance from her mysterious, beautiful eyes makes your pulse race with longing. "I have spoken with Blood Warder Takaris," she says. Her voice is birdsong at the height of spring, the music of a running brook, all the gentle and beautiful sounds that you have ever loved. "He told me of treachery within Blood Wood. Did he speak true?"

You would say yes to anything this woman asked, yet you dare not lie to her. You nod your heads, feeling it a mercy beyond price that the truth and your desires are the same. She smiles at you, and the very sunlight shines brighter. "You have my gratitude." Reaching down, she picks something up and tosses it into the air.

"Catch it before it strikes the ground!" she commands.

To catch Alachia's rose, a character must make a successful Dexterity (6) Test. If multiple characters try to catch the rose, only the character with the highest result catches it. If a character catches the rose, one of its thorns pricks the character's skin, drawing a drop of blood which the rose absorbs. Once that happens, continue with the following:

A lucky one among you reaches out his hand, and the object falls into it. He holds it up, and you see that it is a perfect white rose. Long, twisted thorns grow on its stalk.

"Study the rose," Queen Alachia commands. "Only by seeing its truths can you fathom what we are." Favoring you with a smile so full of sorrow that you cannot bear to leave her without comfort, she turns away and disappears into the tower.

His voice hushed, Takaris speaks. "You have seen Queen Alachia, as few save the Elven Court ever do. Truly, you are blessed among Name-givers."

Leaving Blood Wood

After allowing the characters a good night's sleep, Takaris leads them to the border of Blood Wood, taking the same path that the characters took when they first arrived.

When the characters set out for Haven, read the following to the players:

Takaris steers you east toward the rising sun. At the border of the woodland, he stops. "Here we must part company," he announces. "Should you have occasion to visit Blood Wood again, carry the rose of Queen Alachia and none shall harm you. The rose will keep its bloom for a year and a day; beyond that time, it withers and its enchantment dies."

"One last warning before you depart; Kalourin has left Blood Wood. My soldiers know not where he has gone, but I fear he may seek revenge against you for what you have done. Fare you well; I wish you a safe journey!"

Takaris walks back into Blood Wood, which swallows him without a trace. Facing eastward, you feel the warmth of the rising sun on your face. Your strength renewed by sleep and hope, you spur your mounts toward Haven.

Kalourin's Next Move

Regardless of how much the characters told Takaris upon returning from Akarem, they have made a powerful enemy in Kalourin. He knows their Names and faces, and wants them dead. By wounding and nearly destroying the Mist, they have deprived him of its power; if they exposed any of his dealings with the Mist or with Fegis Kul, they have also deprived him of his home and privileged status. If the characters decided to keep quiet about Kalourin's unsavory activities, he seeks their deaths anyway to avenge the loss of his Horror-granted power (assuming the characters beat the Mist and completed Sheena's ritual) and to prevent them from blackmailing him in future.

Kalourin has left Blood Wood for Haven to await the characters' return. If the Theran spies Tural and Alkor are still alive, he joins up with them; if not, he gets reinforcements from their employer, the wealthy trader Agramen.

Troubleshooting

The only potential problem in this encounter occurs if the characters choose not to tell Takaris about Kalourin's involvement with the Mist or Fegis Kul. If this happens, Takaris does not arrange the audience with Queen Alachia or mention Kalourin's disappearance. However, Takaris still gives the blood ivy to the characters, and Kalourin still travels to Haven to kill the characters, because their knowledge poses a threat to him.

Scorched Earth Policy

On the way back to Haven, the characters encounter a band of ork scorchers. Not related to the other events in this adventure, this encounter exists only to present the players with another aspect of life in the world of **Earthdawn**. Despite the potential danger the ork scorchers pose, this encounter need not turn violent.

If the gamemaster thinks it inappropriate to his game, he may skip this encounter.

Setting the Stage

When the characters are on their way back to Haven, read the following:

Thus far, the ride back to Haven has proved uneventful. After more than a week's travel, you feel grateful for the respite. As you travel through the gently rolling fields and patches of cool green woodland, the landscape that seemed so beautiful when last you passed this way now seems eerily empty and silent. The shadows of trees make you start in momentary panic whenever you approach them; whether you will or no, you cannot help remembering the Horror of Akarem and wondering if some like dread creature lies hidden in every shadow. On this journey, you have faced the true corruption of the Horrors and the twisted evil of their allies. For the first time, you truly understand why Barsaive needs heroes.

Thus far, you have traveled within a day's ride of the Midland Trading Post and are ten days from Haven. Remembering the Midland Trading Post's good food, strong ale, and soft beds, you urge yourselves to a swifter pace. If you hurry, you may reach the trading post by nightfall.

Ahead on the road, you make out a group of riders heading toward you. As they draw nearer, you can see eight orks astride great war horses. Seeing you, the orks spur their mounts to a gallop, all ten pulling their steeds to a halt as one within forty paces of you. The largest ork knees his mount forward, closing half the distance between you.

Built like a small mountain, he wears leather armor that shows the shape of his bulging muscles. The strength in his arms could snap your necks with a single blow. Though not richly armed and equipped, he glares at you, and then puffs out his chest and bellows, "I am Rustang! We claim this stretch of road as ours! Pay tribute or you shall not pass!"

Themes and Images

Convey the feeling of a long, weary journey nearing its end. Make the characters feel exhausted, dragged, nearly spent; the ork scorchers are just one more damned thing going wrong on this trip. The orks themselves are more interested in cold, hard cash and a chance to strut and swagger than they are in actual combat.

Behind the Scenes

Rustang and his scorchers ply their extortion trade in the region between Blood Wood and the Midland Trading Post. If asked how much to pay for tribute, Rustang demands 10 silver pieces per character. If the characters have no cash or not enough, Rustang and his cronies will demand food, alcohol, or weapons of comparable value.

Characters may attempt to negotiate with Rustang, who has a Hostile Attitude towards the characters (see the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 90 of the **Gamemaster's**

Compendium for more information on **Gamemaster Character Attitudes** and **Social Interactions**). Should the characters decide to attack instead of paying, Rustang and his band gladly give them a fight.

As mentioned above, the orks want money more than a fight. In a brawl with the characters, they attempt to beat the adventurers black and blue, rob them of coin and treasure, and ride off with their spoils. Even if the characters lose the fight, it is unlikely that the ork scorchers will kill them. Fortunately, they are uninterested in a box of plants and are likely to leave the characters with their hard-earned blood ivy, unless the gamemaster desires to teach the characters a lesson by encouraging creative, non-violent approaches to recover it.

If the characters give in and pay the toll, they can escape this encounter without injury. If they wish, they may try to intimidate the orks into letting them pass without payment. To accomplish this difficult task, a character must make a successful Interaction Test (see the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 92 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

Ork Scorchers (7+Rustang)

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (17): 7/D12
Toughness (19): 8/2D6
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 7
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 43
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 12
Knockdown: 7/D12*
Unconsciousness Rating: 35

* The character knows the Sure Mount skill.

Combat Movement: 28
Full Movement: 56

Skills

Artisan:
Tattooing (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Caravan Trade Routes (2): 7/D12

General:
Animal Bond (4): 9/D8+D6
Animal Handling (3): 8/2D6
Charge (2): 9/D8+D6
Fence (1): 6/D10
Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Sure Mount (3): 10/D10+D6

Equipment

Rider's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Padded Leather (Phys 4)

Broadsword (Damage 12/2D10; w/scabbard)
Lance (Damage 13/D12+D10)
2 × Daggers (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit
Tattooing Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Riding Horse per ork; Rustang has a War Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

6 silver pieces per ork; Rustang has 4 gold pieces

Legend Award

105 Legend Points per ork; 155 Legend Points for Rustang

Notes

The character possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

Back at the Midland Trading Post

If they wish, the characters may stay at the Midland Trading Post on their return trip to Haven. For details on the inn and the trading post, see **Midland Trading Post**, p. 35. During their stay, they may hear any number of interesting rumors at the gamemaster's discretion (see **At the Midland Tavern**, p. 38).

Enemy Actions

Though the characters do not interact directly with Kalourin and the Theran spies until the next encounter (**Hiermon Again**, below), the information below allows the gamemaster to keep abreast of action taken by Kalourin and the Therans up to this point.

Theran Spies

Unless the characters killed Tural and Alkor in a previous encounter, they have since returned to Haven. They report to Agramen that the characters brought the Everliving Flower, which they consider a Theran treasure, to Blood Wood.

Kalourin

Whether or not the characters told Takaris about Kalourin's involvement with Fegis Kul and the Mist, Kalourin has traveled to Haven to await the characters' return. If Tural and Alkor are still alive, he will find them and order them to keep watch for the characters. If Tural and Alkor are dead, Kalourin will use Agramen's spy network to look out for the characters. In either case, Kalourin hides out in a secret chamber beneath Agramen's residence until the characters return to town.

Troubleshooting

If the characters look as though they may get themselves killed in a fight with the orks, the gamemaster has several options. He may fudge the orks' dice rolls or have them use the Attacking to Stun combat option (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 404 of the **Player's Compendium**) so that the characters simply come away battered, or he may allow one or more of them to die in order to reinforce the idea that engaging in combat tends to be a risky choice.

Hiermon Again

In this final encounter, the characters return to Haven to deliver the blood ivy to Hiermon. Unknown to the characters, the Wizard is under the Mist's control. When the characters appear in Hiermon's apartments, Blood Warder Kalourin reveals himself and attacks them, aided by Tural and Alkor (or two other Therans working for Agramen).

During the battle, the Mist manifests itself from Kalourin's amulet, killing him, and then turns on the characters.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach Haven, read the following:

The sun is high in the sky when you reach the town of Haven. You ride through the crowded, bustling, noisy streets toward the Old Neighborhood, eager to fulfill Hiermon's errand and receive his knowledge of your amulet in payment. Whether because you know where you are going or because of the air of hard experience that clings to you, no one stares warily after you as you pass by shops and market stalls. You return your faithful, hardy steeds to the stable from which you acquired them, garnering a few curious looks but no questions. After arranging the night's lodging at Loak's Legacy, you turn toward Brenula's Arms. Your ordeal nears its end, and you can almost taste success. If only you could shake the feeling that someone is following you…

Ignoring your nagging unease, you walk into Brenula's Arms. As before, Brenula comes to meet you. She seems not to recognize you, but you let it pass; your dearest comrades would scarce know you under so many days' worth of travel grime.

"Welcome to my humble shop," Brenula says quietly. "How may I serve you?"

Themes and Images

Play up the feelings of excitement, triumph, and invulnerability. When the team first arrived in Haven, they felt like country bumpkins in the big city; now they are bona fide heroes, about to claim a rich reward of valuable magical knowledge. Let them swagger and strut; after surviving this adventure, they should feel almost invincible.

As the characters travel through Haven, every so often the gamemaster should puncture their triumphant dream bubble with hints that something can still go wrong. They may sense unfriendly watchers in the crowd or simply feel a creeping unease that they can't pin down. This feeling intensifies when they reach Brenula's.

Behind the Scenes

Like Hiermon, Brenula is under the Mist's magical control. The Horror accompanies the blood elf, who is waiting

for the characters upstairs in Hiermon's chambers. Brenula does not remember them because Kalourin does not know whether the ork would recognize a band of adventurers she has seen only once; the characters may find her lack of memory odd.

At the gamemaster's discretion, the characters may make Perception (8) Tests in order to notice any unusual circumstances. A successful result reveals that Brenula appears dazed, and seems to look through the characters rather than at them. At this point, the characters may begin to realize that something is amiss.

When the characters ask to see Hiermon, the ork leads them to him immediately, without checking first. Once again, the gamemaster may allow each character to make a Perception (8) Test; if successful, they notice Brenula's odd behavior. If they ask her about her strange actions, she claims that she is not feeling well.

Seeing Hiermon

The Mist is controlling Hiermon from the adjacent room, channeling his power through Kalourin. The Horror is putting Hiermon through the motions of conversation with the characters.

Adventure Hook

Hiermon and a rival Wizard Named Gelaron regularly play pranks on each other, based on a years-old feud. The last prank played by his rival had Hiermon running naked out of his house, thinking he was ablaze. Now, Hiermon is ready for revenge: he hires the characters to deliver a small bottle to his rival's house and break it inside his sleeping chamber. Where Hiermon's rival's house is located and how it is protected against intruders is up to the gamemaster, but Gelaron is no fool and he expects the Wizard to retaliate.

When the bottle is broken, the gas in it floats around completely filling a 10-yard radius sphere centered on the bottle, causing all Name-givers inside the area to stink like a chamber pot. Anyone approaching the stinking character must pass a Willpower (5) Test or turn away in disgust. The smell cannot be washed off, but vanishes after three days.

Of course, things might get interesting if any character suffers from these effects, accidentally or otherwise. Due to the smell, triggering some of the magical defenses, or being spotted, Hiermon pays them upon their return and recommends the party leave Haven for a while to avoid any direct retribution from Gelaron, as he seems to be looking for them.

When the characters enter Hiermon's chambers, read the following to the players:

The Wizard has his back to you, seemingly lost in study. As you walk toward him, you see that he is studying the amulet you acquired from the lair of the giant spiders outside the village of Tureem.

Sensing your nearness, he turns toward you. His eyes are glazed, as though slumber has eluded him for many a day. "So, you have returned. You tarried longer than I expected, but no matter. Have you the ivy?"

When the characters hand over the package of ivy, read the following:

Hiermon drops the hard-won ivy on his work table with hardly a glance. "My thanks," he says, his gaze fixed unblinkingly upon you. "You shall now have your payment."

As the Wizard's last word dies away, his body stiffens as though lightning-struck. As you draw breath to call out his Name, Kalourin enters, followed by two armed men.

With an evil smile and angry eyes, Kalourin makes the gestures of a spell. His amulet begins to glow, growing brighter as he nears the spell's completion. With the final gesture, he shouts, "Any who harm Kalourin of Blood Wood shall pay the cost! You sought to expose me and take my power; now I will have your blood!"

Kalourin's Attack

As combat begins, Kalourin casts the Death's Head spell on himself (see p. 350 of the **Player's Compendium**). At the start of the first round of combat, Tural and Alkor (or two other Therans) enter the room and attack the characters.

Kalourin and the Therans will fight the characters to the death. If a character dies in this battle, so be it. If the Therans are hirelings of Agramen's other than Tural and Alkor, use Tural and Alkor's game statistics for them anyway.

The Mist Returns

At the beginning of the third combat round, the Mist emerges from Kalourin's amulet. As a pattern item of the alliance between the Blood Warder and the Horror, the amulet acts as a bridge by which the Horror can return to the physical world. For an explanation of pattern items, see the **Workings of Magic** chapter on p. 253 of the **Player's Compendium**.

When the Mist begins to manifest, read the following to the players:

As Kalourin raises his hands in yet another spell, he begins to shake as if palsied. His glowing amulet flares as brightly as the sun, so brightly that it stings your eyes. From the center of the amulet, a swirling mist begins to form. As the mist pours out and grows more solid, the elf gives a thin, choking scream and collapses lifelessly to the floor. The

swirling mist begins to hold a shape, one you hoped never to see again, save in nightmares. A few more heartbeats and the Mist stands before you, its loathsome eyes turned on you with hatred.

The Mist has returned to exact revenge against the characters for driving it from Akarem, and the characters are in real trouble. Though the Horror's manifestation killed Kalourin, the characters now face an even deadlier enemy.

Luckily for the characters, Brenula and Hiermon are no longer under the Horror's control, and may take part in the following combat. Also, the Mist cannot attack during the round in which it manifests. The characters can use this Horror-free round to attack the Therans, if they are still alive, or to attack the Horror before it finishes materializing. In the following combat round the Mist launches its attack on the characters, fully recovered from the damage they inflicted on it in **Kaer Akarem** (p. 60).

Help from Hiermon

Kalourin's death shatters his control over Hiermon, and the Wizard awakes to the sound and fury of battle. Realizing what is happening before his eyes, he attempts to use his magic to aid the characters.

If the Therans survive long enough, they escape out the window 2 combat rounds after the Mist appears. At this point, the characters can concentrate on fighting the Horror. If necessary, the gamemaster may use Hiermon to help the characters defeat the Mist, but if possible should allow one of the characters to deliver the killing blow.

After the Fight

Once the characters have caught their breaths, they may complete their business with Hiermon. In exchange for the blood ivy, the Wizard shares with the characters the following Key Knowledges he has discovered about their mysterious amulet:

- The amulet has five thread ranks.
- No Deeds are associated with the amulet.
- The amulet grants its wearer increased resistance to attacks.
- In order to weave a thread to the amulet, the characters must learn its Name.

Gaining more information about the amulet requires further study using the Item History Talent (see the **Talents** chapter on p. 189 of the **Player's Compendium** for a description). This talent is available to Troubadours, or can be acquired by a human adept through his Versatility talent.

Troubleshooting

Given the level of opposition, one or more of the characters may well die in this encounter. The gamemaster should try to keep at least some of the characters alive, but every adventure in Barsaive carries the risk of death. The gamemaster should not attempt to ignore this reality.

If all the characters die, the gamemaster might wish to create a follow-up adventure in which a new group of characters seeks out the dead ones and learns the story of their deaths at the hands of Kalourin. See **Loose Ends**, below, for more ways to use story ideas from this adventure in further adventures in the gamemaster's campaign.

Loose Ends

The information in this section allows the gamemaster to tie up the adventure's loose ends, and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Mists of Betrayal** in future **Earthdawn** adventures.

After the Adventure

Though the characters have had a long and difficult journey, their trials have gained them much. In addition to learning the Key Knowledges of the amulet they found in the village of Tureem, the adventurers have considerably enhanced their reputations in more than a few eyes. In Haven and its environs, powerful and influential people might seek out the characters' services in the future. Most importantly for the players, their characters' exploits in this adventure have earned them Legend Points and enabled them to begin building their own legends (see the **Building Your Legend** chapter on p. 419 of the **Player's Compendium**).

In addition to giving the adventurers the knowledge he promised in exchange for the blood ivy, a grateful Hiermon arranges for the characters to keep the mounts he lent them. The Wizard also expresses interest in chronicling the characters' adventures, especially the horrifying events that took place in the village of Akarem.

If the characters defeated or talked their way cleverly past Rustang and his ork scorchers (**Scorched Earth Policy**, p. 66), Rustang and his band feel a grudging awe for them. Rustang admires strength and bravado, even when he is on the receiving end. By impressing the ork scorchers, the characters have made unexpected allies.

The next time they land in desperate trouble during an overland journey, Rustang and his orks may ride out of nowhere to save the characters' hides.

Having defeated his rival Kalourin with considerable help from the characters, Blood Warder Takaris is inclined to feel kindly toward them, and would certainly do nothing to harm or interfere with the characters should their paths cross in future. However, his natural elven arrogance may prevent him from actively doing the characters any favors. After all, a Blood Warder of the Elven Court has far more important concerns than the needs of a scruffy band of outsiders, particularly since Takaris has inherited the job of defending Blood Wood from trespassers.

Besides making friends, of course, the adventurers also make enemies. Agramen, the Theran sympathizer who owns the import/export business, hates the characters for having foiled his attempts to snare the Everliving Flower and for injuring (or killing) two of his best spies. He will listen to the stories told of the adventurers at local inns in

Haven, and perhaps even buy the characters a drink or two, but only as a means of discovering some way in which to avenge his losses at their hands.

Fegis Kul, the Theran slaver, also has little love for the adventurers who cost him a lucrative chunk of his slave trade. A few days after the characters leave the freed village of Akarem, Fegis returns to the village and finds it reduced to rubble. Having lost both a buyer for his slaves and his powerful Blood Warder ally through the characters' machinations, Fegis Kul may well plot revenge.

Sogora, the Thief, if he is still alive, has been foiled by the characters twice, now, and may well consider them enemies.

As for the Mist, if the characters fail to destroy it and it has somehow not killed all of them, they have made the worst possible enemy. The Horror will turn its considerable powers toward destroying them.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

The following section provides guidelines for awarding Legend points to the player characters. As recommended in the **Introduction** on p. 6, the gamemaster should award Legend Points at the end of each game session as well as at the end of the adventure. The following guidelines for Legend Awards suggest the points to be awarded for each task accomplished or goal reached in a game session.

Game Sessions

Mists of Betrayal is intended to be played over the course of at least four game sessions. Use the following suggestions to organize your game sessions.

The four suggested game sessions outlined below each include certain encounters; if the gamemaster has organized the encounters differently in his game sessions, he should award Legend Points as appropriate.

Session One

In the first game session, the characters arrive in the village of Tureem, hunt down the giant spiders, discover the mysterious amulet, travel to Haven to meet the Wizard Hiermon and agree to take the Everliving Flower to Blood Wood.

This session includes the encounters **Arrival in Tureem** (p. 16), **Going Hunting** (p. 19), **Haven** (p. 21), and **Visiting Hiermon** (p. 26). The characters' session goal is to meet with Hiermon and agree to bring the Everliving Flower to Blood Wood in exchange for the Wizard's research into the mysterious amulet from Tureem.

Session Two

In this session, the characters leave Haven for Blood Wood. They fight off highwaymen on the road, and are attacked by a band of orks at the Midland Trading Post. As they continue on their journey, they come across a caravan recently destroyed by a Horror. Upon arrival at Blood Wood, the characters confront a band of blood elves patrolling the wood's borders.

This session includes the encounters **Cross Country** (p. 30), **Ambush!** (p. 32), **Midland Trading Post** (p. 35), **Caravan of Death** (p. 40), and **Blood Wood** (p. 41). The characters' session goal is to arrive at Blood Wood alive and reasonably well.

Session Three

In this session, the characters meet with Blood Warder Takaris, deliver the Everliving Flower, and agree to find the Theran slaver Fegis Kul. They follow Fegis Kul into the village of Akarem, where the slavers and a band of blood elves loyal to Blood Warder Kalourin capture them and leave them to be slain by the Horror, the Mist. They escape confinement in Akarem's kaer, search the kaer, and drive the Horror from the village.

This session includes the encounters **Meeting a Blood Warder** (p. 43), **Search for a Slaver** (p. 46), **Village of Mists** (p. 49), **Inside Akarem** (p. 51), and **Kaer Akarem** (p. 54). The session goal is to drive the Horror from the village, thereby freeing its residents from the Mist's baneful influence.

Session Four

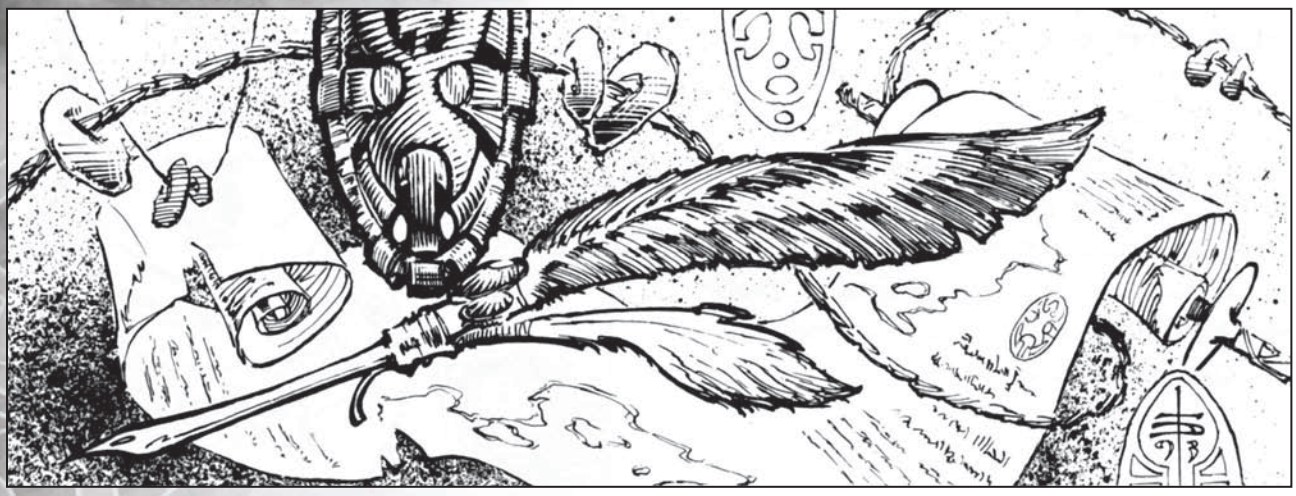
In the final game session, the characters return to the Queen's Palace in Blood Wood, overcoming an attack by Kalourin's thorn men on the way. At the palace, they meet Takaris and inform him of Kalourin's involvement with the Horror and the Theran slaver. After an audience with Queen Alachia, the characters depart for Haven with the blood ivy that Hiermon requested. On the road, they encounter a band of ork scorchers. Once back in Haven, they go to see Hiermon and find Kalourin there with two Theran spies. Kalourin and the Therans attack the characters; during the battle the Mist emerges from Kalourin's amulet, killing the elf. The Horror attacks the characters, determined to kill them for driving it out of Akarem.

This session includes the encounters **Kalourin's Last Gambit** (p. 62), **Back to the Palace** (p. 63), **Scorched Earth Policy** (p. 66), and **Hiermon Again** (p. 68). The adventure goal is to return to Haven, deliver the blood ivy to Hiermon, fight off the Therans and Kalourin, and defeat the Mist.

Legend Awards

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, each game session in **Mists of Betrayal** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. The potential number of Legend Awards each character may earn in each game session should take the following elements into account: completing the game session's goal (one Legend Award), defeating creatures and opponents (award the number of Legend Points listed with each creature or gamemaster character), individual deeds and roleplaying (one to two Legend Awards), and acquiring magical treasure (as listed with the magical treasure).

A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a First Circle character receives from 25 to 75 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session. In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain



two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal.

Campaign Ideas

Published **Earthdawn** adventures are designed to fit into an existing campaign with little or no extra work on the part of the gamemaster. Adventures do not exist by themselves if run in a campaign. The world of **Earthdawn** is dynamic and changes over time. For example, when using the events from this adventure to change the overall course of a campaign, the players can watch the changes as they happen and play an active role in it. This adds a sense of reality vital to good roleplaying. No matter how you use this adventure, it is likely to make your **Earthdawn** game more interesting; whether you use it as written or only by drawing on the ideas and information given in this book to enhance your own stories.

Many of the situations and gamemaster characters presented in this book provide hooks for further stories, and can be used to supplement a longer campaign. Feel free to use them in your own **Earthdawn** campaign in whatever ways you see fit, and find some additional advice below.

The Mist

If the characters defeat the Mist without destroying it, the Horror will most likely victimize another small village similar to Akarem. If it wants revenge badly enough, the Mist may follow the characters, biding its time until it can strike at them. It may choose to simply kill them, or it may decide to make their lives a living hell. For example, the Mist may follow the characters on their subsequent travels and attack each town, city, or village that the adventurers pass through. By attacking innocent residents of these towns and cities rather than striking at the characters themselves, the Mist can ensure that the characters are blamed for the Horror's atrocities.

Fegis Kul

Fegis Kul, the Theran slaver, continues to operate in the area between Blood Wood and the Serpent River. Though the fate of Akarem ultimately causes him only minor inconvenience, Fegis Kul will be furious when he learns of Kalourin's disgrace and death. The former Blood Warder was a valuable ally, and the slaver will go to considerable lengths to avenge his loss. Through use of his extensive network of slaving contacts, Fegis can easily learn the identities of those who destroyed Kalourin and Akarem, and he will be out for blood. He may pay his hired thugs to assassinate the characters, attempt to capture them and sell them into slavery, or cause any number of other difficulties for the characters during the gamemaster's campaign.

Agramen

Though not happy at the characters' safe return to Haven, Agramen will not act openly against them for fear of exposing his operations. However, he may use his spy network to keep tabs on them and take future opportunities to make trouble for the adventurers.

Whether or not Agramen takes action against the characters, he continues to monitor activities in Parlainth. When Agramen informs his contacts at Sky Point of the removal of the Everliving Flower, his Theran superiors order him to retrieve it from Blood Wood.

Tural and Alkor

If Agramen's spies Tural and Alkor survived the adventure, they will lurk in the shadows of the Old Neighborhood, tailing the characters and hoping for a chance to ambush them. Because the characters humiliated them by defeating them at every turn, the spies have every reason to want them injured, enslaved, or dead. Though the Wizard Hiermon knows that Tural and Alkor worked with Blood Warder Kalourin, he and the rest of Haven know nothing of the spies' connection to Agramen's network.

Takaris

With Kalourin gone from Blood Wood, Takaris has eliminated his primary rival and inherited the job of defending Blood Wood from trespassers. If the characters approach Blood Wood, they will meet the same guard patrol that they met on their first visit, though the guards' armor displays Takaris' symbol rather than Kalourin's.

Takaris will allow the adventurers free passage through Blood Wood for the year and a day that Queen Alachia's rose lasts; whether he does them any additional favors is up to the gamemaster.

Duaga

During the Scourge, the Horror Named Duaga took up residence near Blood Wood, terrorizing and butchering those unlucky travelers who passed through its domain. Since the return of Parlainth, mercantile traffic, adventuring groups and the occasional blood elf patrol, keep the Horror amused. Otherwise, it spends most of its time sleeping in its lair (see below). Duaga destroyed the caravan in **Caravan of Death**, p. 40.

This Horror is a deadly opponent—only characters of sufficient power should expect to survive a direct confrontation with Duaga ...

Game Information

DEX: 10 **STR**: 12 **TOU**: 11
PER: 12 **WIL**: 12 **CHA**: 7

Initiative: 5
Number of Actions: 2
Attack: (5): 15
Damage:
Tendrils (3): 15

Physical Defense: 13
Spell Defense: 15
Social Defense: 9
Physical Armor: 20
Mystic Armor: 7

Death Rating: 55 (145)
Wound Threshold: 16
Unconsciousness Rating: 48 (128)
Recovery Tests: 5
Knockdown: 12

Combat Movement: 49
Full Movement: 98

Karma Points: 40
Karma Step: 15

Powers: Astral Sight (3): 15, Burning Aura (5): 5, Combustible Touch (5): 17 (see text), Durability (10), Forge Horror Construct (3): 15, Horror Mark (3): 15, Skin Shift (3): 15, Spellcasting (3): 15, Terror (9): 16, Thread Weaving (Nethermancer) ^{T} (3): 15

Spells: Nethermancy (Tenth Circle)

Legend Points (3): 100,440

Equipment: None

Loot: See **Duaga's Lair**, below.

Commentary

This humanoid Horror stands 8 feet tall, with sore-dotted, leathery skin so hot that it smolders under normal conditions. It attacks its prey with its two arms, each of which ends in slender, flexible tendrils.

Rules

Duaga possesses the following special Horror power.

Combustible Touch: To use its Combustible Touch power, the Horror must hit the target with its limbs. To do this, the Horror makes a Combustible Touch Test against the target's Physical Defense. If the test succeeds, the target starts burning and takes Step 6/D10 damage. Physical Armor protects against this damage. The fire continues to burn for the next 3 rounds, inflicting an additional Step 6/D10 damage each round unless the target somehow extinguishes it, by diving into a pool of water or suffocating the flames by other conventional or magical means.

Duaga's Lair

Duaga lives in a gloomy patch of woods a few miles from the road where the destroyed caravan lies in **Caravan of Death**, p. 40. The trees grow close together, their thick branches forming a waterproof canopy under which Duaga has built its lair. Fire-blackened skulls, rib cages, and other scorched bones dangle from the tree limbs, and the sickly-sweet smell of burning flesh permeates the air.

Within the lair lie 375 silver pieces, a suit of crystal ringlet armor, a ferndask shield, and the Headband of Kedar the Dark. This item is described in the **New Magical Treasures** chapter on p. 343.

The Everliving Flower

An enchanted item of elven creation, the Everliving Flower dates back to the time before the Scourge. Intended as a gift from the elves of the faraway nation of Shosara to the Elven Court at Wyrm Wood, the flower disappeared in transit. It eventually turned up in the Theran provincial capital of Parlainth, where it remained until adventurers hired by the Wizard Hiermon recovered it. The legend of the Everliving Flower is related in **Meeting a Blood Warder** on p. 43.

Alachia's Rose

The rose given to the adventurers by Queen Alachia of Blood Wood grants them passage through the forest for a year and a day. Once that time has passed, the rose withers and dies as the blood magic that sustained it drains away.

If the characters go back to Blood Wood within a year and a day, they will see that the rose changes color depending on its distance from Blood Wood. In or near Blood Wood, the rose turns crimson. Far away from Blood Wood, the rose deepens almost to black. Particularly alert characters may remember that the Everliving Flower underwent a similar transformation, and may set out to discover more about Queen Alachia's mysterious gift.

Cast of Characters

This section provides information and game statistics for the gamemaster characters playing a major role in **Mists of Betrayal**. If necessary or appropriate, the gamemaster may change some of these statistics to suit the abilities of the player characters in his game.

Because these characters will likely appear more than once in the course of the adventure, their statistics and descriptions are grouped here for convenience. The gamemaster characters are presented in order of general importance to the story. Descriptions and statistics for other, minor characters are given in the encounter in which they make their first appearance.

Kalourin

A Blood Warder in the Elven Court, Kalourin's sharp, almost feline facial features might be handsome, but for the perpetual smirk he wears. Though among the youngest and least powerful of the Blood Warders, the devious and power-hungry Kalourin always has a plan or two spinning in his head. He regards his fellow Blood Warder, Takaris, as his greatest rival for power, and would do almost anything to bring him down if he could accomplish it without getting caught.

Recently, Kalourin has allied himself with the Theran slaver Fegis Kul and a Horror called the Mist in a corrupt, misguided attempt to extend his influence and power outside Blood Wood. His connection with the Horror has gained him extremely powerful magical abilities, but he has not yet dared to use those powers openly for fear of exposure. If known, his treasonous alliance with a Horror would bring an automatic sentence of death.

Kalourin is a Fifth Circle Nethermancer.

Attributes

Dexterity (18): 7/D12
Strength (14): 6/D10
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Perception (17): 7/D12
Willpower (15): 6/D10
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10
Initiative: 4/D6
Spell Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 7
Social Defense: 10
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 34 (54)
Recovery Tests: 1
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 26 (41)

Combat Movement: 38
Full Movement: 76

Karma Points: 20
Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents

Animal Possession (3): 9/D8+D6
Astral Sight [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
Durability (4/3) (5): 5
Karma Ritual (5): 5
Read and Write Language (5): 12/2D10
—Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Theran, Troll
Read and Write Magic [D] (5): 12/2D10
Spellcasting [D] (5): 12/2D10
Spell Matrix (5): 5
Spell Matrix (5): 5
Spell Matrix (5): 5
Spell Matrix (5): 5
Spirit Hold [D] (5): 11/D10+D8
Spirit Talk [D] (5): 12/2D10
Summon [D] (5): 11/D10+D8
Thread Weaving (Nethermancy) [D] (5): 12/2D10

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Robe Embroidery (4): 11/D10+D8

Knowledge:
Barsaive History (5): 12/2D10
Blood Elf Lore (5): 12/2D10

General:
Missile Weapons (4): 11/D10+D8
Seduction (4): 11/D10+D8
Speak Language (3): 10/D10+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Sperethiel*, Theran
Tracking (3): 10/D10+D6

Equipment

Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3; modified for thorns)

Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Elven Warbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 70–140–280)
Quiver (w/20 warbow arrows)

Kalourin's Amulet (Rank 5; conduit for The Mist)

Adventurer's Kit
Embroidered Elfweave Robe
Embroidery Tools
Grimoire
2 × Healing Potions
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
2 × Waterskins
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Spells

Animate Skeleton, Astral Spear, Bone Circle, Bone Dance, Chilling Circle, Death's Head, Evil Eye, Experience Death, Fog Ghost, Fog of Fear, Insect Repellent, Life Circle of One, Pack Bags, Pain [M], Pass Ward, Repel Animal, Shield Mist [M], Spirit Double, Spirit Dart [M], Spirit Grip [M], Viewpoint, Visions of Death, Wither Limb.

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix.

Loot

100 silver pieces

Legend Award

790 Legend Points

Notes

Kalourin possesses the blood elf racial abilities of Low-Light Vision, +1 Spell Defense, +1 Social Defense, Armor Restriction, Pain Resistance, and Reduced Recovery Tests.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests

TAKARIS TALSHARA

A Blood Warder of the Elven Court, Takaris is Kalourin's chief competitor for Queen Alachia's mercurial favor. Cautious in his dealings with outsiders, Takaris genuinely cares about the overall well-being of the elves of Blood Wood. The only outsider that Takaris has chosen to deal with recently is the wizard Hiermon, mainly because Hiermon's innocuous request for blood ivy provided Takaris with the means to engineer Kalourin's downfall.

A quiet, pensive individual, Takaris wears his silver hair in a long, thick ponytail. He bears his thorns with shame, longing to remove them but knowing he cannot. His quietness camouflages the strong will and wily mind that have kept him a Blood Warder in the intrigue-riddled Elven Court. Takaris is a Fifth Circle Wizard. Upon reaching that level of proficiency as a magician, Takaris chose to learn another Discipline, and is also a Fourth Circle Warrior.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12
Strength (16): 7/D12
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (17): 7/D12
Charisma (17): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Initiative: 4/D6
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 7
Social Defense: 10
Mystic Armor: 3

Death Rating: 33* (57)*
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 10
Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 25* (43)*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 34
Full Movement: 68

Karma Points: 20
Karma Step: 4/D6

Wizard Talents

Astral Sight [D] (5): 11/D10+D8
Book Memory [D] (5): 12/2D10
Book Recall [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Durability (4/3) (6): 6
Evidence Analysis [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Karma Ritual (5): 5
Read and Write Language [D] (5): 11/D10+D8
—*Sperethiel*
Read and Write Magic [D] (5): 11/D10+D8
Spellcasting [D] (5): 11/D10+D8
Spell Matrix (5): 5
Spell Matrix (5): 5
Spell Matrix (5): 5
Thread Weaving (Wizardry) [D] (5): 11/D10+D8
Willforce (5): 12/2D10

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Warrior Talents

Acrobatic Strike (4): 11/D10+D8
Air Dance (4): 8/2D6*
Anticipate Blow [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Avoid Blow [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
Down Strike [D] (3): 10/D10+D6
Melee Weapons [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
Throwing Weapons (4): 11/D10+D8
Tiger Spring (4): 4
Unarmed Combat D (4): 11/D10+D8
Wood Skin [D] (4): 10/D10+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
* Talent step modified by –3 armor Initiative Penalty.

Skills

Artisan:
Robe Embroidery (4): 11/D10+D8

Knowledge:
Creature Lore (4): 10/D10+D6
Shosaran History (6): 12/2D10

General:
Tracking (5): 11/D10+D8

Equipment

Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3; modified for thorns)

Broadsword (Damage 12/2D10; w/scabbard)
Short Sword (Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)

Desperate Spell Charm (3 Damage Points)
Belt Pouch
Embroidered Elfweave Robe
Embroidery Tools
Grimoire
Helmet
Tunic
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Spells

Astral Sense, Astral Shield, Ball of String, Counterspell [M], Crushing Will, Dispel Magic, Mind Dagger [M], Iron Hand, Leaps and Bounds [M], Makeshift Missile, Rope Ladder, Shatter Lock, Thorny Retreat, Wall Walker, Vines

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix.

Loot

100 silver pieces

Legend Points

750 Legend Points

Notes

Takaris possesses the blood elf racial abilities of Low-Light Vision, +1 Spell Defense, +1 Social Defense, Armor, Restriction, Pain Resistance, and Reduced Recovery Tests.

Fourth Circle: (Wizard) Karma on Perception-only Tests. (Warrior) Karma on Willpower-only Tests

THE MIST

DEX: 11 **STR**: 14 **TOU**: 12
PER: 12 **WIL**: 12 **CHA**: 11

Initiative: 11
Number of Actions: 2
Attack: (3): 14
Damage:
Claws (3): 17

Physical Defense: 15
Spell Defense: 15
Social Defense: 14
Physical Armor: 7
Mystic Armor: 7

Death Rating: 59
Wound Threshold: 17
Unconsciousness Rating: 52

Recovery Tests: 5
Knockdown: Immune

Combat Movement: 70* **Full Movement**: 140*

* This value is the Horror's flying Movement rate.

Karma Points: 20 **Karma Step**: 10

Powers: Astral Sight (3): 15, Animate Dead (3): 15, Control Being (3): 15, Corrupt Karma (3): 15, Displace (3): 15, Horror Mark (3): 15, Spellcasting (3): 15, Thread Weaving (Elementalism) [T] (3): 15, Thread Weaving (Nethermancy) [T] (3): 15

Spells: Air Blast, Boil Water, Fog of Fear, Ice Spear, Metal Scream, Puddle Deep, Resist Fire

Legend Points (3): 4,035

Equipment: None

Loot: See **Kaer Akarem**, p. 59, for the loot in the Mist's lair.

Commentary

This Horror most often manifests as a cloud of mist, sometimes filled with twinkling motes of light. At will, it can coalesce into a solid, human-shaped form with a ghostly skull for a face. When gravely injured, it flees into astral space to recover, leaving behind a small lump of cold, glittering crystal. A sadistic, sneaky entity, the Mist prefers playing with its captives to killing them outright.

The Mist can wander around Barsaive from dusk to dawn, during which it occasionally attacks and murders an unfortunate passerby. During one of its wanderings in

search of new victims to torment, the Mist met Kalourin and made a pact with the blood elf. Discovering Kalourin's dealings with the slaver Fegis Kul by reading the elf's thoughts, the Mist offered Kalourin unique and powerful magical abilities in exchange for a steady stream of slaves sent to the captive village of Akarem for the Mist to feed on. For the present, this alliance amuses the Mist and suits its needs. However, the Horror may grow tired of it at any time.

Its malleable form allows the Mist to seep through tiny cracks. Only airtight doors and magical wards can keep the Mist at bay. The Mist speaks in a cold, whistling voice with a slight echo. In addition to its powers, the Mist can use a few select Elementalist and Nethermancer spells.

Rules

The Mist has a unique power that allows it to control other beings:

Control Being: This power allows the Horror to take complete control of a target character. The Horror makes a Control Being Test, the result of which becomes the Difficulty Number for any Willpower Tests the target makes to break free of the Horror's control. Exerting control over another being requires the Horror to spend an action concentrating. While under the effect of this power, the target moves and acts slower than normal and its eyes may appear glazed.

Hiermon

In excellent health despite his advanced age of 105 years, the Wizard Hiermon can no longer undertake long journeys, but still manages to get around with a spryness that belies his stooped and wrinkled appearance. A human Wizard of great wisdom and power, Hiermon specializes in acquiring knowledge of rare and mysterious objects. A shrewd bargainer and a stubborn man, Hiermon nonetheless has a good heart and willingly aids strangers even at cost to himself.

His best friend is Brenula the ork, who owns a weapons and armor smithy in the town of Haven, above which is Hiermon's own residence. Hiermon wears an ornately embroidered robe of midnight blue, and uses a twisted staff for help in walking as well as for defense.

Hiermon is a Seventh Circle Wizard.

Attributes

Dexterity (9): 4/D6 — **Strength** (7): 4/D6
Toughness (9): 4/D6 — **Perception** (17): 7/D12
Willpower (15): 6/D10 — **Charisma** (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6 — **Initiative**: 4/D6
Spell Defense: 10 — **Physical Armor**: 3
Social Defense: 7 — **Mystic Armor**: 2

Death Rating: 30 (58) — **Recovery Tests**: 2
Wound Threshold: 7 — **Knockdown**: 4/D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 21 (42)

Combat Movement: 18 — **Full Movement**: 36

Karma Points: 37 — **Karma Step**: 5/D8

Wizard Talents

Arcane Mutterings [D] (7): 12/2D10
Astral Sight [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Book Memory [D] (6): 12/2D10
Book Recall [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Durability (4/3) (7): 7
Enhanced Matrix (7): 7
Evidence Analysis [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Hold Thread [D] (5): 11/D10+D8
Karma Ritual (7): 7
Lifesight [D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Read and Write Language [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Theran
Read and Write Magic [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Speak Language [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Theran
Spellcasting [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Spell Matrix (7): 7

Spell Matrix (7): 7
Spell Matrix (7): 7
Thread Weaving (Wizardry) [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Willforce (7): 13/D12+D10

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Versatility (4): 4
Melee Weapons (2): 6/D10
Item History (6): 13/D12+D10
Tiger Spring (3): 3
Weapon History (6): 13/D12+D10

Skills

Artisan:
Robe Embroidery (4): 10/D10+D6

Knowledge:
Alchemy and Potions (4): 11/D10+D8
Barsaive History (4): 11/D10+D8

General:
Alchemy (4): 11/D10+D8
Evaluate (3): 10/D10+D6
Haggle (4): 9/D8+D6
Research (5): 12/2D10

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)

Twisted Quarterstaff (Damage 6/D10)
Dagger (Damage 6/D10; Range 9–15–18)

Belt Pouch
Ornately Embroidered Robe
Embroidery Tools
2 × Healing Potions
Grimoire
Wealthy Traveler's Garb
Room at Brenula's Arm includes an Alchemy Lab

Spells

And His Money, Astral Sense, Astral Shield, Bedazzling Display of Logical Analysis, Clean, Confusing Weave, Counterspell [M], Dispel Magic [E], Divine Aura, Inventory, Karma Cancel, Mage Armor [M], Move on Through, Mind Dagger [M], Notice Not, Relax, Seal, Seeking Sight, Silent Converse, Shatter Lock, Sleep, Slow, Spell Cage, Triangulate, Trust

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix.
[E] Denotes a spell currently attuned to an Enhanced Matrix.

Loot

250 silver pieces

Legend Award

1,945 Legend Points

Notes

Hiermon possesses the human racial ability of Versatility.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests
Sixth Circle: +1 Spell Defense
Seventh Circle: Karma on spell Effect Tests

Fegis Kul

Born and raised in Thera, Fegis Kul is a balding, grubby, ill-mannered, battle-scarred mercenary in his early thirties. Some years ago, Fegis turned his attention from war to slaving, because it paid better. Fegis sees all living beings as potential slaves, sizing them up for market value in a single look. This repellent man truly gives humans a bad Name in Barsaive. A band of slavers of various races follows and aids Fegis in his evil trade, regarding him with respect and even a little awe. Knowing his mercenary background, they trust his tactical skills implicitly in battle.

Fegis works with Blood Warder Kalourin, kidnapping and enslaving unlucky wanderers who leave Blood Wood. In return, Fegis keeps Kalourin informed of Theran affairs

and politics. In addition to slave trading, Fegis also acts as a courier, ferrying information from his Theran superiors at Sky Point to Theran spies throughout Barsaive.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (16): 7/D12
Toughness (18): 7/D12
Perception (9): 4/D6
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (6): 3/D4

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 8
Social Defense: 4
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 40*
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 12
Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 32*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 28
Full Movement: 56

Skills

Artisan:
Weapon Rune Carving (1): 4/D6

Knowledge:
Caravan Trade Routes (1): 5/D8
Theran Politics (3): 7/D12

General:
Animal Handling (3): 8/2D6
Bribery (5): 8/2D6
Conversation (3): 6/D10
Hunting (2): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (3): 9/D8+D6
Missile Weapons (3): 9/D8+D6
Navigation (2): 6/D10
Read and Write Language (3): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, Theran
Speak Language (3): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, Theran
Streetwise (4): 8/2D6
Tactics (3): 7/D12
Tracking (6): 10/D10+D6
Trading (4): 7/D12
Wilderness Survival (3): 7/D12

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17)
Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Broadsword (Damage 12/2D10; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)
Longbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 60–120–240)
Quiver (w/20 longbow arrows)

Absorb Blow Charm (2 Damage Points)
Adventurer's Kit
Belt Pouch
Carving Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins
Riding Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

290 silver pieces (40 in belt pouch, 250 in saddlebag)

Legend Award

105 Legend Points

TERROR IN THE SKIES

A century after the Scourge and the plague rears its ugly head once again towards our city. The rakken may be just the beginning—scorching the skies, announcing the darkness at the horizon.

• Nameless Streetsage, somewhere in Travar •

"Had Rasper Nor but come—"

The windling magician Skeethen turned on his fellow Elementalist, anger blazing in his eyes. "He has not come, Mearach, as any half-wit can see. He will never come! Those things out there have doubtless torn out his heart and devoured it, and all his so-called powers could not stop them!"

"Nor can we." Giska's voice cut across Skeethen's furious words. Unwillingly, Skeethen looked toward the elderly magician, his mentor since childhood. In the past few days since the sealing of the windlings' kaer, dug deep into the peak of Talon Mountain, Giska had become more bent, more stooped and withered. The eyes that had once brimmed with confidence in his power now held the calmness of despair.

"The Horrors have broken our only defense against them, Skeethen. How should we stop the Scourge, when even the mighty Therans cannot stand against it?"

Skeethen took a step toward Giska. "We are the seven most powerful magicians in the kaer! We cannot simply hide in this room and do nothing. The Tome—"

"Skeethen." Giska spoke only his name, but it was enough. The old magician held Skeethen's gaze for a moment, then glanced toward the huge oak stump that served as the windlings' table.

Silently, Skeethen waved his hand across the stump's polished surface. He and his colleagues gazed at the glossy wood. Before their eyes an image slowly formed: windlings by the thousands streaming out of the kaer's ceramic towers like wind-blown cinders from a thousand bonfires, fleeing the giant, black mantises that swarmed over the Talon and through the windling heartland. The Horrors stalked their tiny, fragile prey without mercy, impaling six or seven fleeing windlings on each of the huge barbed spines at the end of their eight hard, shiny black arms.

Skeethen watched as a pair of mantises crushed a wall of one of the ceramic towers and tore at the family inside. One of the mantises spitted all three children on a single spine, then lifted them to its mandibles and devoured them. The second mantis speared their mother through the shoulder and lifted her toward its jaws as she writhed in mortal agony. It seemed to Skeethen that the mantis watched the woman's weakening struggles with a horrible curiosity before throwing her against the base of the shattered wall hard enough to dash her skull to pieces.

A man's dying scream split the air, close by the Magicians' Tower. Startled, Skeethen let the spell disintegrate. As shouts of pain and rallying cries echoed through the chamber, the windling stalked to the tower's iron-barred window and looked downward toward the funnel-shaped entrance of the Magicians' Cavern. A few, mutilated corpses of the Winged Guard, the finest fighters in the kaer, lay dead about the funnel's rim, their blood draining down into the reservoir far below. Toward the right, in the direction of the shouting, Skeethen saw the Guard's tattered remnants making a last stand in their barracks against the oncoming Horrors. Below him, near the front entrance of the Magicians' Tower, Skeethen saw a few more bloody, battered defenders flying around a knot of mantises, firing tiny arrows at the insects' bulbous eyes in a desperate attempt to beat them off.

"Rasper Nor could have kept them from us," muttered Mearach, his voice flat and toneless. "He helped build this kaer. He helped us design it. Rasper Nor could have saved us..."

A terrible cracking sound echoed from below. Faint shouts and screams came to the magicians' ears, followed by a soft tapping at the round doorway in the floor of the tower's topmost chamber. The tapping grew more frantic, then abruptly gave way to muffled screams. After several

seconds, the screaming choked off into silence.

"He's led them straight to us," whispered Skeethen. "Like a wounded rabbit running to its warren ..."

The door exploded inward, showering the room with splinters of stone. Skeethen and the others, knocked flat by the blast, stared upward in terror as one of the great, black monsters leapt into the chamber. From the corner of his eye, Skeethen saw the flutter of a silvery wing as Giska struggled to his feet and reached for the Tome of Banishment. Skeethen shouted a warning, but too late. Before the aging windling could utter a sound, one of the Horror's spines pierced his heart. Giska's blood spurted over the open book, spattering the parchment with scarlet.

Skeethen watched, frozen in shock and terror, as the mantis spitted the remaining five magicians like wriggling fish. As the monstrous, black head with its clacking mandibles turned toward him, a fresh burst of panic broke Skeethen's paralysis. He threw himself across the room and grabbed the Tome of Banishment, then launched himself upward in desperate flight. He had hardly risen a windling-length off the floor when the mantis's spikes tore through his left wing. Skeethen screamed, but kept himself and the heavy book aloft through sheer force of will. Knowing that he could not hope to weave a spell fast enough to slay the creature, Skeethen made the only choice he could.

He flew toward the Sanctuary.

The small, round doorway in the roof loomed before him, the darkness within it waiting to swallow him. Skeethen had helped Giska construct the Sanctuary and knew its grim purpose, but had never guessed that he would be the one to entomb himself alive. You are already dead, Skeethen told himself, even as wild hopes and desperate plans flashed through his mind. He could slip past the mantis and fly out of the ruined kaer to freedom! But if the dreadful thing caught him or his torn wing failed him, the Tome would fall into the hands of the Horrors. That betrayal Skeethen dared not risk.

Skeethen beat his wings harder and soared close to the hole, ignoring the agony in his shredded left wing. The mantis raked its terrible arms across his leg, nearly severing it. Breathless and half-blinded by pain, Skeethen summoned up the dregs of his rapidly fading strength and threw his bleeding, battered body toward the Sanctuary. He fell short of the doorway, and began to drift back downward toward the mantis. Skeethen cursed his weakness, cursed his terror, and cursed the crazy thoughts of escape that had made him hesitate too long. Skeethen the coward had doomed the world.

His wingbeats grew slower, and he began to fall faster. As the mantis reached for Skeethen with a hungry hiss, Giska's bloody corpse moved. The ancient magician pointed a withered, blood-spattered finger at Skeethen, and suddenly the young windling felt himself pushed upward into the Sanctuary. He screamed the triggering words of the sealing spell, and watched as stone knit itself together over the entrance.

Curling his battered body around the Tome as if for comfort, Skeethen listened to the screams of the dying and the scraping of mantis barbs across the stone. Lying in the dark as his blood and the life-giving air seeped away, Skeethen smiled. Unlike Giska's, his death would count for something. Nothing would ever enter the Sanctuary. And nothing would ever leave.

From the hovering patrol boat, Lark gazed down at the tiny, twinkling lights of Travar. "Time of legends," he grunted softly. "Time of hiding, I say." He slammed a fist into the ship's railing. "The damned Therans said those things would disappear! The Scourge is over!"

His partner, Yorlk, gave a bark of bitter laughter. "Sailors Who Died for a Fat Merchant's Money—that's our legend." He shook his grizzled ork head. "Shoulda never signed onta th' Flying Patrol."

Lark glared down at the city far below. Over the past few months, the air patrols over the trade city of Travar had run into disaster upon disaster. Three weeks ago, a band of third-rate pirates had rammed a patrol boat and slain all on board. Only sheer carelessness on the part of the crew had allowed the pirates to gain so much as a toehold on the doomed ship, but Travar's merchants didn't care to hear that kind of truth. No, they'd all rather shake fists at Travar's air warden and demand reparations for lost goods that they knew the Flying Patrol couldn't afford. Then another airship had gone down, in far worse than a pirate attack. In spite of himself, Lark shuddered at the memory.

Lark's four-ship patrol had spotted a flaming arrow, shot into the sky from a beleaguered ship owned by the Merris merchant house. As the Flying Patrol drew near the foundering merchantman, they saw three winged creatures from the darkest nether regions swarming over it, setting fire to the craft's sails and attacking its crew. As Lark and Yorlk maneuvered their patrol boat within boarding distance, one of the fiends threw the first mate over the side, his chest torn open and his body smeared with blood.

Lark remembered bellowing at the things, waving his sword and trying to draw the creatures away from the helpless cargo ship. One of the dreadful creatures swooped down from the merchantman's burning rigging, shooting flame from its arms as it descended toward him. Lark braced himself for impact, but his crewmates Smorgan and Trusa swung their own patrol boat in front of Lark's ship. The creature landed hard on the deck near the helm. Faster than the eye could follow, it shot to its feet and grabbed Trusa. Lark could only watch, paralyzed with terror, as the monster sank its teeth deep into the pale flesh just below Trusa's tender throat. Smorgan swung his scimitar at the creature, but its leathery wings beat back the blow as it tore Trusa to shreds. Even as Lark and Yorlk tried to reach the crippled ship, the patrol boat broke apart and plunged to the cold cobblestones far below.

Of course, the greedy merchants blamed the Flying Patrol for the disaster and cursed them for incompetence. Lark wondered what the ill-tempered Trusa would have done to them had she survived.

Yorlk shook Lark's shoulder, banishing the awful memory. He pointed toward the south. Lark turned his gaze reluctantly southward, and saw a single arrow tracing a silent, fiery arc across the night sky.

Yorlk grinned at him. "Time to get to work, Lark. Time to face death."

Plot Synopsis

In the last few years before the Scourge, when the races of Barsaive shut themselves away in sealed citadels or in kaers beneath the earth, the human Nethermancer Rasper Nor looked for a safe haven with a community of windlings living in the Thunder Mountains. Rasper Nor counted the windling clan's Elementalists among his friends; together, they had spent the past several years studying the Horrors, in particular methods of banishing the loathsome creatures back to their home plane. Because the windling magicians thought that airborne Horrors were most likely to attack their kaer dug within the peak of Talon Mountain, the Elementalists' collective knowledge included considerable information about several such species of Horrors, as well as earthbound ones.

Rasper Nor arranged to meet his windling friends at their kaer in 1030 TH, but a hazardous route fraught with marauding Horror-spawn slowed his progress. After surviving countless perils, Rasper Nor and his few remaining retainers arrived at the base of Talon Mountain. They began the last, perilous trek up the Talon toward the kaer in the peak, battling huge, black mantises that appeared out of nowhere among the rocks. Once through the kaer's doors, Rasper Nor and his men could rest their weary bones and have their wounds tended amid comfort and congenial company. Rasper Nor also made what haste he could for another reason; he feared for his windling friends. They had agreed to hold the kaer doors open until his arrival, and the unexpected swarm of Horrors on the mountains posed a threat to them that Rasper Nor had not foreseen.

Driving off one last mantis with a final sword thrust, Rasper Nor climbed the final ledge and gazed across in shock at Talon Peak. The doors of the windling kaer stood closed, and as he read the strange symbols written across them, dread filled Rasper Nor's heart.

The windlings had sealed the kaer.

Rasper Nor and his three surviving hirelings stood stranded atop the Talon, pondering their few options with growing panic. The trek back down the cliffs grew more perilous by the second, and it was a six-day journey through lands over-run with Horrors and their dreadful creations to Rasper Nor's retreat in the Delaris Mountains. And even if by some miracle he survived to reach his tower, he knew full well that its magic might not prove strong enough to protect him from the Scourge. Yet he must try; he had no alternative.

Gripping their weapons with grim purpose, Rasper Nor and his remaining hirelings fought a running battle back down the mountain. Somehow they reached the mountain's foot alive. For two more days they fought their way across the wild, ravaged lands. They found no shelter, no rest, and no respite from the growing black clouds of Horrors that fell upon the once-sweet earth like malignant rain. The giant insects were no longer their only enemy; shrieking, winged creatures with slavering, fanged mouths and wicked talons flew around them, lashing out at their prey and drawing blood with every touch. One by one, Rasper Nor's men fell dead. The Nethermancer staggered onward until he fell, weak from blood loss. Then he crawled onward, refusing to listen to the sinister flapping of wings. Through bloodshot eyes, Rasper Nor caught one last glimpse of his tower retreat before the Horror Named Tyrannisis used its sharp talons to rip the orbs from their sockets.

Before Rasper Nor's life could ebb away, Tyrannisis possessed his soul and animated Rasper Nor's nearly dead body with its evil power. In possessing the Nethermancer, Tyrannisis discovered that Rasper Nor and the windling magicians had found ways to banish certain types of Horrors, including those like Tyrannisis itself, and in the process had also learned how to summon such beings. The windlings had recorded this knowledge in a book called the Tome of Banishment, which lay within the windling kaer that Rasper Nor had helped construct.

Determined to get at the Tome of Banishment, the Horror left Rasper Nor's identity intact, and constantly whispered into his brain that his so-called friends among the windlings had deliberately sealed the door of their kaer against him. Tyrannisis left Rasper Nor's body eyeless and hideously scarred, using the Nethermancer's blindness and pain to fan his hatred.

For months, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis tried to breach the windling kaer. Knowing that Rasper Nor had helped construct the sanctuary's defenses, Tyrannisis counted on the Nethermancer to dispel or defeat whatever wards kept the Horrors out. The possessed Nethermancer eventually succeeded, and Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis sent swarms of giant insects to overrun the windling haven.

The jubilant Horror led a group of its minions deep into the windlings' violated kaer in search of the Tome of Banishment. To Tyrannisis's outrage, one of the magicians had sealed himself and the book within a specially prepared structure. Neither Tyrannisis nor Rasper Nor could penetrate the stone sanctuary, or solve the riddle carved into its surface.

Throughout the Scourge, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis continued to experiment with extra-planar spells that could summon more Horrors. After the Scourge ended, the Horror-possessed Nethermancer turned his corrupted talents toward bringing back the Scourge. He failed in this effort, but successfully summoned enough individual Horrors into the world to threaten many villages. Upon observing a flotilla of airships from the city of Travar in flight over the Thunder Mountains, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis concocted a plan to retrieve the long-coveted Tome of Banishment. He would summon dreadful creatures to attack Barsaivian airships until a group of heroes appeared to stop the carnage. Once the heroes proved themselves able to survive the terrors that still lurked within the ruins of the windling kaer, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis planned to trick them into entering the ancient haven and unlocking the magical wards that had kept the Tome of Banishment sealed safely away for almost five hundred years. Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis would then use the Tome to reopen the gateway between Barsaive and the realm of the Horrors.

To test the mettle of prospective adventurers, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis created Horror constructs resistant to non-magical weapons and spells in the hope of ensuring that only a truly powerful team of adventurers could survive an encounter with them. Also, using flying Horror-minions as hero-bait would ensure that any successful adventurers would know how to fly or sail an airship—a skill necessary to reach the windling kaer within Talon Peak.

At this point the player characters enter the adventure, shortly after their arrival in the city of Travar. While enjoying a meal at a local tavern, they learn that in the past few weeks airships traveling near Travar have been attacked by mysterious, bloodthirsty flying creatures, and that the city's air warden wants to hire additional hands to guard the airships and their valuable cargo. The characters join the Flying Patrol, the airship force that protects the sky lanes in and around Travar. After the characters experience a few encounters with the flying creatures, known as rakken, Air Warden Drimsby learns of the existence of the Tome of Banishment, a book that holds the key to banishing the rakken. According to Drimsby's source, the Tome lies buried in the ruins of a windling citadel in the Thunder Mountains.

Drimsby, the characters, and a hearty crew of air sailors set off for the windling kaer within Talon Peak. As they descend into the depths of the terrible place, the adventurers battle horrible creatures and Horror constructs, as well as harsh weather, steep cliffs, and deep crevasses. Upon reaching the room where the Tome of Banishment lies within the sealed Sanctuary, the players must decipher the tricky riddle left behind by the Sanctuary's builders before they can take the treasure inside.

With the Tome in hand, the heroes climb triumphantly out of the windling kaer just in time to allow Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis to attack their airship and steal the book from them. The survivors of the attack fight a running battle with the Horror's airship all the way back to Travar, where they attempt to take the Tome of Banishment from Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis and use it to banish the evil being to its native plane.

Those men and women who live to accomplish this epic task will truly become the stuff of legends.

Prelude to Terror

This encounter begins shortly after the heroes have wandered into The Picky Palate, often called the best tavern in Travar, for a hot meal. When Travar's Air Warden, Gardius Drimsby, stops by the Palate to call out members of the City Watch, the heroes discover that the sky lanes around the city are being terrorized by flying Horrors bent on destroying Travar's airships and commerce.

Setting the Stage

When the characters enter the Picky Palate, read the following aloud:

You walk into The Picky Palate, all but drooling at the prospect of a gourmet meal after several days on the road. Your fellow diners look prosperous, much more so than the denizens of the roadside pubs you frequent: fine leathers, brightly colored silks, and even the occasional glint of candlelight off jewelry dazzle your eyes. The rich aroma wafting from the kitchens makes your stomachs rumble. To judge from the tempting scents, The Picky Palate more than deserves its reputation.

You seat yourselves at a table so highly polished that it gleams, reveling in the simple act of leaning back in a leather-cushioned chair. So much more comfortable than a hard, wooden stool… Within minutes, a young human woman carrying a small sheet of parchment steps up to your table. She wears a simple black dress with a white apron, both cut of good cloth.

"Good evening and welcome to The Picky Palate. I am Tarlinna, your server." She sets the parchment down in the middle of the table. On it are drawings of several choice dishes: poultry with steaming vegetables, beef topped with boiled potatoes and leeks, t'skrang fish soup, stew with winter vegetables, nut-flour bread smothered in honey, and many others. The simple sketches make your mouths water. So many luscious dishes to choose from, and so little time…

After the characters have ordered, read the following aloud:

More quickly than you expected, Tarlinna emerges from the kitchens, a large tray bearing your meals balanced on her slender shoulder. Halfway to your table, she stops and turns toward the door. The entire dining room falls silent as a dwarf clad in a steel breastplate, scarlet undershirt, and brown breeches enters the tavern. On his head he wears a rounded helmet, topped by a thin crest that runs down its middle. One hand rests on the hilt of a dwarf sword thrust through his leather belt.

When every eye in the room is upon him, the dwarf speaks. "I am sorry to interrupt everyone's meal, but I need all members of the City Watch and any other able-bodied citizens to come with me."

With a scraping of chairs and a rustling of cloth, half the diners rise and move toward the door. As the dwarf turns to leave, Tarlinna calls to him. "Warden Drimsby, has there been another attack?"

Drimsby turns back to her and answers softly. "I'm sorry, my girl. The Dawn *went down."*

Tarlinna's hands grip the edges of the tray. "Berthon?" she asks through trembling lips.

Drimsby says nothing, but slowly shakes his head. Tarlinna drops the tray and dashes through the kitchen door with a strangled cry. A grim-faced Drimsby watches her disappear, then walks out. Several men and women rise to follow, some scooping a last mouthful of food into their mouths before leaving their tables.

Adventure Hook

This hook is intended to provide a way to get the characters to Travar and into the Picky Palate. While staying in another of Barsaive's city states, an employee of Juliak Merris hires them to accompany a small caravan of mining supplies on its way to Travar, from where they are to be shipped to Merris' mines. The caravan only counts five carts, and its cargo is generally unattractive for raiders. However, the caravan is important for Merris' mining operations, so the employee wants to make sure it arrives on time. To achieve this, the caravan has to leave the trade route in several places for shortcuts, crossing paths with some of the more unpleasant inhabitants of the province.

When the caravan finally arrives in Travar, a local employee asks them to meet Juliak Merris in The Picky Palate to discuss further business. While Merris intends to hire the characters to investigate his problem with the rakken, the meeting does not take place until after the events described in **Crimson Dawn** (p. 86). Of course, the meeting with Merris (see **Baiting the Trap** on p. 98) will have to be adjusted due to the fact that he has a working relationship with the group and wanted to hire them for the job in the first place. This also provides the gamemaster with an alternative route into the action by having Merris hire the group first, then ordering them to work with the Flying Patrol.

You look around the silent, near-deserted tavern: the only patrons remaining are the few too aged to be of use. Quietly, the waitresses in the front room begin to clear the empty tables.

THEMES AND IMAGES

The characters enter a bustling establishment full of contented eaters and animated conversation. After Drimsby brings news of the destruction of the *Crimson Dawn*, a large air-freighter with two score crewmen, the level of conversation drops to a few low, dispirited mutterings. Over the soft table talk, a perceptive character can hear Tarlinna sobbing faintly in one of the back rooms.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The menu includes almost any meat dish the characters can think of, all of which come with a wide range of vegetables. The average cost of a meal is 10 silver pieces. Choice cuts of steak or extra helpings can raise this price by two to five silver pieces. The fee must be paid before the meal arrives on the table. Though The Picky Palate established this policy to forestall walkouts, the gamemaster can use it to get the characters involved in the adventure. With any luck, the heroes will follow Drimsby, ask him what the trouble is, and offer to help. Alternatively, one of them may try to comfort Tarlinna, who then explains the trouble to the character. If neither of these options work, stress that the expensive meal the characters just paid for lies scattered across the floor. If the characters flag down another waitress and ask for a new meal, the waitress tells them the following:

"I'll replace your food immediately. No charge. You must excuse Tarlinna; her betrothed served aboard the Crimson Dawn. *We've lost three airships in a month now—no one seems to know how to stop these dreadful creatures from attacking."*

If the characters ask their new waitress about the creatures, she tells them that Horrors have plagued the skies for a month, and that Air Warden Drimsby is eager to hire any adventurers willing to take on the creatures.

Comforting Tarlinna

If a character finds and comforts Tarlinna, she tells that character the same information that the other waitress knows. If a character is particularly kind to her, Tarlinna may become romantically interested in him, but it will take her at least six months of game time to get over the loss of her fiancé. Berthon, an elf, worked for Juliak Merris, an obsidiman merchant and owner of the *Crimson Dawn*.

Following Drimsby

From the tavern, Drimsby heads southeast toward the flaming wreckage of the *Crimson Dawn*. The characters may catch up to Drimsby and speak with him on the way, but Drimsby never stops walking.

Unless the questioning character manages to offend Drimsby or somehow make him suspicious, Drimsby freely

tells the characters what he knows. Talking out loud helps the old dwarf think things through, and he also wants to hire any able body he can get his hands on to help his city.

If the characters show any interest in Travar's plight, Drimsby eagerly offers them the following facts gleaned from the survivors.

- Three demonic creatures, called rakken by the locals, have attacked airships near the city. The rakken have scarlet skin, huge leathery wings, and hollow arms from which they shoot fire. The creatures use their wings and their flame jets to maneuver, often changing direction faster than any weapons fire can follow. Their long, tapered bodies each end in an opening that shoots fire, just as their arms do. A rakken's large, round head initially appear to have no mouth, until the creature opens its jaws. When it does so, the rakken's head parts across virtually its entire width, revealing hundreds of jagged teeth. Several survivors have seen their friends bitten in two by this vicious maw.
- The creatures attack by flying near airships and setting their masts, sails, and rigging on fire. As the crewmen try in vain to extinguish the flames, the creatures swoop down and pick them off. No one has yet claimed to have injured a rakken, let alone killed it.
- Most survivors are members of the Flying Patrol, a group of air sailors kept on call to escort airships as they enter and leave Travar. The patrolmen ride in small, fast patrol boats, and have tried arrow barrages, ramming, and even a spell or two against the creatures with little success. Of the three patrol boats escorting the doomed *Crimson Dawn*, only two returned to Travar intact. The third vessel remains missing.

The characters and Drimsby arrive at the burning wreckage of the *Crimson Dawn* just as Drimsby finishes speaking. Go to the following encounter, **Crimson Dawn**, below.

Troubleshooting

Ideally, this encounter should end with the characters offering to help Drimsby in some way, though they need not necessarily offer to fight the rakken at this point. Encourage the players to get involved putting out fires, clearing wreckage, offering first aid, and so on. If the characters are not interested in helping Drimsby at this point, the following encounters provide plenty of additional hooks.

If characters caught up in visions of death-or-glory offer to fight the rakken in this encounter, the gamemaster should recast the following encounter, **Crimson Dawn**, so that the fire from the burning airship burns out of control and ignites several buildings. One way or another, the characters should battle the flames side by side with the good citizens of Travar. Doing so should connect them emotionally to the people who need their help.

Crimson Dawn

In this encounter, the heroes help fight the fires caused by the crash of the *Crimson Dawn*.

As they work side by side with the citizens of Travar, the characters learn more of the city and the threat that plagues its people.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach the crash site, read the following aloud:

The mammoth airship ripped open a trench the length of fifty men when it slammed to earth. Several buildings lie smashed to rubble in its path. Cracked and scorched cobblestones lie scattered around the streets, and flaming planks threaten to set fire to nearby houses and shops. The rising wind whips the flames higher, sending hot sparks swirling into the cool, night sky. Several of the City Watch are furiously digging a second trench, trying to stop the fire from spreading into the town. One of them, a sergeant, shouts at the townspeople to help. Some move toward the diggers, but most simply stare in shock at the shattered Crimson Dawn. *Drimsby curses and grabs a shovel, bidding you to follow him closer to the flames.*

Behind the Scenes

The ship's size is difficult to judge from its burning remains. Sky Raider or Air Sailor characters who make a successful Perception-based Half-Magic (10) Test can discern three things from the wreckage: the ship was larger than a regular drakkar, the fire that consumed the *Dawn* started almost simultaneously in several locations, and the shredded sails were most likely the first target of the ship's attackers.

Fifteen to twenty of the City Watch are trying to keep the gathering crowd away from the flaming hulk. Another fifteen, plus four townspeople, are digging a firebreak to keep the conflagration from spreading. A silent mob stands watching, most too stunned to offer any help. Drimsby immediately snatches up a shovel and starts digging; at this point, the characters must choose whether or not to get involved. Some may try to prod the onlookers into digging, while others may choose to lend a hand fighting the fire.

Fighting the Fire

Assessing the situation, the characters will notice that the fire threatens to spread to the surrounding buildings within minutes. If left unchecked, it could easily set the entire city quarter on fire. The firefighters need more manpower or some other support to be successful in stopping the fire spreading. Characters can help by moving flammable objects out of the way or fetching water from nearby wells. Magicians might cast beneficial spells like Air Armor, Assuring Touch, Dry and Wet, Giant Size, Resist Fire, Sky Lattice, or Snuff (see the **Player's Compendium** for descriptions) on firefighters to enhance their capabilities.

Any character can try to gain the assistance of onlookers through roleplaying, the use of social talents or skills, or simple Interaction Tests. Some onlookers might be more easily convinced to help if they just have to form a line handing buckets to the firefighters rather than approaching the inferno.

In this situation, game mechanics do not matter as much as the players' creativity and their will to help. It is important that they do all that they can to assist; whether their ideas actually help is not important. The City Guard will be cheered up by receiving more help, while the onlookers will enter the fight against the flames if they see that complete strangers are willing to help their city.

If the gamemaster judges the characters' actions as appropriate, the fire will stop spreading. It might even be put out completely. If they fail to do what is in their capabilities, or don't do anything at all, have them witness many people's homes being reduced to ash.

Sole Survivor

During the frantic digging and scraping, have one of the characters spot a blackened hand moving inside the inferno of the crashed airship. Though any character may see the hand, consider choosing a player whose character tends to stay out of the limelight, or a character refusing to help Drimsby. In the former case, a shy player character has a chance to do something heroic, gaining both attention and Legend Points. In the latter, the reluctant character may feel more personally connected to the events that are occurring and choose to get involved after all.

The sole survivor is an elven crewman named Radlin. Any character attempting to rescue him must have some protection against fire, or take Step 12/2D10 damage from breaking through the flaming timbers to drag Radlin out. Though the elf is initially in too much pain to speak, once healed he will share valuable information with his rescuer (see **Radlin's Tale**, below).

The rescuer also gets more immediate benefits. Impressed with the hero's sacrifice, the owner of The Picky Palate offers him a free meal, and the questors of Garlen hovering nearby heal the character for free, once they have taken care of the most critically wounded. At the gamemaster's discretion, any business in this neighborhood may choose to give the hero a 10 percent discount on any goods available from that establishment.

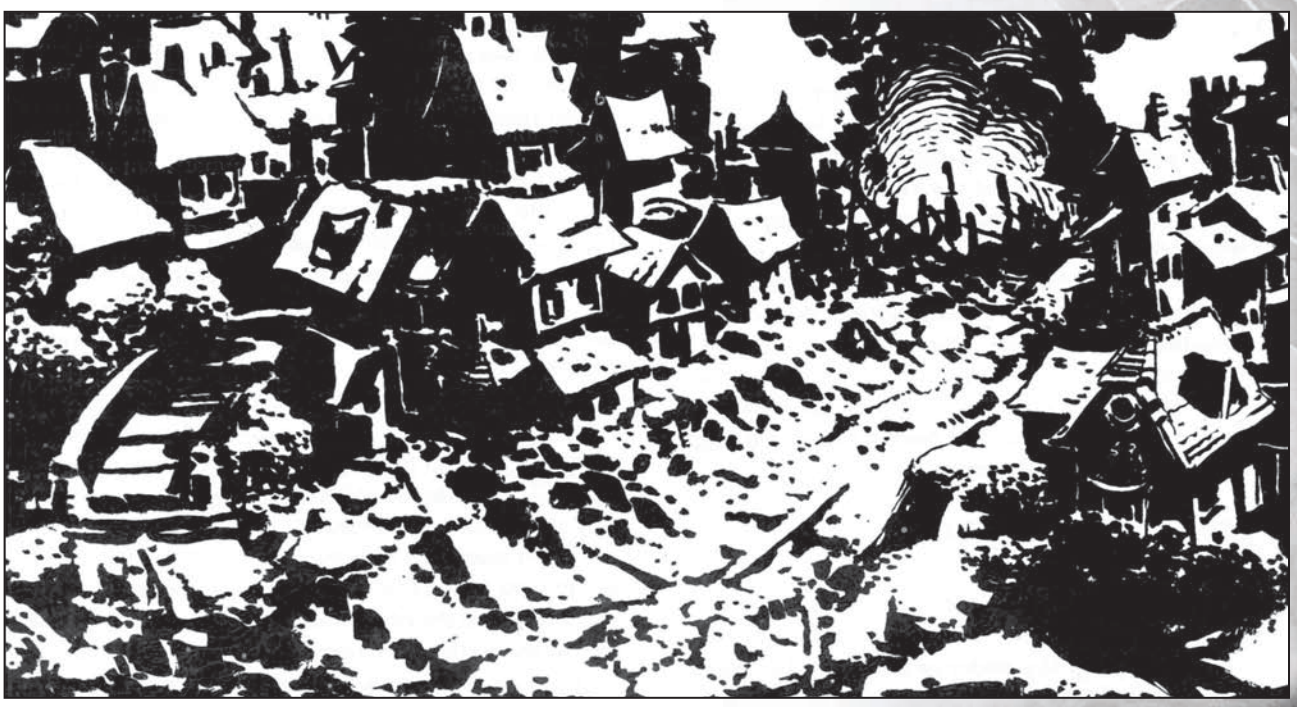
Radlin's Tale

The lone survivor of the *Crimson Dawn* disaster knows about the rakken firsthand. When he is able to speak to the characters, read them the following:

> *"They came from nowhere, shooting fire from their arms and flapping their huge wings near our heads. I kept firing arrows at them, but my shafts never pierced them. They attacked my friend Berthon in the rigging; he struck a good blow before one of the Horrors slew him. It bathed him in flame, then its head seemed to split and it ripped him in half with slavering, sharp teeth.*
>
> *"All of my companions died, but the Passions let me live. Or maybe those things did. I don't know. I wish I had died—and taken a few Horrors with me."*

As the sole survivor, Radlin feels guilty. A truly heroic character will try to comfort him, and may suggest he join the Flying Patrol in order to take revenge against the rakken. Though Radlin does not think of vengeance himself, he eagerly agrees if someone mentions that possibility to him. If not, he plans to leave Travar as soon as his wounds heal.

A character who helps the elf cope with his guilt need not make Persuasion Tests. Instead, roleplay the conversation to its conclusion, keeping in mind that heroes can build legends with kind words as well as with steel.



Questors of Garlen

Several questors of the Passion Garlen, young women dressed in white shirts and pants, have gathered near the wreck to tend those wounded as the ship crashed to the cobbled streets. If a character saves Radlin from the wreckage, the questors will call the character to bring Radlin to them, where a windling girl named Tryla gives the elf immediate aid. Radlin can tell his story at this point, while Tryla asks the characters to stay and hold Radlin in place for his treatment. Eventually, volunteers led by the questors transport all the wounded to the Sanctum of Garlen, a refuge several blocks away.

Talking with Drimsby

After the fire has been contained, Air Warden Drimsby mentions to the characters that he is looking for temporary recruits for the Flying Patrol. This branch of the City Watch guards airships and shipping lanes near Travar. If any or all of the characters agree, the Air Warden signs them up at a pay rate of 15 silver pieces per eight-hour shift, adding five silver pieces in hazard pay to the standard pay rate of 10 silver pieces. He cannot pay much more, because the city merchants in charge of the budget will give him no more funds. Alternatively, Drimsby may offer a bounty of 750 silver pieces out of his own pocket to any character who finds and destroys the rakken. A character or group must either join the patrol or claim the bounty, but may not do both.

No matter which arrangement the characters choose, Drimsby takes care of such simple tasks as arranging for healing at the Sanctum or finding rooms (though he does not pay for lodging). Once the heroes have proven themselves and gained Drimsby's trust, he may choose to assist them further. He does not offer to buy them weapons, armor, or any other equipment, however. The characters must acquire these things themselves as part of their contract.

Once the group has either joined the Flying Patrol or agreed to take the bounty, Drimsby asks them to meet him at the Flying Patrol's docking house at noon the next day. Go to **Knights of the Skies**, below.

Rumors

During the characters' stay in Travar, they may hear the following rumors about the Air Warden. The gamemaster must determine which of the rumors are true and which are false. The gamemaster may adapt the tone and wording of each rumor, depending on which of the various townsfolk the heroes ask.

"Drimsby's been Air Warden for more than ten years. He's an old hand at air sailing—used to fly with his patrol up until a few years ago. What with these Horror attacks, I pity the man. He's doing the best he can. Can you blame him for not defeating those fiendish things?"

"Don't be startin' me on Drimsby, friend. The dwarf's a coward and a fool. Says he's too old to take ship and face the demons. Says he leaves the fightin' to the younger men. Like my son ... Drimsby killed him, as sure as if he'd slit his throat. The dwarf sat safe on the ground while my son fought Horrors and died for it."

Troubleshooting

If the characters choose not to help fight the fire, have a sergeant of the City Watch grab them and commandeer their assistance. Alternatively, have a gamemaster character start digging, and make sure the player characters notice all the attention and respect he attracts.

True heroes should want to help on their own, but occasionally they need a little prodding. Regardless of how much effort the gamemaster puts into getting the characters to help, they may simply refuse to get involved. If the player characters do not offer any assistance, make sure they are shown the consequences of their decision not to act. This could range from destroyed houses to a substantial number of dead Name-givers.

If the characters take the bounty instead of joining the Flying Patrol, Drimsby sends them out to look for the missing patrol boat anyway (see **Knights of the Skies**, below). The gamemaster will, however, need to recast the following encounter slightly to reflect the characters' status as bounty hunters.

Knights of the Skies

In this encounter, the characters learn to fly airships, search for the missing patrol boat, and discover more about the marauding rakken.

Setting the Stage

When the characters arrive at the docks, read the following aloud:

After resting most of the morning, you arrive at the Flying Patrol dock. Several small airships, some bearing the scars of battle, stand moored along wooden wharfs, looking for the entire world like a fleet of riverboats on a waterway gone suddenly dry. A dwarf with tired eyes and a weary t'skrang rub wax over one of the patrol boats, glancing indifferently at you as you enter the small docking house.

You find Drimsby's office easily enough; the grim-faced dwarf stands in the doorway, waiting for you. "Thank you for your promptness," he says, walking into his office and beckoning you to follow. Drimsby gestures toward a few wooden chairs and bids you take a seat. He offers you water, pouring each of you a cupful from a plain, wooden flagon. He pours a cup for himself, then leans against the edge of his desk and looks each of you in the eye.

"Let me tell you about your first day's work with the Flying Patrol."

BEHIND THE SCENES

Everyone refers to the airship dock and all buildings on it collectively as "the dock". It has mooring spaces for the city's four galleys, spaces for a number of smaller craft, a docking house, and a storage hut. The docking house includes a waiting area, an office where Drimsby's second-in-command stays whenever Drimsby is out, and Drimsby's own office where he keeps pay records, tips on battling Sky Raiders, and other work-related information. The dock also includes a shack full of spare parts and shipwright's tools.

The airmen with whom the heroes will interact most are a human named Lark and an ork named Yorlk. Neither of these men know anything more about the rakken than Drimsby does. In briefing the adventurers on the workings of the Flying Patrol, Drimsby tells them the following:

"Outgoing ships send us a runner about an hour before leaving. When the runner arrives at the docking house, we dispatch our own runners to the patrolmen and send two or three patrol boats up to escort the trading vessel. The patrol ships fly escort for an hour or two before returning to Travar. The Flying Patrol has put quite a crimp in the dealings of our local raiders. Time was, they had spies living in the city; when the spies saw a ship lift, they'd warn their fellows, who'd strike the ship within days of it leaving Travar. I could almost wish for sky pirates to fight now; anything but those rakken beasts.

"I need to know where you'll be from breakfast to dinner each day. If a ship tells us she's going up, I'll send a runner and have you airborne in less than an hour.

You escort her out safely, then come back and go about your business until another ship lifts. Even during the heaviest trading season, we usually only get three flights a day; with these flying Horrors marauding, it's dropped back to one, sometimes two.

"Ships don't leave Travar at night; the darkness makes it too easy for the pirates to trail them and attack after the patrol boats leave. Sometimes, though, a ship comes in after dark. Most merchants try to schedule day landings, but slow winds or over-long trading stops can delay them. That's what happened last night with the Crimson Dawn. *I sent up three patrol boats, but the* Crimson Dawn *was already on fire when they got there. One of the patrol ships is still missing; I want you to find it. Take up a ship now to get the feel of it, and then look for the missing crewmen. If they're alive, take them to the questors of Garlen in the Sanctum. If not, bring their bodies back to the city for a decent burial."*

The newly inducted airmen may ask Drimsby whatever questions they wish. If the characters ask Drimsby about the earlier rakken attacks, read them the following:

"They hit the Day Dreamer *first, an empty ore carrier headed toward Merris's mines in the Thunder Mountains. The Merris merchant house uses airships to cart ore to Travar, where Juliak Merris sells it to local foundries. The creatures struck in broad daylight. The* Dreamer *was a sturdy ship, built to last centuries if need be. Those flying Horrors breached the hull and brought the* Dreamer *down with all hands. We also lost several men from the Flying Patrol ships flying escort. We plucked nine survivors out of the wreckage. They all described their attackers as three huge, winged Horrors that shot fire from their arms.*

"Six days later, the things attacked the Rigula, *a wooden galley loaded with goods from several local merchants. My friend Captain Guidon owned the* Rigula *and made his living ferrying merchandise between Travar and Kratas. Most of the merchants in Travar had cargo on the galley; they took plenty of losses when the Horrors destroyed it. The Horrors set it afire, and it went up like a pitch-soaked torch before crashing. The Flying Patrol managed to save fourteen of the* Rigula's *crew, swooping over the galley and snatching them off the burning decks. All the survivors described the same fire-spitting Horrors.*

"Their third target was the Crimson Dawn. *You saw what they did to her. The* Dawn *is the second freighter Juliak Merris has lost. He's an obsidiman; been trading in Travar for years. He has plenty of friends, and a reputation for fair dealing. He deserves better luck. So do we all."*

Exploring Travar

Though the characters will have an eventful first day on the job, they will also live through several long stretches of downtime in which they may choose their own course of action. The characters will probably want to wander around Travar, searching for any special items that might

give them an edge in the inevitable encounter with the rakken. If the players choose this sensible course of action, they may visit any of the locations listed below. However, the characters have to keep in mind that Drimsby might always call them in, so they will need to leave back a message at their place that points Drimsby's runner towards them.

Though the city of Travar is far too large to describe in detail, the characters can find the following locations within an easy walk of the docks.

The Picky Palate

The tavern where the adventure began serves meals from noon to midnight and belongs to the human Maxor Yarl. A consummate gourmet, Yarl prides himself on serving the finest cuisine in southern Barsaive.

Uglan's Arms

Uglan, an aging t'skrang swordsman, turned to selling the huge quantities of weapons and armor he had collected from his defeated foes. This enterprise proved so profitable that he eventually opened up shop in Travar. The characters may find in his shop any weapon normally available.

The Broken Cutlass

A bartender named Mug serves spirits from this traditional tavern, frequented by retired sailors, raiders, and a few who help out on airships now and then (or even still engage in piracy).

Sanctum of Garlen

Fifteen women and three men live within this retreat, healing all in need. In addition to healing, the questors also sell all of the healing aids described in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 450 of the **Player's Compendium**.

The Slumbering Traveler

This inn is famous for its good beds, hot baths, and safety. The owner, an obsidiman named Greeg Harksot, keeps two well-armed guards on duty at all times. These guards patrol the grounds to keep out thieves and safeguard the patrons. The characters may hear any number of legends and rumors in the Traveler.

Mad Marnic Strikes!

A local magician who long ago went insane, Mad Marnic walks the streets of this corner of Travar babbling incoherently to unseen friends and screaming at invisible tormentors. Everyone in the district knows Mad Marnic and avoids him like the plague. Maxor Yarl of The Picky Palate leaves table scraps behind the tavern for him from time to time, but only the waitress Tarlinna knows of this kindness.

At some point during the day, have Mad Marnic run up to one of the characters, sling mud at him, and cackle something about stealing oranges from the apple grove. If the character attacks Marnic, point out that the old man is annoying, but harmless. If a character seriously injures Marnic, that character has ruined his reputation in this

part of Travar from that point onward. Few people speak to him, and merchants charge him 10 percent above standard prices for all goods and services. If the character ignores the lunatic, Marnic eventually stops harassing the group and goes merrily on his way.

Should a character ask someone about Marnic, tell him the following. Note that the passage below is written as if spoken by a commoner on the street; the gamemaster may wish to change the accent or wording to fit whomever the character asks.

> *"Mad Marnic soiled ya, did he? Well, now, there's a strange one. Some say he were a Elementalist what dabbled where he shouldn'ta. Some even say he's Horror-marked. If that's true, seems funny that the creature never makes him do harm. Just torments the poor crazed soul, that's all."*

This incident, though minor, lets the heroes know what a Horror mark is. This piece of information becomes important in **Finding the Sanctuary**, later on in the adventure, on p. 115. If the characters already know about Horror marks, the gamemaster may skip the meeting with Mad Marnic. Though in most Barsaivian cities a Horror-marked individual would be stoned to death or driven out, the people of the dock district know that Marnic is harmless and therefore attribute his madness to some less corrupt influence than a Horror.

Unfriendly Skies

Eventually, the characters must take to the skies and hunt for the missing crewmen. Upon boarding their ship, the *Tree Skimmer*, they meet their fellow airmen, Lark and Yorlk. Drimsby has asked these two experienced flyers to work with the characters. For Lark's and Yorlk's statistics, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 134. The patrol boats can seat up to eight men comfortably; the weight constraints of the magic that keeps it aloft give the craft a maximum carrying capacity of 10 men.

Flying the Skimmer

For most characters, this might be the first time they actually have to crew an airship. Perhaps they have not even been on one before. While flying an airship requires the Air Sailing talent or skill (which the characters may or may not have learned) the focus of this adventure is not operating an airship. This means that the gamemaster does not have to worry about if they are actually able to propel the ship, as Lark and Yorlk will fill that role. However, if one of the characters has learned the Air Sailing talent or skill, or is an Air Sailor or Sky Raider, the gamemaster should give him the opportunity for a little practice.

See the description of the Air Sailing talent on p. 168 of the **Player's Compendium**, the statistics for the *Tree Skimmer* given below, and the **Airships and Riverboats** chapter on p. 141 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium.** Use the following guidelines to bring your characters into the action.

Each airship has a given Crew Size, which is 4 for the *Tree Skimmer* or any other patrol boat the characters might encounter. The *Skimmer* does not really need exactly four crewmen, however. The Air Sailing talent requires only 75 percent of the regular crew size to succeed on their Air Sailing Test for the ship to fly just fine, 50 percent are needed for basic maneuvering, and only 25 percent are needed to keep it in the air. Further, each sailor can count as more than one crewman if he achieves a result better than Average on his Talent or Skill Test. So for the *Skimmer* to stay afloat, only Lark or Yorlk has to succeed on his Air Sailing Test. Both have to succeed for basic maneuvering, and if one of them achieves a Good or better result, they are at peak efficiency.

Essentially, Lark and Yorlk can operate the *Skimmer* all by themselves (although they appreciate any help the characters can render). In game terms, they might have to spend Karma on their Air Sailing Tests to make sure they get home before supper, but they are used to flying with non-sailors and will probably not mind. The characters better look after the two airmen, however, because if one of them gets hurt , chances are that they will have to walk back home on foot (or fall from the sky in the worst case).

Flying Patrol Boat

With a length of 6 yards and a width of just over 1 yard, a patrol boat is only a little larger than an airboat. Shipwrights designed the patrol boat specifically for Travar's Flying Patrol, as a fast scout and to quickly transfer troops onto a cargo ship under attack. If a cargo ship is attacked by raiders, Travar's patrol boats are manned with troops from the Flying Patrol and City Watch to join the boarding fight that has likely already begun. While merchant ship crews are no match for crystal raiders, the Flying Patrol are.

Patrol boats usually don't mount any ship weapons, as they cannot hope to win a battle against a larger vessel that does. Patrol boats on scout missions rarely operate more than a day out from Travar, as they have little room to store equipment or provisions.

Base Price: NA (or around 25,000)

Speed: 13
Maneuverability: 11
Firepower: None

Hull:
Armor: 6 — Ramming: 12
Cargo: 2

Damage:
Derelict: 24 — Critical: 8
Destroyed: 32

Crew:
Captain: 1 — Crew Size: 4
Crew Skill: 1 — Crew Rating: 8
Morale: 35

Search for the Ship

Lark pilots the *Tree Skimmer*. Once he has flown the craft a reasonable distance from the city, have the characters make Perception Tests to search for the missing ship. To find the downed patrol boat takes a Base Time of 180 minutes, or three hours. For every result level above

poor that a character achieves on a Perception (6) Test , reduce the search time by 10 minutes. For example, if a player achieves a result of 14 on his Perception (6) Test, an Excellent result, reduce the Base Time by 30 minutes to 150 minutes just for this player's result alone. If the gamemaster wishes, he may make Perception (6) Tests for Lark and Yorlk and use the successes generated for those gamemaster characters to further reduce the search time. Regardless of how successful the players are, the characters must spend at least 60 minutes searching.

After the characters have searched for the appropriate amount of time, have the character with the highest Perception Test result spot a large *kalamis* tree at the edge of a forest just outside Travar. Something large has split it down the middle, and several large limbs lie at its base. If the *Tree Skimmer* moves in for a closer look, the adventurers can see the missing patrol boat wedged high in the tree's remaining, twisted branches. At this point, one of the characters must climb the tree to look for survivors.

Kalamis trees exude a sweet sap used as a syrup on pastries and other sweet foods. The tasty sap is a delicacy for many animals, and so the tree developed a natural defense, growing wicked barbs that stick out along its limbs and branches. Climbing over these thorns is extremely difficult and painful. The climber must make a Climbing (7) Test. If the climber does not achieve at least a Poor result on this test, he slips and takes falling damage as determined by the gamemaster. If the climber achieves a Poor result, but not an Average result, he takes Step 4/D6 damage from the thorns and has to repeat the test.

All but one of the craft's six crewmen perished in the crash landing. The sole survivor, a t'skrang named Slilith, is unconscious and requires immediate aid. To get Slilith or any of the dead crewmembers into the *Tree Skimmer*, the rescuing character must make a successful Climbing (9) Test. The added difficulty reflects that the climber has to handle the dead weight Slilith poses. Note that the rules for Encumbrance may also apply (see p. 48 of the **Player's Compendium**). If this test fails, determine the consequences as for the previous one. The characters might want to drag Slilith onto their ship using a rope. This, however, is a bad idea, as they will have to drag him through the barbs. Any character who uses a rope to get into or out of the tree takes step 4 damage five times.

Once Slilith heals, either at the hands of a skilled character or of the questors of Garlen in Travar, he can tell the characters what happened during the attack on the *Crimson Dawn* (see **Slilith's Tale**, below).

Slilith's Tale

The t'skrang airman that the heroes may have rescued in **Knights of the Skies** (p. 88) was the only survivor of the patrol ship lost during the attack on the *Crimson Dawn*. If the player characters ask him about the attack, read them the following:

"The winged monsters came from nowhere, shooting past us on great gouts of flame, banking and rolling and diving, shooting fire at us from their arms. They set the Dawn*'s sails afire; one of*

them roasted my best mate, Valiirye. I can still hear him screaming… One of them swooped close and I struck it with my sword, but the blow bounced off. Jarred my hand, hard—I almost dropped my blade. The Horror flew off, and I thought I'd scared it away; then I saw it fly beneath the patrol boat and bite clear through the hull!

"We tried to bring our ship down in a clearing, but fell straight into the trees. Pietor and Hajim must have died in the crash. I remember nothing after we hit the kalamis *tree, though it feels like its branches nearly crushed my skull."*

Returning to Travar

Once the characters have reported to Drimsby, the Air Warden thanks and dismisses them, then calls for another crew to salvage the remains of the ruined patrol boat.

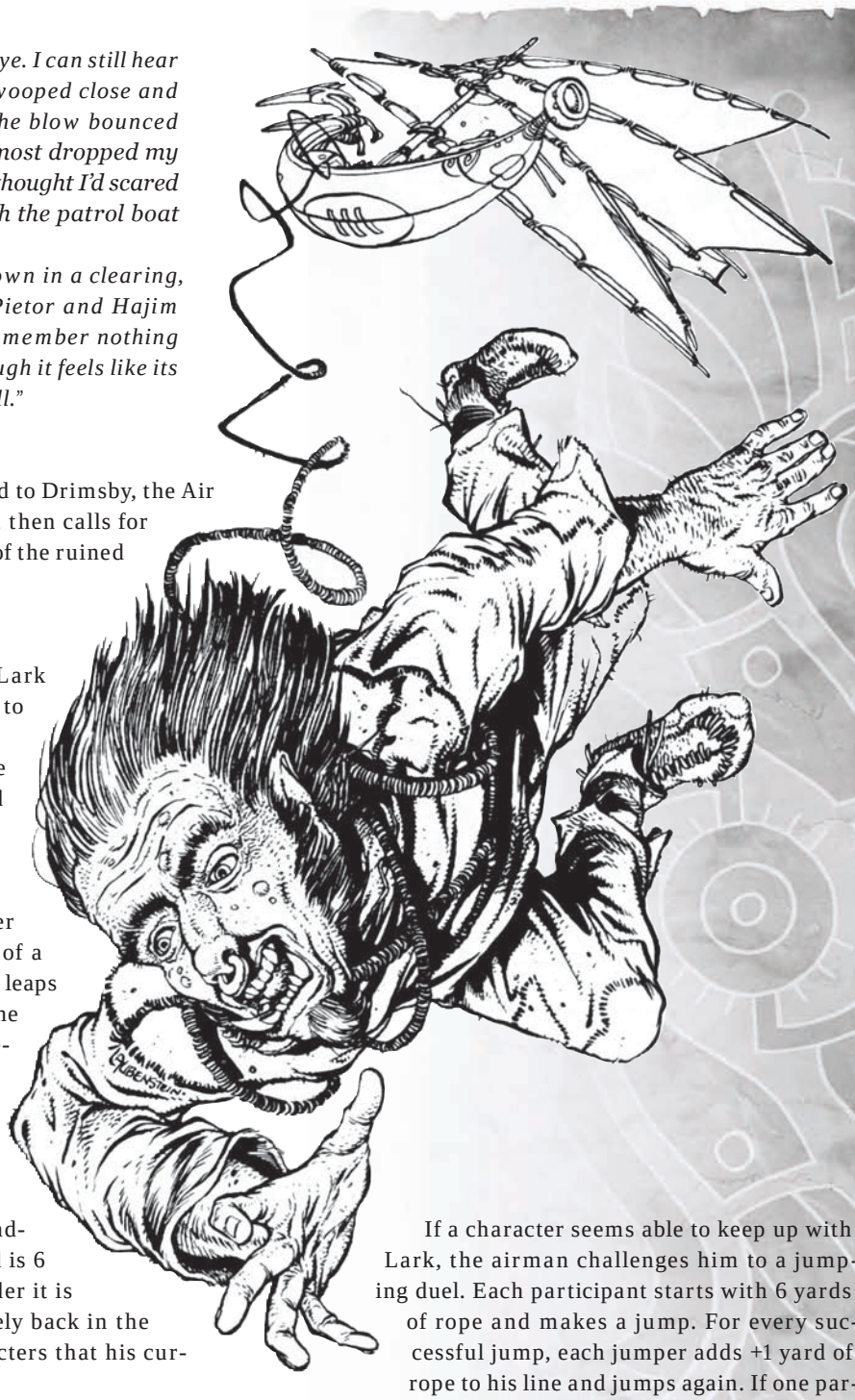
Hull Jumping

After the salvage ship departs, Lark and Yorlk challenge the characters to their favorite sport, hull jumping.

Though Lark seems calm to the point of indifference, he is a die-hard thrill seeker who developed hull jumping to while away some of the dull hours aboard airships. In this dangerous pastime, the hull jumper secures himself to the middle seat of a patrol boat with a short length of rope, leaps off one side, and swings around to the other, landing back on the deck (hopefully). As the jumper pushes himself off the side, he also pushes the boat away behind him, which helps pull the rope tight during the initial swing and shoves the craft down and back into a better position for the landing. The shortest length of rope used is 6 yards. The longer the rope, the harder it is to complete the swing and land safely back in the patrol boat. Lark brags to the characters that his current record stands at 12 yards.

In game terms, anyone courageous (or foolish) enough to try this stunt must make a Dexterity Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the length of the rope in yards. Hull jumping is extremely difficult, but an agile character can probably make one out of every five jumps. An Average or Good result lets the leaper grab onto the side of the boat and drag himself in. An Excellent result throws him haphazardly into the ship, and an Extraordinary result places the jumper on his feet in the patrol boat. A Poor result does Step 4/D6 damage to the character, who must be hauled back into the boat. No armor protects against this damage.

Lark jumps not for money or to prove anything, but simply because he likes the thrill of hurling himself out of the patrol boat. Yorlk, on the other hand, enjoys the gambling, and bets up to 5 silver pieces per jump on Lark.



If a character seems able to keep up with Lark, the airman challenges him to a jumping duel. Each participant starts with 6 yards of rope and makes a jump. For every successful jump, each jumper adds +1 yard of rope to his line and jumps again. If one participant misses a jump, he must keep trying at his current length of rope until he succeeds. The duel continues for ten jumps, or until one of the two exceeds Lark's record (12 yards). In the case of a tie, Lark concedes victory to the character; Yorlk is happy to part with his money if this happens. The winner receives whatever Yorlk has bet (up to 50 silver pieces), as well as an additional Legend Point Award to reflect the character's newly gained reputation as a daredevil.

Escort Duty

During the course of the day, two more ships leave Travar, one belonging to the Merris merchant house and the other to an independent hauler. Drimsby calls in all of his patrols to escort them. The first ship leaves in late afternoon, the second at dinner time.

Though nothing happens during these two flights, the gamemaster should ask the players where their characters are sitting in the patrol boat and where their ship flies in relation to the others. These details will be necessary during the next encounter, **Obsidian Flyer** (see below), when the rakken finally attack.

Back to Earth

At day's end, Lark and Yorlk may decide to take their new compatriots out carousing. Likable and loyal, these two make ideal companions for the player characters. The gamemaster should encourage a friendly relationship for several reasons. First, adding familiar and trustworthy gamemaster characters enriches the flavor of Travar and makes it seem more real to the players. Second, because Lark and Yorlk are loyal to the Flying Patrol, their friendship may well encourage the player characters to feel the same way.

When the rakken strike later in the night, the adventurers are more likely to act heroically than they might if they saw the Flying Patrol as just another job.

Rumors

The characters may hear rumors about Mad Marnic and the rakken at this point. The gamemaster must determine which of the rumors are true and which false. The gamemaster may adapt the tone and wording of each rumor, depending on which of the various townsfolk the heroes ask.

Mad Marnic

"Aye, I remember Mad Marnic. Poor old soul. Enchanter, he was—sold healing balms and the like. Didn't charge more than a body could pay, neither. Something happened to him a few years back; no one knows what. Went mad, he did-stark, starin' mad. Makes me sad to see him, but the poor creature's harmless."

"A good man, Marnic, but foolish. Some say he tried to cast a spell using raw magic, and his madness comes of a Horror mark. I can neither prove nor disprove that claim. Still, I have never known him to do harm."

The Rakken

"Horrors. Definitely Horrors."

"Anybody tells you they're Horrors, don't you listen. The Horrors are gone. You ask me, the Passion Vestrial sent those flying Horrors. What d'you mean, why? He's a Mad Passion, isn't he? Why does he do anything?"

"I don't know what they are. I just want them gone."

Troubleshooting

Hopefully, Lark and Yorlk befriend the player characters. Unfortunately, the hull jumping competition may create some enmity between Lark and his challenger. If Lark wins, have him promise to buy the participating character a drink or two from the jackpot. If the character beats the pants off Lark, the airman is happy to find a kindred spirit rather than insulted at being bested. Who knows; the two might spend all night downing drinks and thinking up new and more dangerous endeavors.

The gamemaster should try to forge a relationship between these two gamemaster characters and the heroes. The rest of the adventure stands to be much less mercenary and more fun to play if the heroes care about their mission for reasons other than pay.

Obsidian Flyer

In this encounter, the heroes fight their first battle with the rakken, the terrible creatures that the Horror Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis has summoned to terrorize Travar's shipping lanes. As the battle rages, the characters realize that defeating these creatures requires more strength than they possess. The fight becomes both a temporary setback and a foreshadowing of trials to come.

Setting the Stage

The following text assumes that the characters drank a lot on the previous evening and are still in their room. The gamemaster should adjust the text according to the current situation.

The sound of someone hammering on the door of your room rouses you from sleep. Still dizzy from the evening's drinking, you open the door. One of Drimsby's runners gasps out his message: a merchant ship, the Obsidian Flyer, *is on its way in. As the messenger regains his breath, you scramble into your clothes and pick up your gear, then hotfoot it through Travar's shadowed streets to the dock.*

Lark and Yorlk have beaten you there. Breathless, you join them aboard the Tree Skimmer, *followed by the rest of the patrol boat's crew. The lights of Travar disappear behind you as the* Tree Skimmer *flies northwest to rendezvous with the incoming merchant ship. Drimsby's runner told you that the ship sent word of its approach more than two hours ago. As your ship flies in formation with two other boats from the Patrol, you and your companions search the night skies for the Merris merchant vessel.*

Suddenly, you spot a glint of pale moonlight off something far ahead. Steering nearer, you see a ship like none you've ever seen before. It is not so much the size or build, but the color that catches your attention. The whole ship is painted black, but the paint glitters and blinks like the night-sky, from what light it catches. Sailing nearer still, you see Merris's scarlet flag waving proudly from the vast ship's mainmast.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Most of the *Obsidian Flyer*'s crew are humans, though several elves, orks, and t'skrang also serve aboard her. Many of the elves carry crossbows, which they finger nervously as the escort approaches. Once convinced that the airmen are indeed Travar's Flying Patrol, the *Flyer* crewmen resume their tense watch over the night skies. Those crew members with heat sight stand ready to act as point defense, should the rakken attack the ship.

The *Flyer*'s deck is lit by several light quartz crystals mounted around the airship's perimeter. Though an airship's cargo is almost always stored below decks, several crates secured with thick ropes sit on the deck of the *Flyer*. The ship's trademaster has come home with a surplus of goods, hoping to compensate his bosses, crewmen, and himself for the expensive losses of the other Merris-owned airships downed by the rakken.

As the *Obsidian Flyer* and its escort pass over the city's outskirts, read the following aloud:

> *"As you return to safe harbor in Travar alongside the* Obsidian Flyer*, you stifle a bored yawn. No Horrors, no attack, just another uneventful patrol. Your sword was meant to sing a hero's ballad, not rest unblooded in its sheath. A few more trips like this and you'll be off seeking fame elsewhere.*
>
> *You shift your weight, searching in vain for a comfortable seat on the patrol boat's hard, wooden benches, and lean back against its wooden side. A spark of reddish-orange light appears low in the southwestern sky, just off the ship's bow. A star, no doubt. Lazily, you watch it move, trying to remember which stars hang that low in Travar's skies at this time of night. But surely stars don't move?*
>
> *You swallow hard, your mouth suddenly dry as you realize that the light is no star!"*

What the characters take for a star is actually the flame that shoots from the circular arms of the rakken. Though the creatures primarily use their wings to propel themselves, their powerful flame jets can boost their speed enormously and help them make impossibly quick, tight turns. The three rakken approaching the *Flyer* use these flame jets to make their initial attack run.

Fighting the Rakken

The gamemaster must tell the players when the rakken arrive and combat begins. During the first combat round, two of the rakken streak toward the mainsails of the *Obsidian Flyer* and set them aflame. Several of the elves fire their crossbows at the creatures, to no effect. The third rakken swoops down to attack the player characters in the *Tree Skimmer*. The speed and suddenness of its attack gives this rakken Initiative during this first combat round. In subsequent rounds, play proceeds normally.

Even though the battle in this encounter does not really involve ship-to-ship combat, many of the rules for such battles apply. With four airships in close flight formation, the gamemaster will need to maneuver them when fighting the rakken. For ship combat rules, see the **Airships and Riverboats** chapter on p.148 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**. Note that in this encounter it is most important to know where the characters are within the patrol boat and the boat's position in relation to the *Obsidian Flyer*. To make keeping track of these variables easier, photocopy and cut out the maps of the patrol boat and the *Cloud Runner* galley on p.126. Use the *Cloud Runner* to represent the *Obsidian Flyer*. Place figures on the scale drawings or pencil in everyone's position, so that all players can see exactly where everyone is and what actions each of their characters can feasibly perform.

The rakken attacking the patrol boat tends to position itself off the bow where it can use its flame and bite

attacks on several opponents at once. The physical distance between the creature and the characters makes it more difficult to hit the rakken with melee weapons, as the attacker has to lean out of the patrol boat. It also leaves the attacker more exposed. To reflect this, the attacker is considered Harried (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 408 of the **Player's Compendium**).

The patrol boat's pilot must make a successful Air Sailing (5) Test each combat round to keep the boat steady enough for other characters to attack the rakken. After 4 rounds, the creature flies beneath the ship and attempts to set it afire from below. To execute this maneuver, the creature makes a Dexterity (11) Test. If the test succeeds, the patrol boat pilot can only prevent the attack by making a Maneuverability Test with a result higher than the creature's Dexterity Test result. Alternatively, anyone daring enough to perform a successful hull jump may make a Melee Attack Test, but requires a successful Called Shot to hit (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 404 of the **Player's Compendium**).

If this bold maneuver hits the creature, the rakken becomes unnerved and flies away to join its mates in torching the *Obsidian Flyer*. Of course, a jumper who fails will be left dangling from a rope at the vicious creature's mercy. If the characters fail to either drive off the rakken or maneuver the patrol boat away from it, the patrol boat catches fire after three successful attacks the rakken leads in this manner. If this happens, the ship begins to sink after another 3 combat rounds and crashes 6 combat rounds after that (see **Inevitable Defeat**, p. 97).

A character may want to leap from the patrol boat to the *Flyer* to battle the two rakken besieging the merchantman. The two rakken attacking the *Flyer* spend 2 combat rounds setting the ship's masts and sails on fire, then attack the steersman and the ship's wheel in the third and fourth combat round. When the rakken move toward the deck of the ship, they fly within melee combat range, so a character aboard can save the wheel and steersman by intercepting the rakken. The rakken will make only these two attacks, as it is obvious then that setting the sails on fire was enough to finish the *Flyer*.

Rakken (3)

DEX: 10 **STR**: 13 **TOU**: 10
PER: 7 **WIL**: 8 **CHA**: 5

Initiative: 10 **Physical Defense**: 12
Number of Actions: 2 **Spell Defense**: 10
Attack (3): 13 **Social Defense**: 12
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 10
1 × Bite (3): 16 **Mystic Armor**: 5
2 × Flame Jets: 8 (Fire; see text)

Death Rating: 52 (64) **Recovery Tests**: 5
Wound Threshold: 15 **Knockdown**: 13
Unconsciousness Rating: 45 (55)

Combat Movement: 106✦ **Full Movement**: 212✦

✦ This is the Horror construct's flying Movement rate.

Karma Points: 20 **Karma Step**: 8

Powers: Durability (2), Maneuver T (4): 16

Legend Points (3): 1,590

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

This particularly bizarre Horror construct has a round head with no visible mouth and a long body that tapers into an open tube, from which the rakken emits a constant jet of fire. Huge, leathery wings adorn its back, and its two arms each end in a charred ring of flesh from which the creature shoots powerful flame jets. These jets are used to both attack and maneuver in flight. It can rotate its arms in a full circle at any of the arms' major joints. This flexibility allows the rakken to fly circles around bewildered opponents.

Its mouth, visible only when open, contains rows of razor-sharp teeth. Because the mouth is hidden when closed, the rakken's skull appears to split in half whenever the creature opens its vicious maw.

Rules

The rakken's favorite close-quarters tactic is to bathe its prey in flame, incapacitating its opponent in order to follow the flame attack with its ferocious bite. Because rakken are Horror constructs, talents and spells intended to achieve animal control or dominance are useless against them.

Flame Jet: A character struck by one of the rakken's flame jets takes Step 8/2D6 damage from the initial burst, then Step 4/D6 fire damage for four more rounds, or until the fire is extinguished. Physical armor protects against this damage. While the character is on fire, he is considered Harried for all actions (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 408 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Resistant to Non-Magical Weapons: Rakken are resistant to non-magical weapons. Any character attacking with such a weapon must roll an Extraordinary result on his Attack Test to achieve an Armor-defeating Hit.

Inevitable Defeat

No matter how powerful or clever the characters may be, their efforts cannot save the doomed *Obsidian Flyer*. They may slow the rakken down, but cannot prevent them from burning the *Flyer*'s masts and sails. The *Flyer* is heavily laden, and although most of the hull remains intact, the loss of sails, wheel, and crew sends the merchant airship plummeting toward the ground.

Crashing

Once the *Flyer* has lost its sails and mast, assume it hits the ground 15 combat rounds later. If a character leapt aboard the *Flyer* and saved the wheel and steersman, the steersman must make a successful Air Sailing (12) Test to avoid hitting buildings, rocks, or trees that might damage the ship further. The captain and steersman, an ork Air Sailor named Trolm, has an Air Sailing rank of 6 and an Air Sailing step of 11/D10+D8. If the test fails, the *Flyer* crashes with a tremendous impact. All persons aboard her take Step 23/D20+2D10 damage, including any player characters who leapt onto the *Flyer* to battle the rakken. No armor protects against this damage.

Rather than making individual Damage Tests for all of the *Flyer*'s crew, assume that the crash kills or critically injures half of them and leaves the rest with minor injuries. It will take at least two months to repair the damage to the ship. If the steersman's Air Sailing Test succeeds, a few crewmen are gravely wounded but most escape with bumps and bruises. Once the rakken have grounded the *Flyer*, they fly off, not attacking again for another three nights.

If the patrol boat has caught fire, its pilot must make a successful Air Sailing (8) Test to avoid crashing into trees, rocks, buildings, and so on. If the test succeeds, the patrol boat lands roughly, but no one aboard is hurt. If the test fails, all those aboard the ship take Step 17/D20+D10 damage from the impact. No armor protects against this damage.

The best result that the heroes can hope for is to keep the rakken away from the *Flyer*'s crew and the wheel. The ship crashes no matter what, but the steersman has a good chance to land it without significant loss of life if he survives long enough.

Grounded

Once the *Flyer* has crash-landed, one of its crew members tries to flag down and thank the Flying Patrol for their efforts. If Captain Trolm is still alive, he is the one who attempts to contact the patrol ships.

If the patrol tries to track the rakken, they quickly lose the creatures in the forests south of Travar. The rakken have gone to ground in a cave far below the earth's surface, from which they venture forth every three or four days to wait in the forest's shadows for an airship to appear.

Troubleshooting

The only real problem in this encounter occurs if the characters appear able to defeat the rakken. If this outcome looks likely, the gamemaster must play the creatures a little differently than described in the encounter. Instead of continuing to attack the heroes, the rakken try to avoid them once they realize their opponents can actually harm them. The gamemaster should find it fairly easy to keep the rakken out of attack range by having them dart in and out of the burning sails and rigging, swoop below the airship and around to its other side, and generally fly rings around the less-maneuverable patrol boat. Make sure that the adventurers have no desire to tangle with these vicious creatures again. If the rakken have frightened them sufficiently, the characters will gladly seek the grimoire whose spells can send the creatures back to their native plane (see **Baiting the Trap**, below).

Because this battle is only the first of many fights in this adventure, be careful not to kill any of the characters in combat. To ensure the characters' survival, spread out the attacks made by the rakken buzzing the patrol boat. Instead of targeting just one character, have the rakken direct their jets against multiple characters and crewmen. This tactic should prevent death or irreparable damage to the characters, while still convincing them that these creatures are a bit beyond their ability to defeat. In order to keep all of the player characters alive, the gamemaster should feel free to fudge any damage from the crashing *Flyer* and patrol boat that affects them. The Sanctum of Garlen can provide free healing for the player characters, should they suffer more than minor damage from this encounter.

Baiting the Trap

Though no one knows it, the Horror who set this saga in motion is in Travar, posing as a traveler. From his room in a low-rent inn in one of Travar's run-down districts, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis watches each of the rakken attacks, hoping to find a band of adventurers capable of surviving the trek to the windling kaer on Talon Peak.

After seeing the heroes' battle with the rakken to save the *Obsidian Flyer*, the Horror believes he has found the necessary dupes and sets the next part of his plan in motion. He sends Air Warden Drimsby a letter telling him about the Tome of Banishment hidden in the windling kaer. The text of this letter appears within this encounter, as well as in the **Player Handouts** chapter on p. 353.

Setting the Stage

When the characters are in their room, read the following aloud:

You have hardly woken when a knock at your door reveals a messenger from Air Warden Drimsby. The dwarf wishes to see you as soon as possible.

The city of Travar looks impossibly bright and clean in the early morning light. You squint against

the sunlight as you walk toward the dock, munching on the bread and honey you bought at a bakery. After your harrowing battle in the night, you can scarcely believe that you still breathe, and are actually grateful to be awake at this Passion-forsaken hour.

A stern-faced Drimsby greets you as you walk into his office. Hastily, you brush the crumbs from your clothes and seat yourselves. Drimsby leans against the edge of his desk, regarding you with the troubled look that never seems to leave him. "Thank you for coming so early. I heard of your efforts to save the Obsidian Flyer *yestereve; I would like you to tell me the tale."*

Behind the Scenes

Drimsby wants the characters to describe the battle with the rakken, not only to satisfy his curiosity, but also to gather all the information he can about the flying Horrors. If his newly hired airmen get killed, he can pass on whatever they have learned to their replacements. Needless to say, he does not express this pessimistic view to the characters.

Drimsby also wants to tell the characters about the letter he received just a short while ago, from an out-of-town gentleman Named Rasper Nor. The letter refers to the Tome of Banishment, noting that the magical knowledge within it might serve to dispel the creatures attacking airships near Travar.

Once the characters have finished relating the previous night's battle, Drimsby informs them of the letter.

After some discussion between Drimsby and the heroes, the air warden asks them to join him in the search for the windling kaer and the Tome of Banishment. If they agree, Drimsby makes the preparations described below.

To the Air Warden of Travar

Dear Sir,

I have learned of the terrible creatures that roam the skies over Travar, and I believe I know somewhat of the creatures that plague you. Unless I am grievously mistaken, these rakken are Horror constructs, the same dreadful creatures that I encountered upon emerging from our kaer eighty years ago. I was barely able to defeat them, even with my considerable talent in the magical arts.

I recall, however, that one magician among us had studied these creatures, and even devised a means of dispelling them to their native plane. He wrote down this knowledge in a grimoire called the Tome of Banishment, which I believe still remains within the ruins of our kaer. Though I am human, I dwelt with the windlings in their kaer atop the Talon, a craggy peak in the Thunder Mountains. The windling magician Skeethen who compiled the Tome of Banishment was by misfortune buried in his laboratory when a portion of our haven collapsed. We sealed the breach with warding magic lest the Horrors exploit it, by oversight sealing the book up along with our departed friend. I thought little more of poor Skeethen and his book until I heard of your recent troubles.

I believe that this grimoire might aid you immensely, but alas, my bones are far too old to brave the hazards of travel so high and far into the mountains. If a band of true-hearted persons were to venture there in my stead, I believe they could recover the Tome with little difficulty.

I have enclosed a map of the laboratory's location within the kaer, drawn to the best of my ability. Please excuse this tired old mind if the map is less than perfectly accurate; it has been many a long year since I left my former home, and my memory does not always serve me as I might wish.

I wish you well, friends.

Rasper Nor of the Thunder Mountains

Drimsby's Offer

Drimsby provides a fully crewed galley, the *Cloud Runner*, to transport the characters to the Thunder Mountains, as well as a smaller patrol boat to convey them to Talon Peak. He also offers the characters 500 silver pieces each, half of which he gives them outright, with the other half to be paid upon their safe return to Travar.

The characters have one day to gather any equipment they deem necessary before leaving. In the meantime, Drimsby will inspect and outfit the galley, which has been recalled from an extended patrol. For more information on the *Cloud Runner* and its crew, see **Broadsides!**, p. 119.

Meeting Juliak Merris

Some characters may want to meet with the obsidiman merchant Juliak Merris to demand additional money or aid, because his business has suffered the most from the rakken. If this occurs, Merris will react in one of two ways depending on the characters' position in Travar.

If the heroes have officially joined the Flying Patrol, Merris is outraged at their demands. They have a duty to protect Merris's airships, and Merris sees no reason to pay them extra for doing it. If pressed, the most he will offer is 500 silver pieces for slaying all three of the rakken that attacked the *Obsidian Flyer*—a task he knows is virtually impossible. If the heroes have not joined the Flying Patrol and instead are only working for Drimsby's bounty (see

Crimson Dawn, p. 86), Merris feels more tolerant toward them and will offer a reward of 1000 silver pieces for slaying all three rakken.

In either case, he can spare a few men. If a character informing Merris about the expedition makes a successful Interaction Test against Merris's Social Defense of 7, Merris will send 10 of his crewmen along on the journey to Talon Peak. The gamemaster should add these airmen to the crew listed for the *Cloud Runner* in **Broadsides!**, p. 119.

Note that the Interaction Test might require the character to achieve a certain result level, depending on Merris's attitude towards him. This situation should be treated as asking for a small favor (see the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 92 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for details on how Favors work).

Tarlinna's Plea

At some point while the team is planning their next course of action or purchasing supplies for the expedition to Talon Peak, Tarlinna from The Picky Palate approaches them. If a character tried to comfort her the night her betrothed was slain, she speaks with that character in private. If not, Tarlinna approaches an elf in the group first, otherwise the character with the highest Charisma value. Read the players the following or paraphrase it:

"I have heard you have sworn to destroy the creatures that slew my Berthon, and that you go to seek a mighty weapon against them. If this is true, let me join you; I wish to avenge Berthon's death. And please, do not warn me of danger. I have no desire to stay safe in Travar… not anymore."

Tarlinna's plea forces the characters to make a tough decision. If they say yes, Tarlinna may well come to harm. Despite the magical abilities she possesses (see **Cast of Characters**, p. 136), Tarlinna has never faced the rigors of adventuring and has no real experience with the kind of brutal combat in which the group will most likely engage. If they say no, she angrily declares that she will undertake this quest on her own. Tarlinna then storms off and makes her own preparations to fight the rakken, eventually stowing away on the *Cloud Runner*.

Adventure Hook

With the loss of three airships, Juliak Merris is in real trouble. His mines still have a good output of ore, and he has plenty of other trading contracts that need to be fulfilled, but not enough transport capacity. Building an airship takes months, so he has to get back to old-fashioned carts and wagons.

While he has some spare carts and has ordered more to be build over the next few weeks, he wasn't able to get hold of enough draft animals. Merris hires the characters to get those for him by travelling the area around the city and offering everyone who has an animal to spare to sell it to Merris in Travar, because the obsidiman is buying at high prices. In addition, the characters get orders to seek out an ork tribe known to roam the plains southeast of Travar, to negotiate if they are willing to lend the animals to Merris and run a part of Merris' caravan business.

The orks, however, demand another service in return. They are peaceful nomads, but frequently mistaken for bandits due to a small band of scorchers threatening the villages in the area. So far, the orks haven't been able to track down the scorchers themselves, but the characters might…

Radlin Joins Up

Radlin, the elf who survived the wreck of the *Crimson Dawn*, also wants to go on the journey. If the heroes refuse him, Drimsby orders them to take Radlin, figuring they can use all the help they can get. If the characters are working for bounty and therefore not subject to Drimsby's orders, have Radlin stow away on the *Cloud Runner*. Point out to one of the characters that though Radlin is an experienced airman, he has fought very little and may need watching.

Rumors

If the characters ask, they may hear the following rumors about Juliak Merris and Rasper Nor. The gamemaster must determine which of the rumors are true and which false. The gamemaster may adapt the tone and wording of each rumor, depending on which of the various townsfolk the heroes ask.

Juliak Merris

"Quite the wealthy obsidiman, Juliak Merris. He's spent close to ten years building up his merchant house in Travar. He's a fair dealer, but canny—don't try to take advantage of him."

"I remember when the Merris merchant house was a caravan of mule carts. Juliak Merris drove 'em into town one day, loaded with ore from the Thunder Mountains where he comes from. That ore bought him an airship within two years. Within two more, he had a three-ship fleet. Be quite a shame to see him lose it all now."

Rasper Nor

"Rasper Nor? Never heard of any by that name. Nethermancer, eh? They do say that plenty of them dwell in the high peaks of the Thunder Mountains. He may be one of them."

Troubleshooting

Two things can go wrong in this encounter: the characters may find a way to defeat the rakken, or they may refuse to search for the Tome of Banishment. If the former occurs, allow the characters to plot and scheme as much as they like, taking several days if necessary. The rakken should be intelligent and powerful enough to escape most traps. If the group comes up with a really good plan, however, the gamemaster may have to put in extra effort to ensure that it fails. If this happens, give the heroes some reward for their efforts. Let them catch or kill one of the rakken, have Drimsby give them a bonus, or both. The gamemaster might even consider giving the characters an additional Legend Point award each at the end of the adventure by way of compensation for shooting down their bright idea.

If the characters defeat the rakken by some impossible method, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis simply summons more. The group may be able to battle the things to a standstill, but at least a few crewmen will die during each fight. The heroes should eventually seek out the Tome of Banishment, if only to put an end to the fighting once and for all.

If the characters reject Drimsby's reward for finding the Tome of Banishment, the air warden may order them on the quest as part of their job. If the characters still refuse or if they have not joined the Flying Patrol, Drimsby uses his position as Air Warden to convince Travar's magistrates to order the characters out of the city. The threat of banishment should be a terrific incentive to change the characters' minds. If the characters refuse the quest for the Tome and leave Travar, the adventure is over. Award the characters any Legend Points they have earned thus far for defeating creatures, but give them no Session or Adventure Goal awards because they have failed to achieve the goals of the story. Make sure that the characters hear later of a swarm of Horrors and their constructs descending upon Travar and slaying many of its residents. The characters' decision to cut and run from this adventure could lead to further adventures in Travar, in which the characters must fight off the Horrors that now infest the city.

Though the above measures may seem a bit drastic, they should reinforce the idea that Barsaive is in dire need of heroes and that the characters must fill those shoes.

Journey into Doom

In this encounter, the heroes travel to the windling kaer in the Thunder Mountains. During the journey, they forge bonds of friendship with their companions and rescue a village from a band of ork scorchers.

Setting the Stage

When the *Cloud Runner* takes off, read the following aloud:

> *The* Cloud Runner *lifts gently from the ground, its sails caught and filled by the morning trade winds. As the ground falls further and further away, the vessel turns its prow toward the crimson-and-purple sky that heralds the rising sun. The galley soars higher and higher, until Yorlk the steersman tells Drimsby that the* Runner *has reached the sailing lane. With the dangerous ascent over, half the crew stands down. Their work—and yours—will begin again in eight hours, when you relieve those who have worked all day on watch or manning the sails.*
>
> *For now, you lean your elbows on the side of the galley and marvel at the beautiful spectacle of Barsaive stretching its skin beneath the caressing rays of the morning sun. Far to the west, you spy the crisscrossing canyons of the Badlands and the River of Bones. To the north, hot steam rises from the green canopy of the Servos Jungle. To the east lies your destination, the towering, white-and-purple peaks of the Thunder Mountains that seem to point jagged fingers into the lightening sky.*

Behind the Scenes

The *Cloud Runner* is a beautiful ship, built of sturdy wood from the Servos Jungle. Its crew includes Lark, Yorlk, Drimsby, twenty members of the City Watch, the player characters, Radlin, Tarlinna, the craft's regular crew complement plus additional members of the Flying Patrol, and any of Merris's employees he sent along if the characters were successful in securing his assistance. The cut-down Flying Patrol cannot hope to adequately fend off rakken attacks for much more than a few days, so the characters and the rest of the Flying Patrol must accomplish their mission and return to Travar swiftly.

The *Tree Skimmer* is lashed to the *Cloud Runner*'s port side like a huge lifeboat. Because the galley is too large and cumbersome to maneuver in the treacherous wind currents that blow around the highest peaks of the mountains, the characters must approach Talon Peak in the smaller and more maneuverable patrol boat.

The journey to the mountains lasts two days, after which the crew must look for the windlings' kaer. Yorlk knows the area around Talon Peak, but has never been to the mountain itself. Each day after the second, have Yorlk or other spotters make a Perception (12) Test. When one of these characters makes a successful test, the group has found Talon Peak. Go to **Talon Kaer**, p. 104.

The characters have little work to do on the voyage to the Thunder Mountains. This relative idleness gives them time to make plans, chat with Tarlinna or Radlin, go hull jumping with Lark, or engage in other activities through which they might make or deepen friendships (see **Bonding**, below). Around dinner time, the characters must join the rest of the eight-hour night shift to stand watch or man the sails. After midnight, a third shift takes over and the characters can get some sleep.

Drimsby is willing to let anyone switch shifts as long as they find someone to trade with them, though he insists that at least one man with night vision be stationed in the crow's nest after nightfall.

Bonding

After the first few encounters in this adventure, the player characters should regard at least some of the gamemaster characters as friends. Rather than acting like mercenaries interested only in gold, **Earthdawn** characters should act like heroes, joining with fellow Barsaivians to build a new future for the land they love. The encounters described below are intended to help the characters act more heroic by giving them personal motives for getting involved in the events of the adventure. These mini-encounters can take place on the decks of the *Cloud Runner* during the two-day journey to Talon Peak. These events are as important as slaying creatures or winning magical treasures, because they form a bond between the characters and the people they fight beside.

Training Tarlinna

Tarlinna's hatred of the horrible creatures that killed her fiancé is eating away at her soul like a cancer. In her zeal to avenge Berthon's death, she is looking for someone to train her in swordfighting or casting combat spells. If a character tries to help Tarlinna cope with her loss by channeling her energies into training, he should receive Legend Points for doing so (see **Loose Ends**, p. 131). To train Tarlinna, a character must make two successful Charisma Tests against Tarlinna's Social Defense of 8. One player may make these tests once each day, and the player should also roleplay the comfort and support his character gives Tarlinna. Though only one person may make the actual tests, other characters may give Tarlinna words of encouragement to help the primary character achieve success in that day's Charisma Tests. Each such act of support per day adds a +1 bonus to each test, to a maximum modifier of +3.

Rather than telling the players about the above game mechanics or the possible rewards for helping Tarlinna, the gamemaster should roleplay Tarlinna's hatred of the rakken and desire for revenge. Hopefully, this display will prompt one of the player characters to try to help Tarlinna channel her anger into a constructive path.

Training Radlin

Like Tarlinna, Radlin is awash in hatred, desire for vengeance, and survivor guilt. He feels somehow responsible for the wreck of the *Crimson Dawn*, and that he should have done more to save his friends. In fact, he could have accomplished nothing, but guilt knows no logic. To regain his lost faith in himself, Radlin needs to successfully perform some act of courage. A brave elf by nature, Radlin will have little trouble acting heroic. Succeeding at it is another matter entirely. Neither an adept nor a magician—though showing the potential to be both—and possessing no magical abilities, Radlin is just an ordinary elf trying to survive in a world of heroes. His courage will help him become a legend in time, but that day is many years of training away. A crushing defeat for Radlin at this point could rob Barsaive of a potential hero.

If one of the characters spends time with Radlin, he should notice that the courageous young elf has a natural aptitude for the short sword, but lacks training and experience. Anyone who tries to train Radlin instantly becomes the elf's idol, and Radlin chooses that hero's Discipline as his own. The pair can train aboard the *Runner* for the duration of the trip to the Thunder Mountains, but Radlin gains no extra abilities from the training. Though he shows potential, he lacks the confidence to place him on the same level as the characters.

The gamemaster may hint that Radlin needs a confidence builder, but should not point this out directly to the characters. Let them choose this course of action on their own. A character taking time to either encourage Radlin or actively train him should receive Legend Points for his efforts (see **Loose Ends**, p. 131).

Playing Games with Lark

Lark gets off-shift at the same time that the characters do, and is more than willing to renew his acquaintance with them. He prefers to do this through playing games that physically challenge both himself and his companions. In addition to hull jumping (see **Knights of the Skies**, p. 93) Lark might also be interested in seeing who can climb the rigging fastest, or teaching the characters to air-ski from the rear of the *Cloud Runner*. If the games get too competitive or unfriendly, Lark quietly bows out. He is looking for fellow daredevils, not fools, and has no interest in making money on wagers.

Knife-Throwing Competition

Many airmen enjoy a little competitive knife-throwing, and the crew of the *Cloud Runner* is no exception. Attached to the bottom of the galley's mainmast is a circular board covered with concentric red and white circles. At least one sailor, most often Yorlk, can almost always be found throwing daggers at the target board. If the characters challenge someone to a match, use the following guidelines to play the encounter.

Two participants play at a time. Each player takes a turn at making a Throwing Weapons (6) Test. An Average result hits the board and scores 1 point; a Good result scores 2 points; an Excellent or Extraordinary result hits the bull's eye and scores 4 points. On a Poor result, the target is missed or the blade fails to bite into the board. If any character rolls a Pathetic result, his blade misses and soars off the ship. After 10 throws apiece, the two players compare scores. The highest score wins the bet. The usual bet is 1 silver piece for every point by which the winner wins. Few of the crewmen, other than Yorlk, are wealthy enough to raise the stakes higher.

Characters who do not know the Throwing Weapons talent or skill use the rules for **Default Skill Use** in the **Skills** chapter on p. 230 of the **Player's Compendium**. The gamemaster should adjust the scoring for the result level shift.

Crewmen who might play this game with the characters include Lark, Yorlk, Slilith (the t'skrang rescued from the *kalamis* tree in **Knights of the Skies**, p. 91), a human Named Debhor, and a troll Named Gutt. Slilith has a Throwing Weapons step of 8/2D6, Debhor of 9/D8+D6, and Gutt of 10/D10+D6 (Gutt uses a small hatchet instead of a knife).

Playing Gonada

In this t'skrang game of skill, one player thinks of a proper noun, such as Barsaive, the *Cloud Runner*, Kratas, and so on. All other players ask the first player questions until someone guesses the noun. Each contestant may only guess once, however. If he guesses wrong, he is out of the game. The winner (or the last player still in) gets to think of the next word. Slilith loves to play this game, and uses words like Serpent River, Mist Swamps, and Air Warden Drimsby. All losers put a silver piece into the pot, and the player who guessed the most correct answers gets the loot at the end of the game.

One crewman who plays this game is a large, slow-witted human Named Tobry. He asks ridiculous questions and keeps guessing answers, which should put him out of the game. No one says anything, however; all the other crewmen treat Tobry with gentle indulgence. Play this gamemaster character for humor, but keep in mind that if any player character acts cruel to Tobry, the others quickly turn a cold shoulder to the offender. Tobry has been with the Flying Patrol for years and has proven his worth on many occasions. Though mentally slow, he has often risked life and limb to save passengers from burning airships and has pulled more than a few airmen to safety from their shattered patrol boats.

Raiders Below!

As the ship nears the foothills of the Thunder Mountains, a watchman in the crow's nest cries out, "Raiders below!" As the crewmen and the characters peer over the ship's sides, they see a band of ork scorchers swarming over the small village of Famlin like ants over a sugar bowl.

Though Drimsby refuses to risk the valuable galley by going in low, he allows the crew to take the patrol boat and try to scare the raiders off. Up to 10 crew members can fit in the vessel. If the characters suggest this course of action, they are joined by Lark, Yorlk, Slilith, Tobry, and Tarlinna or Radlin (or both). If there is not enough room in the patrol boat, Yorlk stays on the galley, as he is the steersman. Tarlinna will join the group as she considers them the closest thing to friends she has, but will back out if there is no room for her. Her main motive is still revenge.

Landing the patrol boat poses enough difficulties to keep the characters from immediately engaging the ork scorchers in combat. If the characters choose to land and fight, use the statistics provided below for the orks and their mounts. If the heroes drive the scorchers off, the village constable rewards them with 25 silver pieces each.

Once the characters defeat or drive off the ork scorchers, they may then return to the *Cloud Runner*. Drimsby orders the *Cloud Runner* to circle around the area while the characters engage the orks. If the characters choose to land the patrol boat and face the ork scorchers, remind them to keep the ship safe from damage. They will need the patrol boat to approach the windling kaer on Talon Peak in the following encounter, **Talon Kaer**, p. 104.

Ork Scorchers (10)

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (11): 5/D8
Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 2/D4-1
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 10
Social Defense: 6
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 32
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 24

Combat Movement: 28
Full Movement: 56

Skills

Artisan:
Tattooing (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Caravan Trade Routes (2): 7/D12
Creature Lore (1): 6/D10

General:
Animal Bond (4): 8/2D6
Animal Handling (4): 10/D10+D6
Animal Training (1): 5/D8
Charge (2): 8/2D6
Fence (2): 6/D10
Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Sure Mount (2): 8/2D6
Tactics (2): 7/D12
Throwing Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Trick Riding (2): 8/2D6
Unarmed Combat (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Rider's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Broadsword (Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
Long-Spear (Damage 11/D10+D8)
Spear (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 18–30–36)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit
2 × Oil Flasks
Tattooing Tool
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
Waterskin

Thundra Beast (combat-trained)

Loot

D4 silver pieces

Legend Award

85 Legend Points

Notes

The scorchers possess the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

Commentary

These ork scorchers, mounted on thundra beasts, are currently terrorizing the town of Famlin. See p. 348 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on thundra beasts.

Reaching Talon Peak

When Yorlk or another crewman spots Talon Peak, read the following aloud:

Barsaive's vast plains and green fields give way to rocks and crags as you fly higher and further into the Thunder Mountains. Blinding blizzards whirl across the deck, and towering mountaintops jut out of the snow and fog like lonely islands in a sea of cloud. Before you looms Talon Peak, at the end of a long maze of jagged spines that stab upward through the low cloud banks. The winds are strong enough to shake the mainmast, and a few extra-powerful gusts threaten to snap it like a toothpick. Yorlk and Drimsby dare not take the Cloud Runner any higher into the howling storm. Even from the lower level at which the galley hovers, the terrible gales toss the ship back and forth like a cork in a whirlpool. You hope desperately that the cloud sea you are passing through doesn't disguise a jagged, mountain shoal ready to tear the guts out of your vessel.

The deck lurches to leeward under your feet as a cursing Yorlk throws the wheel against the wind. You feel the ship shudder; a horrible grinding sound, rock against wood, screams through the decks. Drimsby shouts for the crew to get below and seal the breach. Within minutes the wind's howl is broken by furious hammering and shouting from below decks. Slowly, the Cloud Runner plows onward.

Two crags suddenly jut from the clouds ahead. The spotter at the prow screams for Yorlk to pull hard left. The ork does not turn, but glares straight ahead and grips the wheel, throwing the galley toward the looming slopes. Despite the frigid air, sweat runs down your forehead; you can feel it freezing on your cheeks. Has Yorlk gone mad?

The galley plunges straight ahead, the spotter screaming all the while. Against all odds, the Cloud Runner sails straight and true between the twin crags. The spotter turns as white as the driving snow as he spies another ridge, lying to the left of the Runner just below the milky clouds. Had Yorlk turned as he was told, the ridge would have gutted the Cloud Runner and sent all of you plunging to your deaths upon the mountains' teeth.

Just when your frantically beating hearts can stand no more, the ship reaches Talon Peak. Yorlk sails around the rocky slope, looking for an eddy on the mountain's far side. He guides the Runner into a relatively safe harbor. As the sails go slack, you swiftly help the crew secure the Runner to the mountain with spiked mooring lines.

The *Cloud Runner* can go no higher, nor withstand another trip back into the swirling, wild currents of the high mountain slopes without repairs. Drimsby insists that the adventurers take the patrol boat and go farther up, toward the mountain's summit. He will need most of the crew to repair the damaged hull, but any of the gamemaster characters may accompany the team at the player characters' request. Tarlinna and Radlin will insist on going with the exploration party, but if the gamemaster prefers not to run these two as gamemaster characters, he may keep them on the crippled galley.

Drimsby hopes to have the ship fixed in 12 hours or so, but will wait up to two days before giving the heroes up for lost. If the group wants to have the patrol boat drop them off and then return to the galley, they must come up with a way to signal for its return once they have retrieved the Tome of Banishment. A flying character or the use of magic can accomplish this easily.

Troubleshooting

The greatest potential for trouble lies in the nature of this encounter. Hack-and-slash players will have enormous difficulty talking Tarlinna or Radlin out of angst or socializing with the other crewmen. They may regard this entire encounter as a waste of time. If your players react this way, let their characters play some drunken games of knife-throwing or hull jumping and subtly work in the subplots involving Tarlinna and/or Radlin. Try to play out each of the mini-encounters described, but do not force them down the players' throats if they are obviously uninterested.

This encounter is written to work well both as emotional drama and as action-adventure. Try both styles of play and see what happens. If the game starts to slow down, run the incident with the ork scorchers. This fight will be the last "easy" battle the group engages in for quite some time. It is important to ensure that all of the player characters survive to reach Talon Kaer, so the gamemaster should feel free to ignore any lucky dice rolls achieved by the ork scorchers against the characters.

Talon Kaer

Having reached the windling kaer, the heroes must make their way through the vast dwelling in search of the long-dead windling named Skeethen and the Tome of Banishment.

SETTING THE STAGE

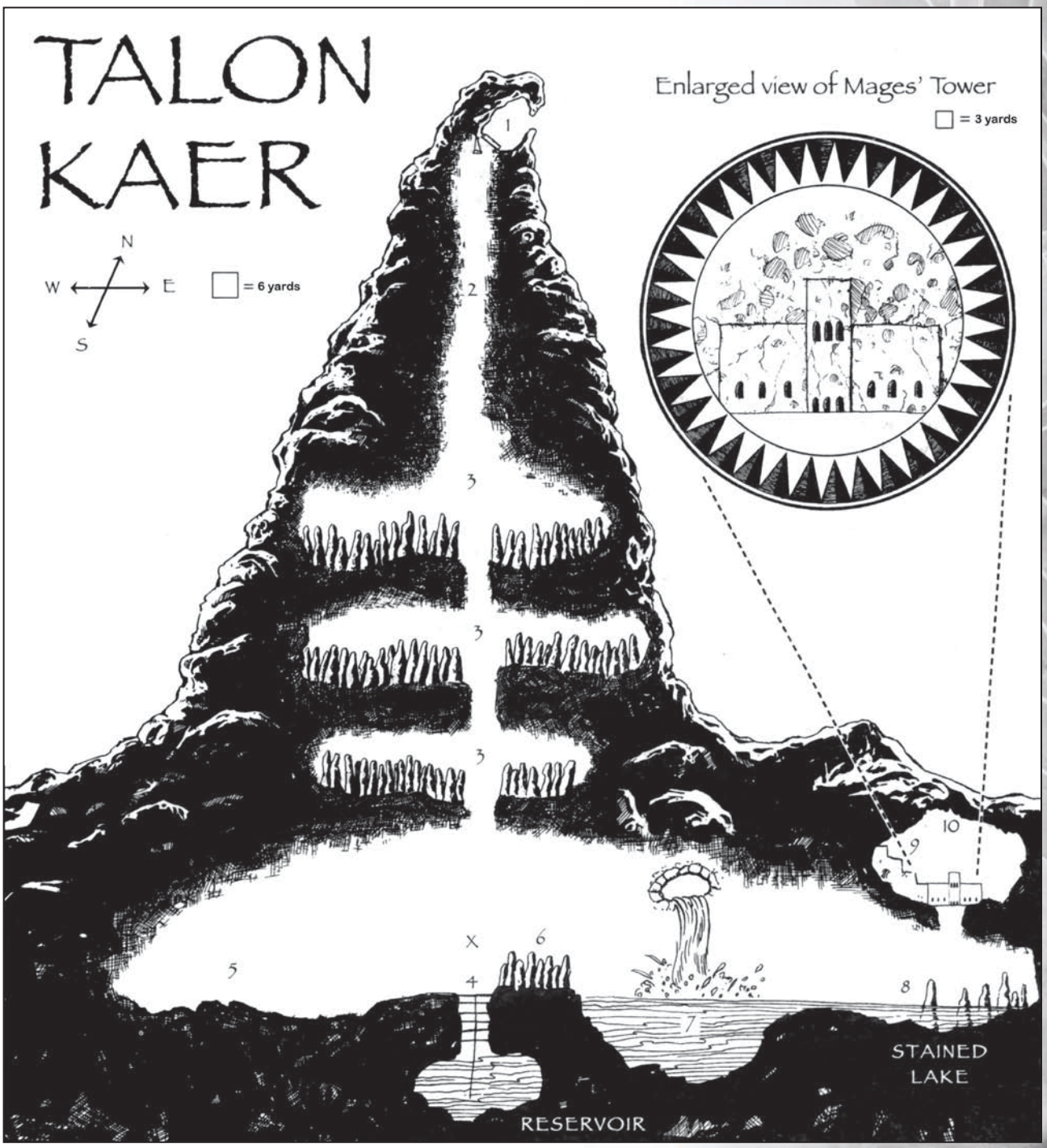
When the characters' ship approaches Talon Peak, read the following aloud:

As your patrol boat nears the peak, you realize why folk call it the Talon. The summit of the mountain stabs toward you like the sharp claw of an eagle, as if it might spear your craft like a fish.

Peering through the blinding snow, you can just make out the entrance to the kaer half-buried in a drift. It looks like the doors to a root cellar, two large squares embedded in the mountain face. Near the doors you see an overhanging rock that provides a small, natural shelter in which to land the patrol boat.

Once the ship has landed, one of the characters must jump out and try to open the kaer doors. Read the following to him:

You leap over the side of the boat and sink knee-deep in snow. Feeling the sudden, chill wetness in your feet and legs, you curse yourself for not wearing warmer clothes. You stagger blindly to the doors, plowing through snow so heavy that the effort of moving through it makes your legs shake. Gasping, you finally reach the entrance to the kaer. With some surprise, you see that the doors are broken, splintered down the middle by giant claws. According to Rasper Nor's letter, his people survived the Scourge unharmed. Knowing



that, these shattered doors mystify you. A Horror must have done this after the Scourge's end; uneasily, you wonder if it still lurks somewhere in these inhospitable heights.

Themes and Images

Exploring the kaer should fill the adventurers with awe. Almost everything they see in this windling domain is designed for beings capable of flight. Most doorways, for example, are in ceilings and floors rather than in walls. As individuals to whom walking is the natural mode of movement, the characters should feel clumsy, huge, and earthbound. The few elements of the kaer's design convenient for walkers appear to have been built to ease the carrying of heavy loads, or for aged windlings whose wings could no longer support them for long distances.

Along with the awe comes dread and confusion. Rasper Nor's letter stated that the kaer survived the Scourge intact, but the hundreds of tiny corpses, shattered buildings, and ominous piles of bones tell a different story. Describe the signs of violence to the characters, and let them solve the apparent mystery.

Behind the Scenes

Unless a character makes a successful Endure Cold (9) Test, the blowing snow and ice on the peak causes him a –1 penalty to his Action Tests. Battling the extreme weather conditions, the pilot of the patrol boat must make a successful Air Sailing (10) Test to dock the craft without damaging it. On a Poor result, the vessel takes Step 6/D10 damage, but the pilot still manages to land the ship in the shelter near the kaer doors. On a Pathetic result, the wind forces the craft back and the pilot must try again; the ship still takes Step 6/D10 damage. No armor protects against this damage.

Entering the Kaer

Once safely inside the kaer, the characters should explore it. Read the following pages carefully, and consult the map of **Talon Kaer** on p.105 for reference.

The kaer's rock walls constantly drip with run-off from the melting snows high above. The hollow plopping and trickling of these numerous, small flows echoes eerily throughout the kaer. The dribbling also keeps the glow-moss colonies at the kaer's lower levels alive. These slimy plants make climbing difficult; the characters suffer a –1 penalty to their Climbing Tests (see p.176 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Locations

The following text describes the places the characters discover as they explore the kaer (see the map on p.105).

(1) Lift

Once the heroes enter the kaer, read out the following:

"Less than six yards from the entrance, the ledge you stand on drops away into darkness. Peering over the edge, you can see a wooden platform dangling from a sturdy rope. One end of the rope is tied to an iron ring in the ceiling. The other passes around a spool-shaped hand crank in the platform's center, then through a hole in the crank's middle, disappearing into the inky blackness. The lift seems to be the only way down into the kaer's shadowy depths."

This 3-yard-square platform consists of wooden planks laid across a metal frame, supported by a wooden cage and connected to diagonal, iron supports and a strong rope. The lift enabled the kaer's windling residents to move goods and supplies into the kaer from above.

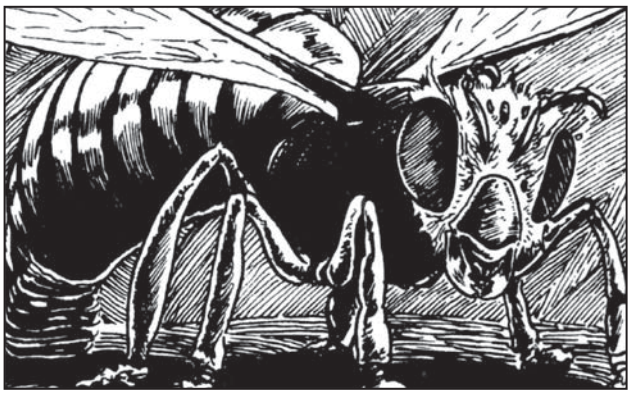
Designed to transport large amounts of cargo, the lift can carry up to six characters, two of whom can be the size and weight of trolls. Roughly six inches of wood around any of the platform's edges is rotten and crumbling, and may break under the feet of any character unlucky enough to step there. The cage that supports the platform, however, is in excellent condition. Forming a boxed 'X' beneath the boards, it keeps the platform stable and secure. The rope that holds the lift is magically enhanced with a Strength value of 48, enabling it to hold close to 5,000 pounds without breaking. Iron spikes attach the rope to the ceiling where it passes through the ring, and from there the rope runs downward to wrap around the crank before passing through the crank's middle and down the long shaft. The lift's operator can turn the crank (with some difficulty) even when the lift contains its maximum load. The platform ascends and descends at a rate of up to 2 yards per round. It is 200 yards to the bottom of the kaer.

If the characters want to test the rope, the lift platform, and the anchoring spikes, each of these actions requires a separate Perception (8) Test. All three items are still reasonably sturdy and secure, except for the dry rot at the edges of the platform. Because the crank was built by and for windlings, non-windling characters, including dwarfs, must kneel in order to turn it. This awkward position makes turning the crank extremely tiring, and so the crank operator suffers 2 Strain Points of damage (windlings suffer only 1 Strain Point of damage) for every 20 yards that the lift moves.

The characters cannot possibly notice the lift's one, dangerous defect. The rope is frayed roughly 8 yards from the bottom of the shaft. When the lift reaches this damaged section, the rope snaps and sends the lift and any passengers tumbling toward the deep reservoir below (see **End of the Rope!**, p.110).

(2) Blood Bee Nest

Though most of the Horrors that entered this place returned to their home plane when the Scourge ended, they left several horrible progeny behind, including a nest of blood bees. As the adventurers descend on the lift, a swarm of these horrible creatures attacks them, 1 or 2 bees per character. The flat, open-sided, partly rotting lift makes combat particularly hazardous. The characters are considered Harried when fighting aboard the lift (see p.408 of the **Player's Compendium**). If a character achieves



a Pathetic result on an Attack or Avoid Blow Test, he has stepped too near the platform's rotting edge and must make a Dexterity (6) Test. If the test succeeds, the character sees the boards bend and quickly steps away from the danger spot. If the test fails, the character's foot breaks off a piece of rotting wood, throwing him off balance. He must then make a successful Dexterity (8) Test or topple over the side of the lift.

Up to two characters can try to catch their teetering companion. To do so, at least one of the characters must make successful Dexterity (6) and Strength (6) Tests. As the price of success, each of the three characters misses his next action. Also, a character who rolls a Pathetic result on a Knockdown Test will be knocked off the platform unless other characters leap to his aid, as above.

Play this battle like violent sport, with the blood bees attacking and/or characters slipping just as the heroes think they have beaten the dreadful creatures off. The blood bees follow the lift up to 6 yards from their nest in either direction (up or down).

Blood Bees (1 or 2 per character)

DEX: 7 **STR**: 2 **TOU**: 5
PER: 5 **WIL**: 4 **CHA** 2

Initiative: 7
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (2): 9
Damage:
Stinger (6): 8 (see text)

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 31
Wound Threshold: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: 22

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 2

Combat Movement: 18/46✦
Full Movement: 36/92✦

✦ The second value is the creature's flying Movement rate.

Powers: Blood Veins (3): 5

Legend Points: 95

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Blood bees resemble 2-foot-long wasps with an accordion-like sac flapping from the thorax. When attacking, the bee flies backward, strikes its prey with the sticky sac, then flies forward. The forward motion extrudes a hollow spine from within the sac, which punctures the victim's skin and drains his blood. Once filled, the bag becomes heavy enough for the bee to pull free. The laden insect then flies back to its nest to feast on the victim's blood.

See the **Creatures** chapter on p. 281 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on blood bees.

(3) Residential Areas

When the characters reach the first residential area, read the following aloud:

"As the lift drops farther down the shaft, a dull, green glow lightens the velvety darkness from below. Tiny rivulets of water race down the walls of the shaft, which widen as you near the bottom.

The shaft opens out into a vast cavern that holds the shattered ruins of a once-beautiful city. Jagged pieces of what must have been scores of conical towers, built of orange-yellow clay, jut like stained teeth from the cavern floor. Each tower once had a single, arched entry, most of which are now-cracked or broken. From amid the broken towers, the pitiful trunks of dead trees poke through the dust-dry soil. As the lift lowers you closer to the ruins, you spy countless tiny, windling skeletons splayed over the ravaged landscape."

The three residential caverns (see the map on p. 105) contain the buildings that housed the kaer's residents during the Scourge. If the characters want to explore these ruins, let them, but remind them that Drimsby can only keep the *Cloud Runner* safe for so long. As they explore, the characters may find treasure, but may also encounter some of the macabre creatures that still lurk nearby. Go to **Searching the Ruins**, p. 108 .

Windling buildings look like tall towers, rounded at the top, with an arched opening anywhere from 3 to 10 yards above the ground. Made from clay that has hardened into a thin, ceramic wall, many of the towers are decorated with carvings of windlings or such reminders of the outside world as the sun, the moon, and clouds. Each tower is 20 yards in diameter and consists of several levels. The topmost is almost always a den or receiving room, complete with once-plush cushions and even a potted plant or two. The next level houses the kitchen and dining room, and the rest of the levels contain private quarters. Circular holes in the floors and ceilings provide access between levels. Each level is 3 yards high, giving the windlings ample room to fly around.

Because the entrances are so high off the ground, entering a windling tower is difficult for races without wings. To climb the smooth walls, a character must achieve a Good result on a Climbing (9) Test (see p. 106 of the **Player's Compendium**); the constant drainage from the cavern ceiling makes this more difficult, reflected by the higher result level needed. If a character elects to bash through the thin, ceramic walls, he creates a 1-foot-square hole in the appropriate side of the building for every 3 Damage Points inflicted. If the character does more than 30

Damage Points, the whole structure collapses, causing Step 15/D20+D6 damage to anyone inside. No armor protects against this damage.

Needless to say, windling-sized doorways are too small for larger creatures to get through easily, if at all. Any character larger than a dwarf takes 2 rounds to pull himself through such an opening, during which time he is considered Knocked Down (see p. 409 of the **Player's Compendium**). Trolls and obsidimen may only enter after breaking away part of the wall, and even then such characters take 3 rounds to crawl through the gap. Characters can travel between levels by dropping through a doorway or hole to the rooms below or by climbing toward the top. Climbing between levels requires a successful Climbing (9) Test (the buildings are drier on the inside).

(4) Rotting Derrick

At the bottom of the lift shaft lies a reservoir that once housed the windlings' central water supply. The windlings built a derrick over this reservoir, including steps in the design so that they could transport the heavy buckets of water without having to fly. Over the centuries, the constant drip of snow-melt down the walls has slowly rotted the wooden derrick.

(5) Farm/Garden/Tunnel Area

The windlings devoted nearly a third of the kaer's lowest chamber to farmland, mines, and a large garden. A waterfall pours through a hole in one wall, emptying into the Stained Lake (7). When the characters reach this area, go to **Rock Bottom**, p. 111.

(6) Merchant Towers

Of all the business establishments throughout the kaer, the merchant towers that border the Stained Lake and its raging waterfall have survived with the least damage.

When the team reaches this area, go to **Getting the Goods**, p. 112.

(7) Stained Lake

On the far side of the merchant towers lies a huge lake, which has flooded a small residential area. The water has turned dark with the blood of the kaer's murdered inhabitants. When the characters reach the lake shore, go to **Crossing the Stained Lake**, p. 113.

(8) Flooded City

In the centuries since the kaer was built, the lake has flooded a section of the windling city located beneath the Magicians' Cavern (see the map on p. 105). Some of the towers jut out of the water, and a few even remain intact. When the characters reach this area, go to **Exploring the Drowned City**, p. 114.

(9) and (10) Magicians' Cavern

The Magicians' Cavern contains two buildings: a barracks (9) and the Magicians' Tower (10). The characters will not reach this area until the following encounter, **Finding the Sanctuary**, p. 115.

Searching the Ruins

During every 30-minute period that a character or characters spends searching the residences, have the character with the highest Perception value make a Perception (9) Test. Characters able to perceive astrally add a +2 bonus to their Perception Tests. If the test succeeds, the characters find an item or treasure or encounter a creature.

While searching the ruins, the characters may experience any or all of the ten mini-encounters described below. Encounters with blood bees can occur multiple times. Those with other creatures or those in which the characters find treasure may occur only once.

If the group splits up during the search, the character with the highest Perception in each of the sub-groups makes the Perception (9) Test referred to above. Though more than one group may encounter similar creatures, only one may find each treasure.

More Blood Bees

More blood bees swoop down from their nests in the glow-moss and attack the characters. Use the statistics for blood bees given on p. 107 or in the **Creatures** chapter on p. 281 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Windling Skeletons

Read the following aloud:

After climbing to the top of one conical tower, you look down and see something that chills your soul. Several tiny, windling skeletons are pinned to the bloodstained walls by chitinous barbs.

Many other skeletons have broken apart and fallen to the floor, the half-decayed bones and cracked skulls lying scattered across the floor like a dreadful game of jackstraws played by a child Horror.

The barbs are the broken-off appendages of the black mantises that Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis used to attack the kaer almost five centuries ago.

If the characters pry the barbs loose, they can use the chitinous points as improvised daggers (see **Improvised Melee Weapons** on p. 411 of the **Player's Compendium**).

The Spear

Read the following aloud:

Beside the rubble of a shattered wall lies the corpse of a windling warrior. A metal chest plate still covers its stick-thin ribs and a small spear lies beside its bony hand.

The 2-foot-long windling spear, though not magical, shows fine craftsmanship. This spear is of the Best quality (see **Better and Best Items** on p. 433 of the **Player's Compendium**). Its sharp point and excellent balance add +1 to the weapon's Damage step.

Loot

Read the following aloud:

Your gaze attracted by a pale glow from within one of the towers, you cautiously peer through a hole in the wall. By the light of the glow-moss growing in a clay basin in the middle of the tower's ground level, you see the corpses of three windlings sprawled in the center of the room.

Their furniture is piled high against one wall, clearly in the vain hope of keeping some terrible creature from breaking through. A large hole in the opposite wall hints at how the windlings met their doom.

Hidden amid the glow-moss, the characters may find a bag containing 40 silver pieces.

More Loot

Read the following aloud:

Spying a tower with an opening nearer its base than most, you cautiously look inside. Near the opening, a windling skeleton lies amid a pile of coins. Noticing the jars of long-spoiled food and drink on the shelves that line the walls, you guess that this tower once belonged to a food merchant.

The pile of coins contains 120 copper and 20 silver pieces.

The Bone-shambler

Read the following aloud:

As you step around a group of the towers, you wonder if the windlings who built this place ever heard of streets. They have placed their towers so close together that in many spots you cannot pass between them. As you gaze upward at yet another tapering tower, it strikes you that windling streets lie high above your lowly, earthbound position.

A terrible noise from behind you snaps you out of your musings. Poised to run, you suddenly realize with a sinking heart that you are trapped in a cul-de-sac. If only you had wings!

Behind the unfortunate character or characters is a bone-shambler, a horrible form of undead Horror construct built from the thousands of bones that litter the kaer.

This particular bone-shambler has 10 gold and 15 silver pieces incorporated into its body.

BONE-SHAMBLER

DEX: 8 **STR**: 15 **TOU**: 15
PER: 4 **WIL**: 7 **CHA**: 2

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense**: 8
Number of Actions: 2 **Spell Defense**: 7
Attack (4): 12 **Social Defense**: 15
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 10
Spikes (2): 17 **Mystic Armor**: 5

Death Rating: 74 **Recovery Tests**: 7
Wound Threshold: 21 **Knockdown**: 13
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 16 **Full Movement**: 32

Karma Points: 5 **Karma Step**: 10

Legend Points (2): 2,010

Equipment: Broken weapons and armor of incorporated victims.

Loot: 15 silver pieces and 10 gold pieces attached to body (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

Bone-shamblers are a horrible form of undead Horror construct built from the thousands of bones that litter the ruins of Horror-penetrated kaers. Many, though not all, bone-shamblers have gold and silver pieces incorporated into their bodies. Bone-shamblers move by rolling, the bones and their former owners' armor and weapons rattling around with a sound guaranteed to set teeth on edge.

See the **Horrors** chapter on p. 448 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on bone-shamblers.

Dead Mantis

Read the following aloud:

Beyond the jagged remnants of several fallen towers you spy a beautiful statue of a Passion, perhaps Astendar. A score of tiny skeletons lie at the statue's feet, as if slain in some brave last stand. Among their broken bodies lies the hard, shiny, black corpse of a giant insect.

It looks like a mantis, except that its eight long arms end in spiked points rather than gripping claws. Several points are missing, as if broken off. Looking more closely, you see the broken points lying between many a windling's skeletal ribs.

Though long dead, the mantis provides some clues as to what kind of creature destroyed this kaer. The heroes should take careful notice of the mantis, because one like it lives elsewhere in the ruins.

Black Mantis

Read the following aloud:

Off to your left, you hear a suspicious noise. You scale a nearby, low hill ringed by broken towers, hoping to get a better view of your surroundings. Centuries-old bones lie scattered across the hilltop. The earth below them looks freshly disturbed. Peering at the soil, you spy a fragment of something pale and mottled that is not bone. Slowly, it dawns on you that you are standing in a nest.

Before you can run, a tremendous crash deafens you. A large, black shape smashes through the only ceramic wall still standing. Shards of jagged pottery rain down on you as the huge shape charges straight toward you!

The black mantis attacks immediately, believing that the adventurers are after its eggs.

Assuming the characters defeat the mantis, they may find a small niche in the surrounding rock where the giant

insect stored those items that attracted its attention. Within the niche lie several windling-sized chest plates, spears and short swords, most broken in pieces. If the characters dig in the disturbed earth, they may also find a clutch of ten eggs, each roughly six inches in diameter.

The Horror Tyrannisis created these black mantises and used them as soldiers when it attacked Talon Kaer. The horrible creatures climbed the kaer's walls using tangled fronds of glow-moss and other natural handholds, and ravaged the kaer more swiftly than even Tyrannisis had thought possible.

Black Mantis

DEX: 10 **STR**: 13 **TOU**: 10
PER: 9 **WIL**: 5 **CHA**: 5

Initiative: 10 (14)
Number of Actions: 4
Attack (4): 14
Damage:
Claws (4): 17

Physical Defense: 13
Spell Defense: 12
Social Defense: 15
Physical Armor: 8
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 51
Wound Threshold: 15
Unconsciousness Rating: 44

Recovery Tests: 4
Knockdown: 14

Combat Movement: 78/61*
Full Movement: 156/122*

* The second value is the Horror construct's climbing Movement rate.

Karma Points: 5
Karma Step: 10

Powers: Climbing S (4): 14, Enhanced Senses (Sight) (2): 11, Silent Walk S (4): 14, Surprise Attack (4)

Legend Points (2): 2,060

Equipment: None

Loot: Eggs worth 150 silver pieces each (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

The black mantis is a huge 9-foot-tall insect with a thick, black carapace that acts as natural armor and eight arms, each ending in a barbed spike. The mantis uses these spikes to spear its prey, then carries the prey to its mandibles and devours it. Six legs support the mantis's 18-inch thorax, helping it climb most rough surfaces.

See the **Horrors** chapter on p. 447 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on black mantises.

Treasures

Read the following aloud:

Chorrolis be praised, you've stumbled across a small fortune! This tower must have belonged to a thief or a miser. Inside a torn feather mattress lies a small, bulging sack with gemstones and jewels spilling out of it, including several large emeralds, a ruby, and a gold ring!

The five emeralds are worth 40 silver pieces each, the ruby is worth 30 silver pieces, and the ring is worth 100 silver pieces.

Potion

Read the following aloud:

You climb through a hole in what seems like the hundredth ceramic wall, and find yourself in a laboratory. Shattered glass carpets the floor, but, amazingly, a few vials remain intact amid the debris.

This room contains a Potion of Life (see p. 185 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

End of the Rope!

As noted earlier (on p. 106), the rope is frayed near the bottom of the shaft. When the lift reaches the frayed section of the rope, its weight snaps the remaining strands. Because the player characters cannot see the rope below them, they cannot possibly anticipate it breaking. The 'X' marked on the map near the derrick (see the map on p. 105) indicates the frayed section.

When the lift drops below the 'X' marked on the map, read the following aloud:

"Desperately in need of something to think of besides the carnage that makes your stomach turn, you turn your gaze toward the crank and watch the rope unwind from around it. The flowing, steady motion reassures you, calms you. On the lift, you feel safer than in any other place in this cursed kaer.

Suddenly, the lift bucks like a startled horse. From below the descending platform comes an ominous tearing sound, then a snap like a breaking twig. You grab wildly for a handhold as the lift plummets through the darkness toward the rocky floor far below."

The characters have just enough time to realize what is happening before the lift plunges 8 yards through the dark shaft and smashes into the rotting derrick at the top of the windlings' reservoir (see the map on p. 105). As they crash through the first level of the derrick, have every character take Step 15/D20+D6 Falling damage. No armor protects against this damage. In addition, any character holding an object must make a Strength (13) Test. If the test succeeds, the character hangs onto whatever he holds. If the test fails, the object falls into the wreckage below and the character must retrieve it.

Once the lift has hit the derrick, the players choose one of their number to make a test to determine whether or not the lift continues to fall. The player makes a Step 5 Action Test to determine the impetus of the plunge, adding a +1 bonus to the test for each character aboard the lift. On a result of 8 or better, the lift smashes through the next level and everyone aboard takes Step 5/D8 damage. Physical Armor protects against this damage because most of it comes from splintering wood and falling timbers rather than from impact. If the lift breaks through the derrick's second level, have another player make the same test for the next level. If the lift breaks through that level, everyone takes another Step 5/D8 damage, then another player makes a test for the next level, and so on.

The lift can fall through up to seven levels, each roughly 1 yard apart, so everyone should get at least one chance to cause harm to themselves and their companions.

Landing

Depending on how many levels the lift falls through, the adventurers end up sprawled either amid the derrick's wet, splintered timbers or at the bottom of the kaer's reservoir 8 yards below the lowest level of the derrick. If the characters are caught in the derrick, have every character make a Climbing (5) Test, with a Harried penalty to each character's test to reflect his Stunned condition (see p. 409 of the **Player's Compendium**). Those whose test fails stagger and slide down to the derrick's next level and take an additional Step 2/D4–1 Falling damage. No armor protects against this damage. The characters are Stunned for a number of rounds equal to the number of levels they fell through.

If the characters fall into the reservoir, each of them must immediately make a Swimming (5) Test to avoid inhaling a lungful of water and taking Step 3/D4 damage. This is due to the shock of hitting the water and the Stunned state of the characters. No armor protects against this damage. If a character fails his test, he must continue making Swimming (5) Tests each round. If he fails three consecutive Swimming Tests, the character slips beneath the water and begins to drown (see p. 248 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Once the character has made a successful Swimming (5) Test he has reached the side, but must climb the 10-yard walls of the reservoir to reach relative safety on the bottom level of the derrick. The reservoir walls have a Climbing Difficulty of 9 (see **Climbing** on p. 106 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). Once out of the reservoir, the character must then climb out of the derrick.

Getting Out

To climb up out of the derrick, a character must make a successful Climbing (8) Test for each level that he ascends. If the test fails, the character slides back to the previous level and suffers additional Step 2/D4–1 damage. On a Pathetic result, the unfortunate climber falls backward through the number of levels between his current height and the level at which the lift stopped. Each level that the character falls through adds another +1 bonus to the damage normally taken for the height from which the character falls (see **Falling Damage** on p. 107 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

Instead of climbing out, the characters may attempt to repair the lift. Miraculously, its metal frame remains intact. The crank is jammed with rotted wood from the derrick, but the characters can fix it by making a successful Craftsman (4) Test using an appropriate craft, determined by the gamemaster. If the characters do not have tools available to them, they require a Good or better result. If the characters do not know any suitable crafts, they may make a Dexterity Test instead, using the rules for Default Skill Use (see p. 230 of the **Player's Compendium**); this test may be harder again if the characters have no tools.

Reattaching the two split ends of the broken rope may prove difficult unless the heroes have a flyer among their number who can reach the rope's dangling end, but if they can accomplish this task, the retied rope stays steady and secure. Lift riders must stand on the bars of the frame, a precarious position that carries its own dangers (see **Return to the Ship**, p. 119).

Rock Bottom

Once the characters climb out of the wreckage of the derrick, and possibly also the reservoir, they find themselves in the kaer's lowest chamber. This vast cavern measures hundreds of yards across. Rasper Nor's map guides the characters through this chamber, across the Stained Lake, and toward the Magicians' Cavern, a smaller chamber that contains the Magicians' Tower and the Sanctuary.

After the characters untangle themselves from the derrick, read the following aloud:

"Around you stretches an immense cavern, several times larger than anything you expected windlings to inhabit. A waterfall pours into a vast lake from a hole in one wall. Its roar echoes off the rock, ringing loudly in your ears. The overwhelming noise turns your head dizzy and makes conversation almost impossible. You refrain from shouting to each other, fearing to disturb some hidden presence.

Looking westward, away from the lake, you see stands of rotting trees interspersed with a bewildering variety of dead plants. The fetid smell of decaying vegetation floats through the cavern, fouling the air. You imagine this forest-garden as it must have been once, lovingly tended by the windlings who dwelt here.

Huge steps have been carved into the chamber's western wall. In front of them you see the

remains of a large, wooden structure made of several platforms, each three feet apart. You have seen something similar before; windlings customarily use such platforms to grow large amounts of food in small places. In the walls next to the garden are a number of small holes, the entrances to tunnels too small for any but windlings to enter."

Farm

The frame that served as the kaer's farm lies along the western wall of Area 5 (see the map on p.105). The windlings grew moss and other plants on the multi-leveled frames and on the wall itself.

Garden

Once the home of thriving trees and other plants too large to grow on the farm platform, the garden fills the remainder of Area 5. The trees have rotted to the point where they crumble at a touch. If the characters attempt to rebuild the lift platform using this wood, inform them that the wood is unusable.

Tunnels

Only 1 yard high by 1 yard wide, the tunnels are located along the eastern and northern walls of Area 5. They continue into the mountain for about a hundred winding yards. Though these mine tunnels once provided the windlings with minerals and ore for craftsmen and builders, nothing of value remains in them. Swarms of rats have taken over the disused mine shafts. A few of the tunnels open onto the mountain's surface and bring fresh air into the kaer's depths. Any non-windling character will find traveling down any of these tiny mines extremely difficult.

Getting the Goods

When the characters head for the lake, read the following aloud:

According to Rasper Nor's map, the lake lies on the far side of the towers that stand before you. Though similar to those you saw on the upper levels, these towers look more sturdily built and somewhat more intact. However, grim evidence of carnage—the worst you have yet encountered—lies all around these structures. Hundreds of windling corpses litter the floors, and thousands more hang from the cracked and broken walls of the ceramic towers. These windlings sold their lives dearly, safeguarding the Magicians' Cavern that lies beyond the towers and lake. More than a few black mantis husks lie trapped between the close-built towers, tiny spears sticking up from their ebony carapaces.

Exploring the buildings yields little of worth to the characters. Most goods in the merchant towers were either destroyed, taken by armies of marauding creatures, or collected over the centuries by the Trader (see below). This odd being has left behind only a few coins and scattered pieces of windling weapons and armor.

As the characters walk through the merchant towers toward the lake, read them the following:

"As you move through the ruins of windling shops and taverns, you smell smoke. Someone—or something—inhabits this huge chamber. Hands on your weapons, you creep forward, straining eyes and ears for some trace of the mysterious enemy's presence. Just ahead of you, you spy the flicker of firelight against the ochre walls of a tower. Slowly, breath held and heart hammering, you creep closer to the light.

By the shore of the huge, dark lake sits a bizarre figure poking listlessly at a campfire. Its mottled skin hangs in loose folds about its naked body, and amber-colored eyes peer out from its dark face. With one wrinkled hand, it turns a spit above the flame, slowly roasting a chunk of flesh from you know not what beast. The firelight dances off piles of salvaged weapons, treasures of many kinds, and the hull of a small boat beached on the shore of the dark, still water."

The Trader

DEX: 5 **STR**: 5 **TOU**: 3
PER: 6 **WIL**: 6 **CHA**: 3

Initiative: 5
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (1): 6
Damage:
Unarmed (1): 6

Physical Defense: 6
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 4
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 23
Wound Threshold: 5
Unconsciousness Rating: 14

Recovery Tests: 1
Knockdown: 5

Combat Movement: 20 **Full Movement**: 40

Powers: Evaluate [S] (5): 11/D10+D8

Legend Points: None

Equipment: Peasant's Garb

Loot: See text

Commentary

The figure on the beach is an unfortunate, dimwitted creature possessed by a Horror known as the Trader. From its home on the astral plane, the Trader uses hundreds of possessed minions to wreak havoc on the physical world.

No two of these Horror-possessed Traders ever look the same, and so tales of the Trader describe it in hundreds of different ways.

When the Horror finds a violated kaer or ruined village, it sends a Trader to gather from that site any treasure it can find. Though the Horror usually makes some attempt to safeguard its minions as they undertake this task, it occasionally sacrifices one for sheer amusement. If a Trader dies, the Horror simply takes over another unwilling soul.

The Horror took this particular minion from another plane and dropped it into the lowest level of the windling kaer. This Trader has sat here for approximately three centuries undisturbed, sustaining itself with the bloated fish that swim in the Stained Lake.

Rules

If a character wants to get a piece of equipment from the Trader, the creature points at something equally valuable carried by that character or one of his companions to be surrendered in exchange. Though it usually chooses a weapon or piece of armor, other items such as books, a backpack minus its contents, and so on may be exchanged at the gamemaster's discretion. The Trader asks only for items worth up to 25 percent more than the object the character desires, and never accepts coin. If the buyer accepts or declines the transaction, the Trader ignores him, but does him no harm.

Stealing From the Trader

If a character attempts to take goods without giving something up in exchange, the purloined item immediately becomes cursed. To determine the specific effects of any given curse, see **Curses** in the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 110 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**. The nature of the curse depends on the item stolen, but in general, the more expensive the item, the worse the curse placed upon it. The curse almost always ruins the item, and some curses may also harm the character. Once cursed, an item remains cursed forever, even if given away. No magic can remove such a curse.

Killing the Trader

Because the Trader wishes to end its miserable existence, it does not fight back, and so any attack kills it. Killing the minion saddles the attacking character with a Major Curse (see **Curses** on p. 111 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**), automatically reducing an Attribute value important to the attacking character's Discipline by –3. A Warrior or Beastmaster, for example, might lose Strength, whereas a magician would lose either Perception or Willpower. The gamemaster chooses which Attribute to reduce, and also decides whether or not the character redeems himself. Because the character earned the curse by slaying a Horror's innocent victim, any act of redemption should involve saving an innocent victim.

Trader's Hoard

The Trader's hoard includes the following items that the heroes may find useful. The description of each item includes a *suggested curse* if the item is stolen.

Large Sack: This ordinary sack can hold up to 100 pounds of food, coin, equipment, and so on. *Suggested Curse: The bag rips and spills its contents at the worst possible moment, preferably in some location from which the goods cannot be retrieved without considerable difficulty.*

Boat: Used by the windlings to ferry heavy goods across the lake, the boat seats up to six normal-sized Name-givers. More than six weigh enough to push it below the waterline, and may sink it. *Suggested Curse: The boat begins to sink halfway across the Stained Lake.*

Short Sword of Dazzling Speed: Borne by a captain of the windlings' best fighters, this item is described in detail in **New Magical Treasures**, p. 346. *Suggested Curse: If the wielder makes more than one attack using this weapon, the second attack always hits a friend. If no friend stands nearby, the sword strikes the user.*

Blinding Stones: This small sack, embroidered with the word "Flash," contains six stones. Flash is the key word for a spell. Uttering the key word causes a thrown stone to explode with light, blinding opponents. For a complete description of this item's effects in game terms, see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 345. *Suggested Curse: The user and all of his companions cannot close their eyes in time to avoid the effects of the flash.*

Grappling Hook and Rope: This sturdy rope and small grappling hook may prove extremely useful later on in the adventure. Be sure to mention this item to the players. *Suggested Curse: The rope breaks while a character is climbing it.*

Crossing the Stained Lake

When the characters approach the lake, read the following aloud:

> *The waters of the vast lake shine dark purple, like aged plum wine. Ripples from the pounding waterfall dance across the surface, making it look as if the water is trying to crawl out of the lake bed. Its eastern shore already has; the lake has drowned the feet of the towers that face you across its breadth. Just your luck, that the flood waters lie across the path that you must follow. Adventuring in Barsaive is never easy…*

The adventurers can cross the lake by flying, sailing in the Trader's boat, or scaling the entire length of the wall that runs behind the waterfall. Flight is the safest way across, but requires magicians with the proper spells to do quite a bit of ferrying. Traveling by boat poses the danger of attack by the carrion fish that live in the lake. Scaling the slippery rock of the wall is the most dangerous way to cross, but offers some chance of success for the group's most expert climbers. The wall has a Climbing Difficulty of 15. On a Pathetic result on his Climbing Test, the climber plunges into the water.

A character falling into the lake must make a Swimming (5) Test to avoid inhaling a lungful of water and taking Step 3/D4 damage. No armor protects against this damage. If a character fails his test, he must continue making Swim-

ming (5) Tests each round. If he fails three consecutive Swimming Tests, the character slips beneath the water and begins to drown (see p. 248 of the **Player's Compendium**). The character must make additional Swimming (5) Tests until he reaches the shore.

Unfortunately, the character is not the only one in the lake. There are several schools of carrion fish roaming the waters. Unless a character reaches shore within 4 rounds, his movements will attract a school of carrion fish, who will attack him. Characters who are in the water are considered Harried (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 408 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Carrion Fish

DEX: 10 **STR**: 4 **TOU**: 9
PER: 6 **WIL**: 4 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 10 **Physical Defense**: 13
Number of Actions: 1 (see text) **Spell Defense**: 7
Attack (3): 13 **Social Defense**: 6
Damage: (see text) **Physical Armor**: 0
One Target (10): 14 **Mystic Armor**: 0
Two Targets (7): 11
Three Targets (4): 8

Death Rating: NA **Recovery Tests**: 4
Wound Threshold: Immune **Knockdown**: Immune
Unconsciousness Rating: 47

Combat Movement: 55✦ **Full Movement**: 110✦

✦ This value is the creature's swimming Movement rate.

Legend Points: 425

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Small and blunt-headed, a school of carrion fish can strip a troll down to the bone in a matter of minutes. These fish feed off dead matter, but must often kill their own prey in order to get the carrion they need. Whenever they sense something entering the water, the fish swim toward it and batter it to death.

Rules

The game statistics above represent a school of 30 carrion fish, which would occupy an area of roughly 15 cubic feet in the water. A single school makes 1, 2, or 3 attacks per round, depending on the number of victims within its range. Each victim within the school's range receives the same number of attacks. If a character attacks the carrion fish school, do not attempt to resolve damage to each fish. The carrion fish school automatically disperses when it takes damage equal to its Unconsciousness Rating.

Exploring the Drowned City

If they choose to, the characters may crawl out of the boat and descend to the base of any of the six watertight, unbroken towers in the flooded city section, where they may find a few treasures amid centuries of debris.

Have each character make a Perception (8) Test for each of the towers that he enters. On an Average result, the character finds 10 silver pieces. On a Good or better result, he

finds 50 silver pieces. Multiple characters may find coins in the same tower.

As the character or characters descend into each tower, have them make several Silent Walk or Dexterity (8) Tests to determine how quietly they move through the doorway. If one of these tests fails, the carrion fish hear the noise and begin to batter the tower. At first, the adventurer or adventurers hear only a few muffled thumps, then more and more until the sounds reverberate through the water-encased structure like thunder.

When the sounds are at their loudest, the character or characters have six rounds to get out of the building. The character(s) must climb the tower's entire 20-yard height, and so must move quickly. As the character(s) climb, cracks and small holes appear in the ceramic walls. The grotesque carrion fish fall through the holes, water spurting through each crack they create.

Once the base of the tower fills with water, the next wave of carrion fish falls unharmed into the rising pool. If a climbing character falls into the water, he takes half the damage normally inflicted by a school of carrion fish in addition to standard Falling damage for the distance fallen (see p.107 in the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). Eventually the tower fills completely, and the frenzied fish search the structure for their prey.

Troubleshooting

If the characters spend too much time exploring the ruins, remind them that the *Cloud Runner* remains in danger from the elements and may leave them rather than wait too long. The falling lift should add excitement and danger to the encounter without killing or seriously wounding the characters. Feel free to fudge dice roll results if necessary.

If the characters have not already realized that the mysterious magician Rasper Nor lied to Drimsby in his letter, the sights in the vast chamber at the bottom of the kaer should drive home that fact. The hundreds of windling skeletons, the mantis corpses, the bloodstained lake and the sheer volume of destruction show clearly that none of the kaer's inhabitants could possibly have survived the Scourge.

Finding the Sanctuary

In this encounter, the heroes reach the cavern containing the tower in which the windling magicians died. Once they find the Sanctuary within it, they must solve the long-dead magicians' riddle to breach the magical wards that have kept the Sanctuary safe from Horrors ever since the earliest days of the Scourge.

Setting the Stage

When the characters approach the cavern, read the following aloud:

In the cave ceiling just above the half-submerged towers, you see a hole leading to yet another dimly lit, rocky chamber. Rasper Nor's map marks this chamber as the Magicians' Cavern. Within it somewhere lies your goal: the tomb of a long-dead windling magician and his precious book of spells. You study the cavern's funnel-shaped entrance, racking your brains for a way to climb through it without breaking your necks. The ceiling around the hole has twigs and branches carved into the stone, mingled with the figures of windlings. Most of the sculpted figures are helping build the wreath of twigs, though a few play musical instruments. The windling musicians wink down at you invitingly, their stone faces full of mirth.

The sight of such joy in the charnel house that this kaer has become makes you unbearably sad, so you shift your gaze from the entrance to what you can see of the cavern's interior. You can barely see the stone foundation of the Magicians' Tower, where Rasper Nor's friend Skeethen reportedly lies buried.

Themes and Images

After the breathless excitement of the harrowing ride on the crashing lift, the battle with the black mantis, and the hair-raising crossing of the Stained Lake, this encounter should feel far too quiet. The sights in the cavern are eerie and unsettling, and the characters should eagerly anticipate completing their dangerous task. Let them believe that the dangers in this encounter are the last ones they will face.

Behind the Scenes

No matter what method of entry the player characters choose, the climb into the cavern is risky. Remind the heroes that the smallest misstep may send them tumbling into the blood-dark waters of the Stained Lake. Once they have climbed inside, the characters may explore the large barracks and its ruined garden if they wish. The gamemaster should remind them that their real goal, Skeethen's tomb, lies at the top of the Magicians' Tower.

Once the characters have climbed through the vertical entrance, read the following aloud:

The little glow-moss left in this cavern gives you hardly enough light to see by, and casts strange, dancing shadows on the rocky walls. It looks as though something tore the moss out by the roots, leaving only enough patches to bathe the cavern and its buildings in a pale, eerie glow.

The Magicians' Tower lies ahead, its doorway shattered by the passage of something larger than a thousand windlings. To the left stands a terraced building dotted with arched entranceways. The withered remnants of once-lovely flowers and rare plants cling to its eastern and southern walls, as a dying child clings to the comfort of a mother's hand. Torn, dead roots and stumps protruding from the gashed soil give mute evidence of a once-thriving

garden's destruction at the hands of a malicious and powerful enemy.

The tiny bones of the kaer's defenders lie piled on the terraces, strewn through the ruined gardens, and smashed against the shattered entrance of the Magicians' Tower. A few pieces of black mantis shell lie scattered among them, along with brittle windling spears and broken windling swords.

Locations

The following locations appear on the map of the kaer, p. 105.

Barracks (9)

A hundred windling warriors once lived in this building. In addition to their spartan quarters, the barracks includes a large, common mess hall at its center that also doubled as an aerial sparring ground. A portion of the southern wing has been partially barricaded by piles of furniture. Halfway through the blockage lies the carcass of a black mantis. On the other side lie twelve windling skeletons, several of them with black barbs sticking up from their tiny chests and skulls. The characters can find nothing of value in the ruins.

Magicians' Tower (10)

The tower's valiant defenders tried to barricade its smashed doorway with tables and other furniture. A pile of tiny bones beyond the shattered portal bears grim testimony to their failure. In the tower's large central chamber, centuries of dust combined with the dark brown stains of windling blood and piles of rubble from shattered sections of wall obscure the brilliant images of birds, dragons, and other aerial creatures painted across the ceramic walls.

To the right and left of the central hall are more empty audience chambers where the windlings once held important affairs. A few broken bodies, but little else, lie scattered across the floors. A hole in the central chamber's ceiling leads upward into darkness. The glow-moss colonies that once lit the tower's upper levels appear to have died.

On the tower's second level, the characters find offices where the windling magicians stored important papers. Leakage from the cavern walls above has rotted the parchment, but the characters may recover the following few artifacts: an official seal of Talon Kaer, a skeletal finger sporting a silver ring worth 15 silver pieces, and 2D6 copper coins. Desks and trunks in all the offices have been ripped apart, indicating that the tower has been searched for valuables by some type of intelligent, and probably angry, being.

Lavish bedrooms and living areas compose the third level. Curtains, pillows, quilts, and other decorations in jewel-like hues of scarlet, purple, sapphire, and so on lie around the rooms, most ripped to shreds or rotting in pools of moisture. Nothing of value, however, remains for the characters to find.

When the characters reach the tower's topmost chamber, read them the following:

"You climb through a shattered stone doorway and enter the tower's topmost chamber. The single,

large room contains several broken chairs and a table made from the polished stump of a huge oak tree. A wooden cabinet stands against one wall, close to an iron-barred window. The cabinet's doors have been ripped off of their hinges, the scrolls and books that once reposed within it torn in pieces and scattered around the room. Bits of parchment litter the floor, mingled with fragments of stone from the shattered entrance and the skeletons of six windlings.

Puzzled, you check your map. You have reached the place of Skeethen's tomb…but you see no sign of the cave-in that Rasper Nor led you to expect. As you gaze around the chamber, your heart sinks. Nowhere can you see any evidence of a tomb, or even of another chamber. Remembering the placement of doorways in the other windling dwellings you have seen, you look up. Praise the Passions, a stone portal in the ceiling frames a solid, oval doorway. From its middle, two bronze handles stick out, as if meant to pull two doors apart. Strangely, you see no seam between the handles; instead, the oval door looks like a single, solid block. Etched into the oval just above the bronze handles is a single sentence that reads: "Only one with the purest heart, tainted by the darkest evil, may unlock this gate."

Examining the Sanctuary

The Sanctuary, referred to as Skeethen's Tomb by Rasper Nor, was carved out of the stone ceiling of the cavern where it brushes the top of the tower. The impenetrable stone and the enchantments that surround the irregular chamber protect it from physical and magical breach.

Skeethen and several other magicians designed this room as a last-ditch retreat from invading Horrors. While researching the methods of dispelling the Horrors that eventually became the Tome of Banishment, the windlings also learned how to summon them. Knowing that they dared not allow the dangerous knowledge contained in their grimoire to fall into the hands of the Horrors or unscrupulous people, the windling Elementalists devised the Sanctuary. Within it they could seal away the Tome, keeping it safe from the Horrors and their minions.

Before attempting to solve the riddle and open the door, the characters may want to check out the Sanctuary both physically and astrally. Though Rasper Nor knew of the secret vault, his windling friends did not agree upon the Sanctuary's magical protections until Rasper Nor had returned temporarily to his own retreat in the Delaris Mountains. Therefore, the Horror Tyrannisis could not glean that information from Rasper Nor's mind when it possessed the human Nethermancer.

For almost five years, the possessed Rasper Nor tried every possible trick, spell, or other tactic to violate the Sanctuary. Any character who makes a successful Perception (6) Test notices the following evidence of such efforts: scratches all around the bronze handles, a dried windling heart lying amid debris in the corner of the room, and deep gashes from an axe blade around the edges of the portal. Any character who uses his or her own axe against the stone door finds that even the mightiest blows dislodge only tiny flakes of stone.

With regard to astral enchantment, the magicians built a similar structure out of the ethereal mists on the astral plane. Any character looking into the astral "copy" of the Sanctuary sees a sealed cube with the riddle written upon its circular door. Have the astral-gazing character make a Perception (5) Test. If he achieves an Average or Good result, he feels as if something is watching him. If he achieves an Excellent or Extraordinary result, he spots a black shadow peering at him from a distance. Though the character cannot know this, the shadow is Tyrannisis.

The Magic of the Sanctuary

The windlings who built the Sanctuary hoped that the Tome sealed within it might someday find its way into the hands of a hero both brave and wise enough to use it against the Horrors. To ensure that only a true hero could breach the Sanctuary, the magicians came up with a magical test and devised a riddle to tell the would-be hero how he might pass muster. The riddle carved into the Sanctuary door states that only a hero "of the purest heart" marked by a Horror ("tainted by the darkest evil") can open the Sanctuary.

The windlings' magical protections, consisting of a simple magical lock and a Divine Aura spell, kept Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis at bay for almost five centuries. Anyone attempting to open the door triggers the Divine Aura spell woven into the matrix of the door's magical lock. Because Skeethen and the other magicians worked together for several months to weave both the lock and the Divine Aura spell, each has a Spell Defense of 40.

The locking spell keeps the door shut until the Divine Aura spell detects the necessary true-hearted but Horror-marked individual. Once that individual attempts to open the Sanctuary door, both spells dissipate.

The windling magicians chose to tailor their magical protections to a Horror-marked hero for two reasons. First, the presence of a Horror mark would mean that the Horrors still existed on the physical plane. The magicians desired to keep the Tome and its dangerous secrets hidden if the Horrors ever truly left the world, lest some evil person choose to summon the Horrors and begin the Scourge again. Second, the Elementalists believed that only the strongest of heroes could be marked by a Horror and still generate a pure aura. If the spell only required pureness of heart, a child might be able to open the portal, and a child would certainly lack the strength to use or protect the Tome.

Of course, a Horror-marked hero who claimed the Tome could also be manipulated by the Horror that had marked him. To protect against this danger, the windlings placed a scintillating medallion within the Sanctuary. This magical treasure offers substantial protection against the powers of the Horrors. For more information concerning the powers of the medallion, see **The Scintillating Medallion** on p. 118.

Solving the Riddle

The riddle requires a hero with two qualities to open the Sanctuary: a pure heart and a Horror mark. The pure heart refers to the goodness of a character's intentions and his or her basic, gut-level commitment to the cause of good, rather than to literal purity. After all, few people exist in **Earthdawn** who have never done anything bad. The gamemaster must make a judgment call with regard to a character's good intentions, but should give the adventurers the benefit of the doubt. Only characters who routinely steal from their friends, execute or torture prisoners, or demand exorbitant fees from the people who ask their help should be considered insufficiently pure of heart.

The need for a Horror mark presents obvious difficulties. Unless one of the characters already has a Horror mark, some brave hero in the group must willingly accept one. The easiest way to accomplish this is to have a magician in the group cast a spell using raw magic, which will send up a flare to any Horror in the immediate vicinity (see **Casting Raw Magic** on p. 289 of the **Player's Compendium**). For spellcasting purposes, the entire Talon Kaer counts as a Corrupt area. If the magician succeeds, the Horror that marks him (or another hero) is Tyrannisis, currently hovering over Talon Peak in his airship, the *Shadow Skulker*.

Rather than hint at the answer to the riddle, let the players solve it themselves. Keeping a poker face also helps to create tension once the group thinks of deliberately gaining a Horror mark. The prospect of attracting the attentions of a Horror without knowing for certain if he has made the right choice should terrify the unfortunate conjurer and his companions.

Opening the Sanctuary

Once Horror-marked, the chosen character must physically grab the bronze handles on the Sanctuary door. As they are 5 yards above the floor, this task is not as easy as it might appear.

Once the character is gripping both handles, read the following:

A blue glow gradually forms around the doorway, accompanied by faint splintering sounds. Hairline cracks race through the thick stone above you. Chunk after chunk tumbles away. Suddenly the entire portal crashes to the ground, sending tremors throughout the tower. The Sanctuary and its hidden treasure now stands open before you.

Any character unable to move out of the way as the first chunks of stone fall is struck by several of them and takes Step 18/D20+D12 damage. No armor protects against this damage. The character opening the door must make a Dexterity (12) Test to swing and drop to safety on the ground, out of the way of the crumbling portal, to avoid taking this damage. Any other characters beneath the portal must make Dexterity (8) Tests.

Finding the Tome

When the adventurers pull themselves through the broken doorway, read the following aloud:

The walls of the small, rock chamber seem to press in on you, and it is difficult to breathe for a moment or two. One of your companions passes you a light from below, and the frightening feeling of entombment eases a little. Suddenly, your heart leaps into your throat. Sitting barely an arm's length in front of you is a windling!

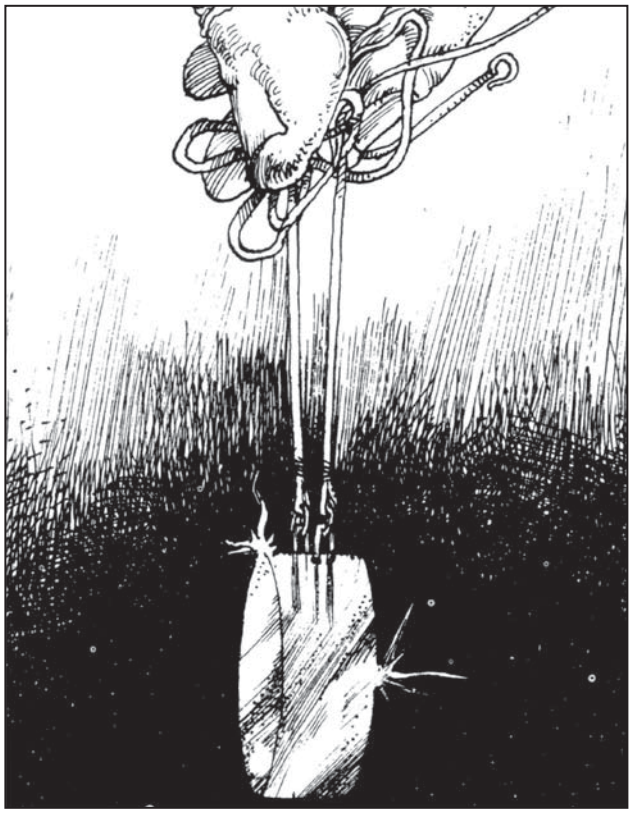
You wait for him to sense your presence, but he does not move or speak. As you look at him more closely, you realize that the windling breathed his last many ages ago. The skin that stretches so taut over his bones is as dry as a withered, autumn leaf. His shriveled arms are loosely clasped around a leather-bound book, a large one even by human standards. Golden letters dance across its cover; they read, "The Tome of Banishment." Clasped in one of the ancient windling's small hands is a small, brass disc about an inch thick; a medallion of some kind.

When the character in the Sanctuary sees the windling, let him declare an action before continuing with the second narrative paragraph. He probably will not realize at first that the windling is mummified.

Once the gamemaster finishes reading aloud and the characters know that the windling is dead, have one of them take the book and the medallion gently from him. Having obtained their prize, the heroes must escape from the kaer and safely return to the *Cloud Runner*.

The Scintillating Medallion

Upon sealing himself and the Tome of Banishment within the Sanctuary, the dying windling magician placed his life force within the medallion in order to protect the



Tome and its eventual rescuer from the powers of the Horror that had marked the would-be hero. The medallion is a small, brass disc about an inch thick. It is hollow and contains a physical manifestation of Skeethen's soul. When shaken, this physical object rattles inside it.

When the would-be hero puts on the medallion, crackling purple lightning surrounds the character as Skeethen's dormant soul awakens. From the moment the eerie display ceases, until a year and a day later, the character can resist the following Horror powers: Corrupt Karma, Karma Tap, Terror, and Thought Worm (see p. 441 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). When a Horror uses any of these powers against the wearer, the character adds +5 to his Spell Defense or Social Defense, as appropriate. The medallion offers similar protection against any spells intended to dominate the wearer's mind or control his actions.

After a year and a day, Skeethen's spirit escapes and the medallion becomes no more than a pretty piece of jewelry. The presence of Skeethen's life force within the medallion means that the wearer need not spend Legend Points or weave a thread to the medallion's true pattern in order to use it. The medallion has a Spell Defense of 16.

Return to the Ship

The heroes have three ways to reach the surface of Talon Peak. They may fly, climb, or repair the broken lift. Flying obviously requires at least one character with that ability, who can then ferry his friends out one at a time. Keep in mind that traveling back up the lift shaft renders a flying character, particularly one burdened by carrying a companion, vulnerable to attack by blood bees. Climbing is even more dangerous than flying because the characters must not only face the blood bees again, but also risk falling several hundred feet to their deaths.

Repairing the lift poses the fewest risks (relatively speaking). Assuming they have not already done so in the previous encounter, Talon Kaer, the characters must tie the two ends of the broken rope together, meaning that one of them must climb 8 yards up the rocky wall of the shaft to the dangling end. Depending on how far the lift fell, the climbing character may also need to climb down through the levels of the derrick or even into the reservoir to reach the other end of the snapped rope. If the adventurers succeed in making repairs, the character who turns the crank must come up with a way to support himself without using his hands. Tying himself to the frame represents the most obvious solution to the problem, but also greatly restricts the character's mobility in combat.

The remaining characters will find the frame much more difficult to stand on than the wooden platform it once held. When the blood bees return, any character who attacks them receives an additional –1 modifier to his Physical and Spell Defense and Action Tests, in addition to the Harried penalty (see p. 408 of the **Player's Compendium**). This modifier reflects the fact that the character must keep one hand on the frame to keep from falling, and so cannot move freely.

If a character steps too close to the edge or makes a Knockdown Test with a Pathetic result, he must make a successful Dexterity (6) Test to avoid falling from the lift, unless grabbed by his companions, as per the rules given on p. 106 of **Talon Kaer**.

Troubleshooting

In this encounter, the group may have trouble getting into the Magicians' Cavern and/or out of the kaer. An ill-prepared group may have neglected to bring rope or a grappling hook, and without this equipment the climb into the cavern becomes almost impossible. If this occurs, Tarlinna or Radlin might have a convenient rope, or a player character may find these items in the ruins. Alternatively, the characters may risk being cursed and take the rope and grappling hook from the Trader (p. 113).

The heroes may also have trouble solving the riddle of the Sanctuary unless the players know about Horror marks. If the players (and their characters) do not have this information, the gamemaster may need to hint at it. If the gamemaster must take this last-resort option, listen carefully to the players' discussion for a reference to Horror powers. At this point, have one player make a Scourge History or Horror Lore (6) Test. If the test succeeds, give the players a brief overview of Horror powers (see p. 440 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**), dwelling just a little on the Horror Mark power. With this veiled hint, the players should eventually solve the riddle.

Broadsides!

In this encounter, the heroes emerge from Talon Kaer with their prize, only to lose it to Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis. The Horror-possessed Nethermancer sails for Travar in his airship, the *Shadow Skulker*, closely pursued by the *Cloud Runner*.

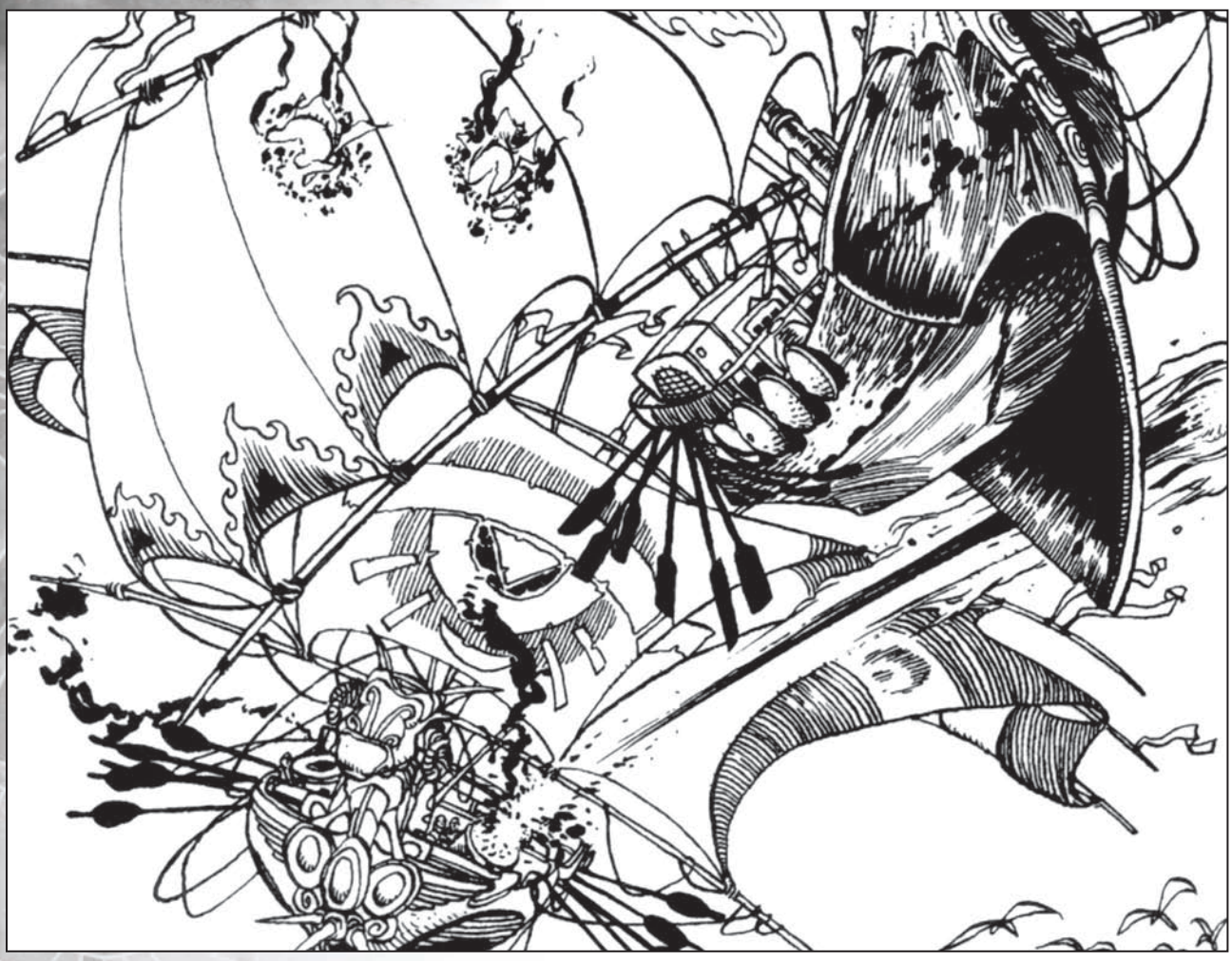
Setting the Stage

When the characters exit Talon Kaer, read the following aloud:

You burst through the kaer doors onto the snow-blanketed rock of Talon Peak. The fading light of day has never looked so lovely, or the crisp, fresh air smelled as sweet. You plow through the snowdrifts as fast as your tired legs and the heavy snow will let you, flinging yourselves into the patrol boat as you reach it.

Somehow, you find the strength to stay alert and sail the patrol boat out of its sheltered nook. Fighting the howling blizzards that strike harder than a dozen bands of ork scorchers, you point your bucking, shuddering craft in the direction of the Cloud Runner.

The patrol boat whips around the side of the peak just in time to see a huge fireball strike the Cloud Runner*'s deck. Some of the galley's crew race to quench the fire with buckets of water, while others saw furiously at the mooring lines that trap the ship against the side of the mountain. In the*



distance you see a vast, black shape arrowing toward the Cloud Runner. *As you land the boat on the galley deck, Drimsby shouts, "Raiders off the starboard side!"*

Themes and Images

Make the players feel the adrenaline rush of a high-speed chase. Chaos and danger abound in this encounter, as the Horror-controlled ship tries to lose its pursuers in the clouds. Whenever the two ships sail within firing range, the *Cloud Runner* attempts to close and board the enemy vessel, spitting gouts of flame from its fire cannons as the galley's crew fights to the bitter end to retrieve the Tome of Banishment from the Horror who has just snatched it. Throughout the battle, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis casts deadly spells to kill his enemies while the heroes try to hack their way to him over the bodies of his loathsome crew.

Behind the Scenes

The **Setting the Stage** section above assumes that the characters have moored the patrol boat under the overhanging rock just outside the kaer. If they chose in the previous encounter to send the boat back to the galley and have it return to pick them up, the gamemaster must edit **Setting the Stage** as appropriate.

The characters have retrieved the Tome of Banishment from the kaer, only to have Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis steal it from them soon after they reach the *Cloud Runner*. Once the Horror has stolen the book, he races back to Travar aboard his airship, the *Shadow Skulker*, with the *Cloud Runner* in hot pursuit. Though the Horror-possessed Nethermancer would enjoy destroying the *Cloud Runner*, his primary goal is to steal the Tome of Banishment and get away clean. Much of this encounter involves chasing the *Shadow Skulker* back to Travar, engaging the *Skulker*'s horrible crew in a running battle along the way. In order for this encounter to work, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis must steal the Tome, and so the gamemaster should exercise considerable ingenuity toward accomplishing this task.

Stealing the Tome

As soon as Rasper Nor/ Tyrannisis sees the characters emerge from the kaer, he sends 20 eendwings to attack them. These small, flying Horrors attempt to overwhelm the patrol boat when it first appears, hoping to wrestle the Tome of Banishment away from the heroes under cover of this attack. Because Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis knows that the adventurers can easily guard against the eendwings when alerted to their presence, he will only send the eendwing swarm once.

If the eendwing attack fails, the Horror will use his Horror Mark power against Air Warden Drimsby as he stands on the deck of the *Cloud Runner*. Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis will attempt to force the Horror-marked dwarf to ask

for the Tome and then hurl it over the galley's side, where the surviving eendwings can catch it. Once Drimsby hurls the book away, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis will desert him, leaving the dwarf to the tender mercies of the angry characters and crew.

If this second approach also fails, the Horror has several powers as well as Rasper Nor's spells and talents to fall back on. The gamemaster should study the Horror's abilities carefully and come up with a way to use them to purloin the Tome. Presumably, the Horror's first two attempts to steal the Tome have led the heroes to surround the grimoire with elaborate safeguards, so the gamemaster should take any such precautions into account when planning the Horror's strategy. At some point, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis must succeed in snatching the Tome.

EENDWINGS (20)

DEX: 9 **STR**: 4 **TOU**: 4
PER: 7 **WIL**: 9 **CHA**: 5

Initiative: 9
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (1): 10
Damage:
Unarmed (2): 6

Physical Defense: 13
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 4

Death Rating: 27
Wound Threshold: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: 18

Recovery Tests: 1
Knockdown: 4

Combat Movement: 28/52*
Full Movement: 56/104*

* The second value is the Horror's flying Movement rate.

Powers: Astral Sight T (1): 8/2D6, Picking Pockets S (1): 10/D10+D6

Legend Points: 105

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Tiny imps with a nasty sense of humor, eendwings resemble fat, pink infants with wings, horns, and pointed ears. These little Horrors are prone to cruel pranks, and often carry out the wishes of more powerful Horrors in their own, diabolical way. Eendwings make personal survival a high priority, so if more than 30 percent of them are knocked out or slain, the remainder will flee. If possible, they drag the bodies of their companions away with them, less from a sense of loyalty than from self-preservation. The eendwings want to make sure that no magician ever figures out their weaknesses.

Chasing the Shadow Skulker

The gamemaster can handle the chase back to Travar simply by setting the two airships in flight and then letting the dice determine the outcome of events. A more dramatic and therefore more memorable alternative is to integrate the actions of the player characters with the series of planned events described in the following pages, in order to create the greatest amount of tension and excitement. As always, the gamemaster should be prepared to deal with anything the characters choose to do.

First Battle

If Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis succeeds in stealing the Tome of Banishment before the patrol boat lands on the *Cloud Runner*'s deck, the characters may sail the patrol boat in pursuit of the Horror's ship. If the patrol boat gets too close to the *Shadow Skulker*, the *Skulker*'s crew peppers it with crossbow fire. If the player characters land on the *Cloud Runner* and join their companions, either before or after the Horror takes the grimoire, they have 5 rounds in which to act before the *Skulker* pulls up alongside and the cadaver men attempt to board the galley.

When the patrol boat or the *Cloud Runner* nears the *Shadow Skulker*, read the following aloud:

> *As the enemy ship looms closer, you see that its sails are made of satin as black as the vessel itself. From the forecastle comes a dull glow and the smell of flaming pitch. The shadow-ship pelts your vessel with cannon fire as the enemy crewmen shoot crossbow bolt after crossbow bolt at you. Their grisly faces, sagging flesh, and mutilated bodies mark them as cadaver men. They advance grimly toward you, and your heart sinks as you realize that they intend to board your ship!*

Once the *Shadow Skulker* lies sufficiently close to the *Cloud Runner*, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis sends 30 of his cadaver men to board the *Runner* and attack its crew in the hope of crashing the ship. Because most of the crew have their hands full flying the ship, the characters must repel the invaders.

In this first strike, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis wants an easy victory over the *Cloud Runner*. If the airmen put up a tough enough fight, the Horror cuts his losses and tries to escape, abandoning the cadaver men if they seem to be losing. Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis stays out of sight during this first battle, along with his obsidian gargoyles and black servitors (see **Second Battle**, below). He is holding these favored minions and his own considerable abilities in reserve, in case the heroes somehow manage to board his ship.

For specific rules regarding ship-to-ship combat, see **Running the Battles**, p.125, and the **Ship Combat Rules** on p.148 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Cadaver Men (30)

DEX: 4 **STR**: 6 **TOU**: 7
PER: 4 **WIL**: 6 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 4 **Physical Defense**: 6
Number of Actions: 1 (4; see text) **Spell Defense**: 6
Attack (3): 7 **Social Defense**: 11
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 0
Claws (3): 9 **Mystic Armor**: 1
Medium Crossbow (5): 11

Death Rating: 39 **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 11 **Knockdown**: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 18 **Full Movement**: 36

Legend Points: 270

Equipment: Medium Crossbow (Damage: 11/D10+D8; Range 70–140–280), Quiver (w/15 medium crossbow bolts)

Loot: None

Commentary

Cadaver men are undead constructs created by the Horrors from the bodies of the dead. See the **Horrors** chapter on p.448 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on cadaver men.

Escape

The first battle should occur near dusk. If this timing is not possible, have a storm front move in and turn the skies dark. At some point during the battle with the cadaver men on the *Cloud Runner*, the *Shadow Skulker* peels off, either when the tide of battle turns against the cadaver men or if the Horror's minions overwhelm the *Cloud Runner*'s crew. If still able, the *Cloud Runner* and perhaps the patrol boat give chase, but the Horror's black ship blends into the night sky and disappears. From their last glimpse of the *Skulker*, Drimsby and Yorlk realize that the enemy vessel is heading for Travar. Throughout the long, anxious night, the adventurers plot their next course of action while Drimsby and Yorlk keep the *Cloud Runner* on course for Travar.

Break of Day

The morning light shows the *Shadow Skulker* several miles ahead of the *Cloud Runner*, trying to use a dark cloud bank as camouflage. The black ship, however, shows up clearly against gray stormclouds.

Now that the characters can once again see the enemy, allow them to try whatever schemes they wish throughout the day. They may attempt another frontal assault, sneak onto the ship from below, or even land aboard the *Skulker* and try to fight their way to Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis's cabin. No matter what the characters attempt, they face stiff opposition, including obsidian gargoyles, black servitors, and possibly even Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis himself. Ideally, the characters fail to retrieve the Tome of Banishment, but succeed in weakening the Horror's forces for the final battle (see **Pyres over Travar**, p.128).

Second Battle

At some point during the day, one of the two ships moves within firing range and pelts the other with cannon fire. Play out the drama of extinguishing the fires before they spread and trying to outsail the enemy ship before it can close to boarding range. Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis and his dreadful minions follow up the cannon fire with physical and magical assaults against the characters and the *Runner*'s crew. Crew statistics are given on p.124.

During this battle, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis casts spells and releases the obsidian gargoyles and black servitors. Game statistics for these Horror-constructs appear on p.123. The gargoyles resemble standard gargoyles in most respects, but their obsidian bodies make them difficult to see at night. To spot them at a distance greater than 15 yards away after sundown, a character must make a successful Perception (12) Test.

The golem-like black servitors resemble troll skeletons encased in a breastplate and helm of greenish stone. Each servitor wields a blood-red servitor sword (see **New Magical Treasures**, p.345). Any character who defeats a servitor can wear its breastplate and helm, but these armor pieces reduce the wearer's Initiative step by –4. The breastplate weighs 80 pounds, the helm 15 pounds.

The gamemaster must strike a balance between an all-

out assault and a small skirmish, keeping in mind the goal of whittling down the Horror's forces so that the characters have a prayer of defeating him in the final encounter. The characters cannot find the Tome of Banishment during this battle, because Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis has hidden it in a pocket of astral space.

Obsidian Gargoyles (2)

DEX: 8 **STR**: 18 **TOU**: 12
PER: 4 **WIL**: 5 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 6
Number of Actions: 2
Attack (3): 11
Damage:
2 × Claws (4): 22

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 10
Social Defense: 11
Physical Armor: 15
Mystic Armor: 6

Death Rating: 59
Wound Threshold: 20
Unconsciousness Rating: 52

Recovery Tests: 5
Knockdown: 18

Combat Movement: 28/38✦
Full Movement: 56/76✦

✦ The second value is the Horror construct's flying Movement rate.

Legend Points: 705

Equipment: None

Loot: Horns worth 5D6 × 10 silver pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

These obsidian gargoyles resemble standard gargoyles in most respects, but their obsidian bodies make them difficult to see at night. See p. 302 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on cadaver men.

Rules

Note that magical talents and spells that affect entities also work against obsidian gargoyles.

Night Concealment: When attempting to spot obsidian gargoyles at night at a distance further than 45 yards, they gain a +4 Full Concealment bonus to their Dexterity step of 8, meaning a successful Perception (12) Test is needed to spot them.

Black Servitors (2)

DEX: 9 **STR**: 8 **TOU**: 14
PER: 8 **WIL**: 11 **CHA**: 8

Initiative: 5
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (4): 13
Damage:
Servitor Sword (7): 15

Physical Defense: 11
Spell Defense: 11
Social Defense: 15
Physical Armor: 7
Mystic Armor: 8

Death Rating: 67
Wound Threshold: 19
Unconsciousness Rating: 60

Recovery Tests: 6
Knockdown: 8

Combat Movement: 46
Full Movement: 92

Legend Points: 555

Equipment: Servitor Sword (Damage 15/D20+D6+Bleeding Wounds (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 401 of the **Player's Compendium**); see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 345), Stone Net Armor (Phys 7; Init 4)

Loot: None

Commentary

The golem-like black servitors resemble troll skeletons encased in a breastplate and helm of greenish stone. Each servitor wields a blood-red, serrated two-handed sword that does Step 15/D20+D6 damage, and is able to cause Bleeding Wounds that inflict 2 Damage Points per round from bleeding until the victim makes a successful Recovery Test or receives healing aid (see **Bleeding Wounds** in the **Combat** chapter on p. 401 of the **Player's Compendium**). However, on any Damage Test that generates a bonus die, the hooks are caught so deep in the enemy or his armor that the black servitor has to make a Strength Test against the target's Toughness step. If this test fails, he loses hold of his weapon and is disarmed.

Any character who defeats a servitor can wear its breastplate and helm, but these armor pieces reduce the wearer's Initiative step by –4 (Initiative Penalty 4). The breastplate weighs 80 pounds, the helm 15 pounds.

Cloud Runner Heavy Infantry Crew (20)

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8 — **Strength** (14): 6/D10
Toughness (10): 5/D8 — **Perception** (8): 4/D6
Willpower (8): 4/D6 — **Charisma** (8): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 — **Initiative**: 2/D4-1
Spell Defense: 5 — **Physical Armor**: 8
Social Defense: 5 — **Mystic Armor**: 0

Death Rating: 31 — **Recovery Tests**: 2
Wound Threshold: 8 — **Knockdown**: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 22

Combat Movement: 22 — **Full Movement**: 44

Skills

Artisan:
Weapon Rune Carving (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Travar Lore (2): 6/D10

General:
Avoid Blow (2): 7/D12
Melee Weapons (2): 7/D12
Streetwise (2): 6/D10
Unarmed Combat (2): 7/D12

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17)
Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)
Broadsword (Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Sap (Damage 7/D12)

Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tool
Light Quartz Lantern
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Waterskin

Loot

None

Legend Award

70 Legend Points

Commentary

These crewmen are members of the Travar City Watch who have been conscripted for duty aboard the *Cloud Runner*.

Cloud Runner Light Infantry Crew (20)

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10 — **Strength** (11): 5/D8
Toughness (9): 4/D6 — **Perception** (9): 4/D6
Willpower (14): 6/D10 — **Charisma** (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8 — **Initiative**: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 6 — **Physical Armor**: 3
Social Defense: 6 — **Mystic Armor**: 2

Death Rating: 30 — **Recovery Tests**: 2
Wound Threshold: 7 — **Knockdown**: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 21

Combat Movement: 28 — **Full Movement**: 56

Skills

Artisan:
Sail Embroidery (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Airships (2): 6/D10

General:
Air Sailing (2): 8/2D6
Avoid Blow (2): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Missile Weapons (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)

Short Sword (Damage 9/D8+D6; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
Light Crossbow (Damage: 9/D8+D6; Range 50–100–200)
Quiver (w/15 light crossbow bolts)

Adventurer's Kit
Embroidery Tool
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Waterskin

Loot

None

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Commentary

These crewmen are members of the Flying Patrol.

Last Respite

After the battle, allow both sides a lull in which to heal, repair damage to their ships, and prepare for the final battle (see **Pyres over Travar**, p. 128). As dusk approaches once more, the adventurers see the distant lights of Travar on the horizon and realize that they will reach its sky lanes in less than an hour.

Running the Battles

The ship combat rules given in this book and in the **Gamemaster's Compendium** are intended to blend individual human actions with piloting tactics and strategy. Whenever the *Cloud Runner* battles the *Shadow Skulker*, have the players choose a character to control the ship's actions and make tests for the *Cloud Runner*. If they wish, the players may split the responsibility among themselves. The gamemaster controls the *Shadow Skulker*.

For further information on ship-to-ship combat, see the rules for **Ship Combat** in the **Airships and Riverboats** chapter on p. 148 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**. Some additional rules and guidelines for individual actions in ship combat appear below.

Swinging from the Rigging

Particularly exuberant heroes may want to swing from the *Cloud Runner*'s rigging to the deck of the *Shadow Skulker*. To do so, the character must be standing near the *Runner*'s mainmast in the combat round in which he swings, and the two vessels must be within 5 yards of each other. The character then makes a Dexterity (8) Test. If the test succeeds, the daredevil can swing across to the *Skulker* in the following combat round, otherwise the character can try again in the next round. On a Pathetic result, he falls overboard unless he makes a successful Strength (6) Test to keep his grip.

Once either a player character or the daredevil Lark swings across safely, the rest of the crew will also take to the rigging if ordered to do so.

Hand-to-Hand Combat Resolution

To avoid the time-consuming, game-slowing dozens of die rolls necessary during combat between the *Cloud Runner*'s crew and the cadaver men, the gamemaster can use the following quick resolution rules to simulate hand-to-hand combat. Roll Step 4/D6 for each battling crewman and for each battling cadaver man, except for those fighting the player characters or Named gamemaster characters (Lark, Yorlk, Drimsby, and so on). Every result of 6 rolled for each crewman or cadaver man eliminates a single opponent from one side or the other. Make the battle between the crew and the cadaver men an even fight; unless the adventurers act soon, the tide could turn either way.

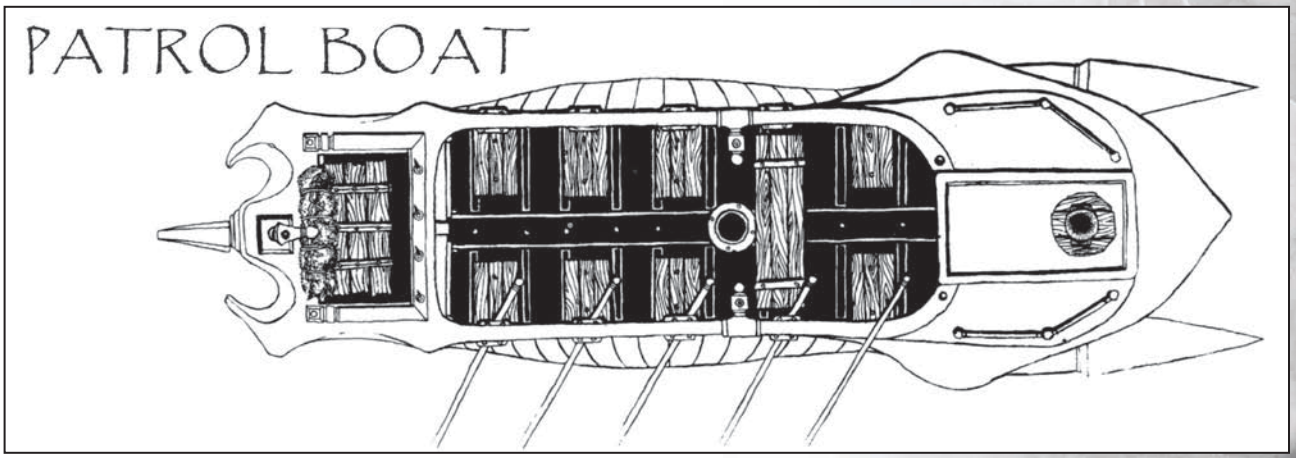
For the player characters and named gamemaster characters such as Lark, Yorlk, Drimsby, and so on, play out the combat per normal rules. Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis remains hidden within his shadowed balcony (see the **Shadow Skulker Map Key** on p. 127) and casts whatever spells the gamemaster deems appropriate. The obsidian gargoyles use their wings to knock down the character who seems either the most dangerous or the most vulnerable. The extremely powerful black servitors head straight for the character who poses the greatest threat to their dreadful master.

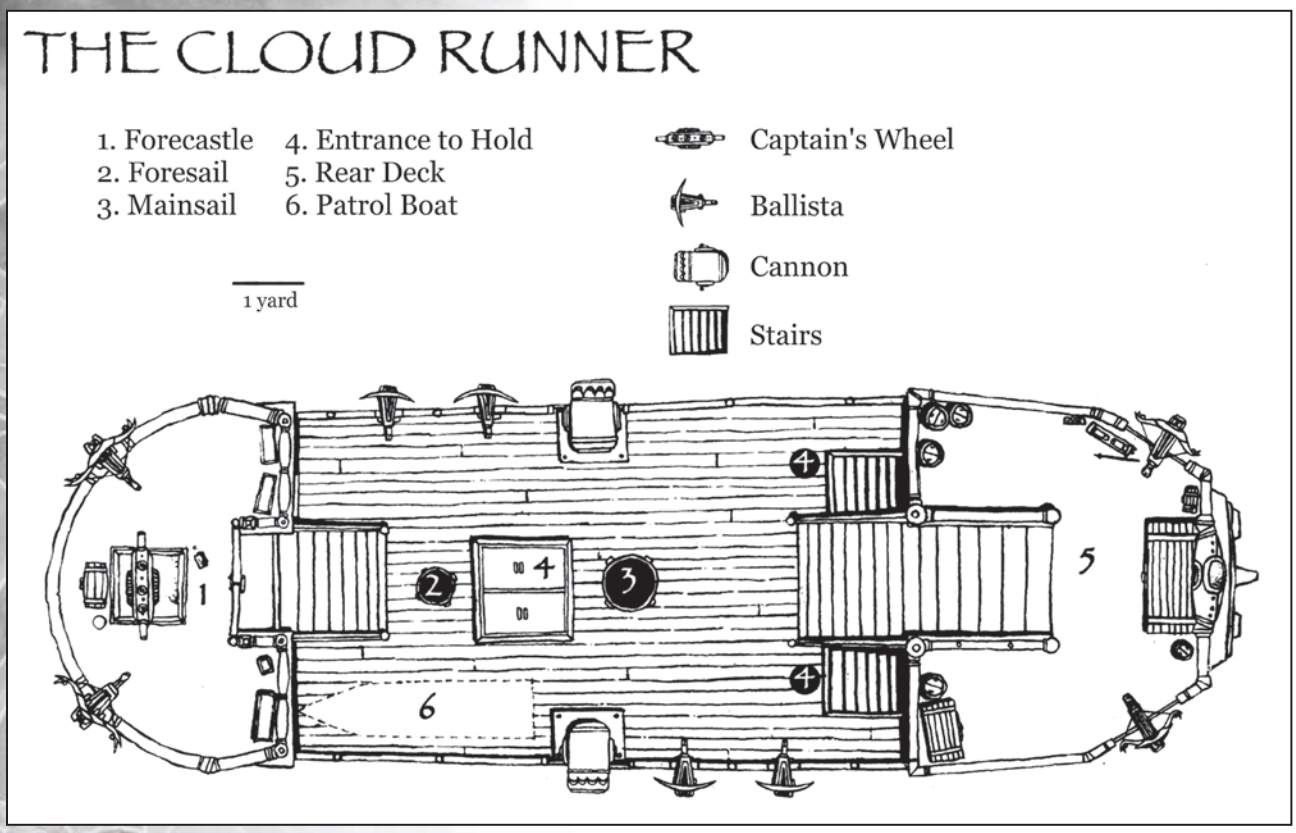
Airship Statistics

Game statistics and map keys for the modified patrol boat, the *Cloud Runner*, and the *Shadow Skulker* appear below.

Patrol Boat

Speed: 13
Maneuverability: 11
Firepower: 8/12 (spear thrower)





Hull:
Armor: 6 Ramming: 12
Cargo: 1

Damage:
Derelict: 24 Critical: 8
Destroyed: 32

Crew:
Captain: 1 Crew Size: 4
Crew Skill: 1 Crew Rating: 8
Morale: 35

Cloud Runner

Speed: 10
Maneuverability: 9
Firepower: 16/20

Hull:
Armor: 15 Ramming: 25
Cargo: 260

Damage:
Derelict: 65 Critical: 21
Destroyed: 72

Crew:
Captain: 4 Crew Size: 100
Crew Skill: 1 Crew Rating: 15
Morale: 55

Cloud Runner Map Key

The following map key refers to the map of the *Cloud Runner*.

(1) Forecastle: This elevated section of the deck contains the wheel, with which the steersman guides the ship. The wheel is connected to oversized rudders beneath the vessel.

(2) Foresail: This triangular sail is affixed to the foremast located on the ship's main deck. It catches the headwinds and helps propel the galley.

(3) Mainsail: The ship's principal sail, the mainsail flies from the mainmast on the ship's main deck.

(4) Hold: This space below decks contains enough food and water to keep the galley's crew alive for two weeks. The hold provides ample room for sleeping, or for setting up a makeshift hospital if necessary. The crew can reach the hold from the deck by climbing down a narrow ladder.

(5) Rear Deck: This flat, open area is located at the ship's stern, a short flight of steps above the main deck. Beneath the rear deck are the captain's quarters, occupied by Drimsby. The captain's quarters also contain a chest filled with coins totaling 1,000 silver pieces, intended to pay for emergency repairs or extra rations. If the characters have not joined the Flying Patrol and are simply working for bounty (see **Crimson Dawn**, p. 86), Drimsby shares his quarters with them. Otherwise, the characters bunk with their mates in the hold.

(6) Patrol Boat: This modified patrol boat is lashed to the deck in this spot whenever the smaller vessel is not in use, with an old canvas sail draped over it to prevent rain from getting in.

(7) Fire Cannons: The *Cloud Runner*'s two fire cannons are located in these positions.

Shadow Skulker

Speed: 10
Maneuverability: 9
Firepower: 15/18

Hull:
Armor: 15 Ramming: 25
Cargo: 280

Damage:
Derelict: 65 Critical: 21
Destroyed: 72

Crew:
Captain: 4 Crew Size: 100
Crew Skill: 1 Crew Rating: 15
Morale: 71

Shadow Skulker Map Key

The following map key refers to the map of the *Shadow Skulker*.

(1) Forecastle: The *Shadow Skulker*'s forecastle is elevated above the main deck, accessible by two short flights of steps.

(2) Catapult: Located on the forecastle, the catapult is the *Shadow Skulker*'s most powerful weapon. Its minimum range makes it unusable during boarding actions.

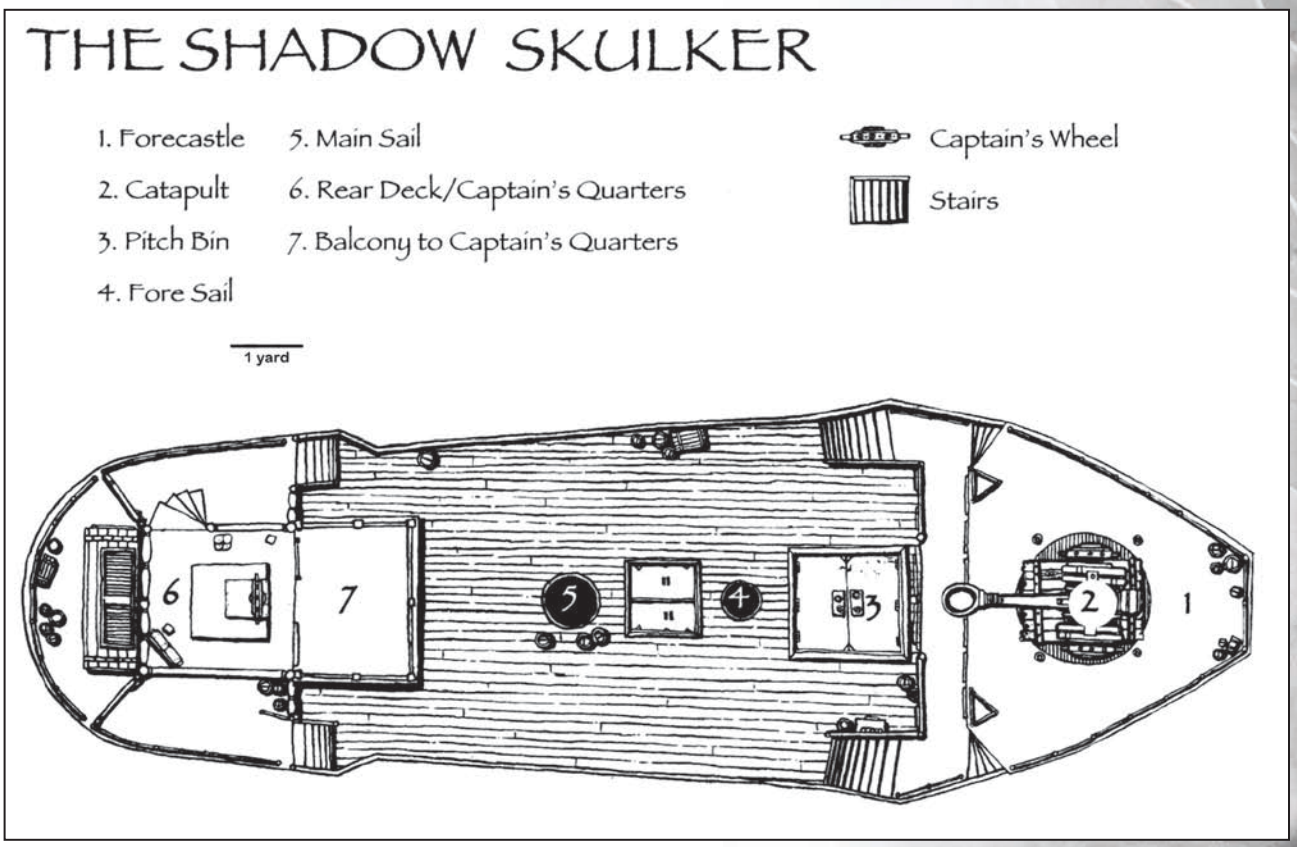
(3) Pitch Bin: Located on the main deck next to the forecastle, this bin contains boiling pitch. The *Skulker*'s cadaverous crewmen carry the pitch to the catapult in shovels and set it alight, then fling it toward the enemy ship. The bin contains enough pitch for 50 shots.

(4) Foresail: Located on the ship's main deck, the foresail catches the headwinds and helps propel the galley. The sail is made of satin and is worth 300 silver pieces if intact, or a lesser amount determined by the gamemaster if damaged. Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis can repair the sail by magical means within two rounds.

(5) Mainsail: Like the foresail, the mainsail is made of satin and can be magically repaired within two rounds. The mainsail is larger than the foresail, and is worth 500 silver pieces if intact, or a lesser amount determined by the gamemaster if damaged.

(6) Rear Deck/Captain's Quarters: The rear deck holds the *Shadow Skulker*'s wheel, which connects to the ship's rudder. Underneath the rear deck are the captain's quarters, occupied by Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis. The Horror's quarters contain a chest full of coins totaling 2,000 silver pieces and seven uncut gemstones, a mixture of rubies and emeralds. The gems are worth 2–20 silver pieces each. A table against the rear wall holds a map of Barsaive with the city of Travar circled in red ink. The cabin also contains a bed, on which Rasper Nor's body sleeps for at least four hours each day. A mirror on the cabin's front wall houses an astral portal that leads to Rasper Nor's retreat in the Delaris Mountains. Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis keeps the Tome in the Nethermancer's stronghold, hidden in an astral pocket, until the final battle in which he attempts to use it. The heroes will find it nearly impossible to recover the book until that point in the adventure.

(7) Balcony: Despite its solid appearance, the balcony is not a physical structure, but a barrier of darkness constructed of raw magic. To an observer, it looks like a



wooden balcony with a light green awning. The shade cast by the awning is far darker than normal, and anyone standing beneath the awning cannot be seen. The shade reduces the effectiveness of all missile attacks by –3 steps and also blocks line of sight, meaning that magicians who cast spells against Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis must see him using Astral Sight or a similar ability.

Troubleshooting

This encounter should unfold as follows. Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis steals the Tome of Banishment and races off in the *Shadow Skulker* with the *Cloud Runner* in hot pursuit. During the first hours of the chase, the two ships exchange a few volleys of fire that do more damage to the vessels' respective crews than to the ships themselves. The *Shadow Skulker* slips away after nightfall, remaining hidden until just after dawn. The *Cloud Runner*'s crewmen spot the Horror's vessel a few miles away in the lightening sky, at which point they close to do battle and the player characters carry out their plans (if any). Though the characters fail to recover the Tome of Banishment during this engagement, they reduce the numbers of the *Skulker*'s crew. The *Skulker* breaks away a second time, and the *Cloud Runner* catches up to it just in time to fight the final battle over the city of Travar.

Needless to say, in a sequence of events as complex as those described above, almost anything can go wrong. In this encounter, the gamemaster will need every ounce of his creativity and resourcefulness to keep things on track. As with any encounter, events need not occur precisely as written, but the gamemaster should follow the written encounter fairly closely in order to give the players a dramatic and exciting chain of events. If the encounter drifts off course, try to ensure that the *Cloud Runner* reaches the *Shadow Skulker* after nightfall over Travar. If the final battle takes place elsewhere or at a different time, be prepared to adjust the final encounter as appropriate.

Pyres over Travar

In this encounter, the *Cloud Runner* and the *Shadow Skulker* fight their final, climactic battle in the skies over Travar. During the battle, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis retrieves the Tome of Banishment from its astral hiding place and uses it to summon more Horrors into the physical world, as the characters and the airmen of the Flying Patrol fight their way through a throng of cadaver men and other dreadful opponents in a desperate attempt to stop him. If they recover the Tome of Banishment, the characters use it to send Tyrannisis back to the nether region that spawned it.

Setting the Stage

When the two ships approach each other, read the following aloud:

The Cloud Runner *arrows toward the shadowship, closing on its quarry as the last light fades from the evening sky. The lights of Travar glitter below, a mute reminder of the thousands of lives at stake. As your galley draws near the* Shadow Skulker, *you see someone standing on the forecastle, screaming up at the storm clouds. Though you cannot hear his words, the rhythm of incantation is unmistakable. Thunder rumbles and lightning crackles through the clouds; the sudden, stark light illuminates the Tome of Banishment in the Nethermancer's hands.*

Themes and Images

In the climax of this adventure, the two huge galleys spit fire at each other like furious dragons as the heroes battle through mobs of the infernal to stop Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis from casting his evil spell. Fire and noise and creatures from the darkest nightmares abound in this final, epic encounter. Play up the drama and danger; inspire the player characters to act like heroes.

Behind the Scenes

This encounter takes place over Travar, approximately 18 hours after the adventurers have escaped from Talon Kaer. By this time, the crew of the *Cloud Runner* should have finished licking their wounds from the opening skirmishes and whittled down the Horror's forces considerably.

Allow the characters to try whatever plan of attack they like to steal back the Tome of Banishment. Ideally, the two ships should be close enough for boarding before the Horror-possessed Nethermancer begins his incantation, so that the adventurers and crewmen have a fighting chance to reach him before he casts his evil spell.

The heroes must somehow take the Tome from Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis. They may swing aboard the *Shadow Skulker* from the rigging, or land the patrol boat on the *Skulker*'s deck, or try any other scheme they have in mind. No matter what strategy they follow, the characters must fight the remaining obsidian gargoyles, black servitors, and cadaver men to get to the Horror and the book he holds. Statistics for the cadaver men, gargoyles, and servitors appear in **Broadsides!**, p. 119.

Throughout the battle, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis stands atop the forecastle and throws summoning spells at the night sky. His curses raise a raging storm, and the furious lightning illuminates him like a damned soul in hell. At some point during the fight, the dark clouds tear open and pelt the ships and land below with rain and hail. The slick, chilly rain makes footing treacherous, requiring those fighting to make a successful Dexterity (4) Test each round to avoid being Harried (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**). The rain may also damage the Tome of Banishment (see **Loose Ends**, p. 133).

Reaching Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis

When the characters finally reach Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis, read the following aloud:

> *"Dressed in black from head to toe, the pale-faced Nethermancer continues to rail at the heavens. Black storm clouds seem to swirl across the plate-mail armor he wears, making your vision swim. As the incantation from the stolen Tome of Banishment rolls off his tongue, the skies grow even darker and the air seems to freeze. A brief flash of lightning illuminates the Nethermancer 's crazed face, and for an instant you see another face imposed over that of the ancient magician, like the faintest wisp of an illusionist's spell. This face looks younger, but its ancient eyes glitter with malevolence. It smiles at you, revealing rows of small, razor-sharp teeth."*

A successful attack by any character disrupts the spell and sends Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis into a rage. He attacks the characters with spells and with his magical sword, Screech, until he either defeats the player characters or loses the battle. Given the Nethermancer/Horror's incredible power; the heroes will find him almost impossible to defeat solely by force of arms. The Storm Armor he wears adds to his power; he has attached four threads to it, giving him its magical effects listed for Thread Ranks One to Four (see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 347). The characters can, however, defeat him through the magic contained in the Tome of Banishment, which he drops during the fight.

A magician who picks up the Tome finds a bookmark in it at the page that holds the spell Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis was casting. If the character makes a successful Perception (6) Test, he notices on the opposite page several incantations for banishing powerful Horrors. The Horrors are described in terms of their astral appearance, so the

magician must use Astral Sense (see p. 374 of the **Player's Compendium**) or a similar spell or talent to see if Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis is among those listed. If the characters have managed to kill Rasper Nor's body by this time, Tyrannisis's true form grows out of the corpse, eliminating the need for an Astral Sense spell. Once the magician sees Tyrannisis's astral form clearly, he recognizes it as one of the five Horrors described in the Tome. At this point, the magician may begin weaving the threads to cast the appropriate banishing spell.

If the magician is unable to catch an astral glimpse of the Horror, he must rely on the process of elimination. In this case, the character weaves two incorrect banishing spells before finally picking the right one. The Banish Circadius spell described below is a Fifth Circle spell that either an Elementalist or a Nethermancer may cast, and will banish Tyrannisis. Treat all other banishing spells that a character casts in the same way, except that other spells have no effect. For information on casting spells from a grimoire, see p. 290 of the **Player's Compendium**.

As the magician struggles to weave the threads and cast the banishing spell, Tyrannisis does his utmost to kill him and any other character within range of the Horror's sword or magical attacks. Once the spell is cast, Tyrannisis ceases to exist in the physical world. If the characters have not yet killed Rasper Nor's body by the time Tyrannisis disappears, the body of the possessed magician crumbles into five-century-old dust.

Banish Circadius

Type: Fifth Circle Elementalism *or* Nethermancy

Threads: 5 **Weaving Difficulty**: 10/19
Range: 10 yards **Duration**: Instant
Effect: Special (see text)
Casting Difficulty: Target's Spell Defense

The Banish Circadius spell banishes the Named Horror Tyrannis. After weaving the required spell threads, the caster raises his hands and makes a Spellcasting Test against the Horror's Spell Defense of 10. If the test succeeds, the Horror's physical body is destroyed, and it is cast back into astral space.

When the magician casts the Banish Circadius spell, read the following aloud:

"The Nethermancer shrieks in agony, dropping his jagged-edged sword. His spine arches backward in a sudden convulsion, the cold rain filling his open mouth. Black fluid leaks from his eyes and ears, blending with the icy water that cascades down his tortured face. His screams dissolve into agonized choking sounds. As lightning flashes behind him, his human form grows translucent; you see within him a slimy, shapeless mass, its grotesque face twisted in torture. The shadow within grows thicker and more tangible, until some mighty, invisible hand seems to rip it out of the Nethermancer's body. The body collapses to the deck in a heap of broken bones. The Horror writhes in pain, snapping its sharp teeth against the empty air. Its dreadful sounds begin to fade as it slowly dissolves into a steaming puddle of rancid grease. As the Horror's last faint, choking gasps die away, the broken human body crumbles to dust. The wind blows the dust into oblivion, along with the fading odor of rotting meat that the Horror left behind."

When Tyrannisis disappears, he loses control over his minions. Any surviving obsidian gargoyles and eendwings flee; the cadaver men and black servitors continue to fight, but attack erratically and with less energy. Because the cadaver men serve as the crew of the *Shadow Skulker*, the loss of Tyrannisis's controlling influence causes the airship to fly out of control and crash within minutes. Unless the characters get off the *Shadow Skulker* within this time, they go down with the vessel.

The characters have several possible escape routes from the Horror's doomed ship. If they flew to it in the patrol boat, they can board the boat and fly back to the *Cloud Runner*. If they swung across to the *Skulker*, they must either take over the *Skulker*'s steering wheel or hope that a rescue party from the *Cloud Runner* plucks them off the deck before they crash. Guidelines for piloting the airship are given in **Knights of the Skies**, p. 91.

If the characters choose to try to pilot the *Skulker* to safety, they will find ready takers for the ship in Drimsby and Juliak Merris. Both of these gentlemen will want the ship for their own fleets, but can give the characters nothing save gratitude for salvaging it. The gamemaster should not give the ship to the characters or allow them to sell it to Drimsby or Merris. After all, the characters do not own the ship, so either Drimsby or Merris can legitimately claim it as a spoil of war. In addition, selling an airship would net the characters so much money that they would no longer need to take on adventures for pay, thereby removing an important motivation for **Earthdawn** characters.

Troubleshooting

If the characters attempt to eliminate the crew of the *Shadow Skulker* in hopes that a crash will kill Tyrannisis and his minions, they are sadly mistaken. A crash kills Rasper Nor's body, at which point Tyrannisis manifests and flies aboard the *Cloud Runner* to attack Drimsby and the characters. If this happens, recast the characters' attempt to banish the Horror so that it occurs on the *Cloud Runner* rather than on the *Shadow Skulker*.

If none of the adventurers possess the necessary magical abilities to banish the Horror, have Tarlinna pick up the fallen Tome of Banishment and recite the banishing spell. Because having a gamemaster character enact the encounter's pivotal event robs the players of the thrill of victory, the gamemaster is advised to use this option only as a last resort.

Loose Ends

The information in this section allows the gamemaster to tie up the adventure's loose ends, and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Terror in the Skies** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns.

After the Adventure

Soon after the climactic battle over Travar, the battered *Cloud Runner* sets down in a green meadow just south of the city. At this point the heroes can examine the Tome of Banishment. A magician who makes a successful Read and Write Magic (8) Test discovers that one of the banishing spells in the Tome applies to a class of lesser Horrors that strongly resembles the rakken. Upon finding the spell, the magician automatically casts it, sending magical energies swirling around his head and then off into the woods toward the city. The gamemaster should assume that the spell works.

As the characters and the surviving *Cloud Runner* crew limp back into town, citizens throng around them, asking what happened. The crowd swells to more than a hundred strong, and the characters find it difficult to escape to their comfortable beds and waiting baths. Several grateful merchants give the player characters small rewards, up to 10 silver pieces each, and Juliak Merris offers to throw them a free dinner party at The Picky Palate the next day. If the group stays in Travar, they can count on plenty of company and an occasional free drink for the next several months.

If the adventurers have stayed on good terms with Drimsby, he allows them to keep whatever treasures they found in Talon Kaer. He even gives them the Tome of Banishment, on the condition that they copy its contents for him so that he and the Flying Patrol can deal with any future threats to Travar's shipping lanes.

Awarding Legend Points

This section provides guidelines for awarding Legend Points to the players. As recommended in the **Introduction** on p. 6, the gamemaster should award Legend Points at the end of each game session as well as at the end of the adventure. The following guidelines for Legend Awards indicate the points to be awarded by the gamemaster for each task accomplished or goal reached in a game session.

Game Sessions

The two suggested game sessions outlined in the following pages each include certain encounters; if the gamemaster has organized the encounters differently in his game sessions, he should award Legend Points as appropriate.

Session One

In the first game session, the characters arrive in Travar, help Drimsby and the townspeople fight the fire set by the crashed *Crimson Dawn*, and either join the Flying Patrol or agree to hunt the rakken for bounty. The characters also find the lost patrol boat, try to save the *Obsidian Flyer* from a rakken attack, and begin the trek to Talon Peak in search of the Tome of Banishment.

This session includes the encounters **Prelude to Terror** (p. 84), **Crimson Dawn** (p. 86), **Knights of the Skies** (p. 88), **Obsidian Flyer** (p. 94), **Baiting the Trap** (p. 97), and **Journey into Doom** (p. 100). The characters' session goal is to meet Drimsby, join the Flying Patrol or take the bounty for hunting the rakken, and agree to seek out the Tome of Banishment in Talon Kaer.

Session Two

In this session, the characters arrive at Talon Kaer and explore it in search of the Tome of Banishment. After dealing with the kaer's various, dangerous creatures and taking the Tome from the Sanctuary, they return to the *Cloud Runner* to find it under attack by Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis. The Horror steals the Tome of Banishment and sets sail for Travar, with the *Cloud Runner* in hot pursuit. The characters battle the Horror and his dreadful minions in a dramatic airship battle over Travar, attempting to win back the Tome and banish the Horror to astral space.

This session includes the encounters **Talon Kaer** (p. 104), **Finding the Sanctuary** (p. 115), **Broadsides!** (p. 119), and **Pyres over Travar** (p. 128). The adventure goal is to retrieve the Tome of Banishment and banish both Tyrannisis and the rakken to the depths of astral space.

Legend Awards

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, each game session in **Terror in the Skies** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. The potential number of Legend Awards each character may earn in each game session should take the following elements into account: completing the game session's goal (1 Legend Award), defeating creatures and opponents (award the number of Legend Points listed with each creature or gamemaster character), individual deeds and roleplaying (1–2 Legend Awards), and acquiring magical treasure (as listed with the magical treasure).

A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a First Circle character receives from 25 to 75 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session. In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal.

Campaign Ideas

Published **Earthdawn** adventures are designed to fit into an existing campaign with little or no extra work on the part of the gamemaster. Adventures do not exist by themselves if run in a campaign. The world of **Earthdawn** is dynamic and changes over time. For example, when using the events from this adventure to change the overall course of a campaign, the players can watch the changes as they happen and play an active role in it.

This adds a sense of reality vital to good roleplaying. No matter how you use this adventure, it is likely to make your **Earthdawn** game more interesting; whether you use it as written or only by drawing on the ideas and information given in this book to enhance your own stories.

Many of the situations and gamemaster characters presented in this book provide hooks for further stories, and can be used to supplement a longer campaign. Feel free to use them in your ongoing **Earthdawn** campaign in whatever ways you see fit, and find some additional advice below.

Friendships

Whether the heroes remain in Travar or move on, they can always count Tarlinna, Radlin, and the men and women of the Flying Patrol as friends. **Terror in the Skies** gives the player characters unprecedented opportunities to form such lasting friendships.

During the course of **Terror in the Skies**, these men and women bond with the characters and can provide favors, information, or simple companionship in later adventures. If the gamemaster uses **Terror in the Skies** as a part of his **Earthdawn** campaign, the relationships formed within it will give that campaign greater depth, reality, and meaning for the players involved.

Though the player characters cannot expect their former compatriots to drop everything and turn up at a moment's notice, the gamemaster characters from **Terror in the Skies** should answer any reasonable request for aid. For example, Lark and Yorlk might easily take a temporary vacation from the Flying Patrol long enough to assist the player characters on an expedition near Travar.

Tarlinna and Radlin might also turn up again, probably more than once. Both of these gamemaster characters will certainly wish to continue any training they may have started, and are eager for more adventures. If either of

these characters accompanies the player character who has trained them after the adventure, the gamemaster should award Tarlinna and/or Radlin Legend Points and continue to track their progress through their chosen Disciplines. As time goes by, these sidekick characters may become lifelong lovers or companions to the player characters, helping them to forge their personal legends.

Future Employment

Terror in the Skies also provides the player characters with a regular source of employment, should they choose to take advantage of it. If Drimsby or Juliak Merris ever needs stout-hearted adventurers, both of them will most likely offer the player characters the job. The gamemaster can use both Drimsby and Merris to start the player characters on the road to a new adventure. For example, Merris may decide to open a new mine near the notorious Blasted Ridge located somewhere in the Thunder Mountains, and may ask the adventurers to scout the terrain for him. Alternatively, Drimsby may hire the adventurers to hunt down a particularly vile band of crystal raiders.

Tome of Banishment

The Tome of Banishment offers the characters potential rewards of money and power. If the characters choose to sell the grimoire, Air Warden Drimsby recommends that the Travarian government purchase it. Travarian officials will pay up to 1,000 silver pieces for the Tome.

Reading the entire Tome takes at least two weeks of game time, but gains any character who accomplishes that task +1 rank in the Horror Lore Knowledge Skill. This knowledge enables a character to identify a type of Horror, such as a bloatform, but not a specific Horror's name. If a character who has read the Tome makes a successful Horror Lore (13) Test, he finds a list in the Tome of that type of Horror's weaknesses, as well as particularly effective defenses against it.

Though the windlings' choice of Circadius as a name for Tyrannisis remains a mystery, the text makes it clear that the original windling researchers studied Tyrannisis specifically. Tyrannisis and five other major Horrors described in the Tome of Banishment, including the Horror Duaga described in **Mists of Betrayal** (p. 73), roamed the general vicinity of the Thunder Mountains for several decades before the Scourge began in earnest, and therefore posed an immediate threat to the Tome's compilers. The characters can use the information in the Tome to track down the Horrors and attempt to banish them from the world, offering several possibilities for adventures or campaigns. After all, any one of the five Horrors might still be plotting and executing diabolical mischief somewhere in the region of Travar and the Thunder Mountains. Have fun creating each Horror's history and its present situation. To make things even more interesting, try sowing a little misinformation in the Tome of Banishment.

In addition to the five major Horrors, the Tome lists at least fifteen types of minor Horrors. Though most of these disappeared at the end of the Scourge, a few may still roam the Thunder Mountains or the nearby Badlands. Any or all of these might turn up to plague the characters during any subsequent adventures they undertake in those regions.

Rasper Nor's Retreat

Long before the Scourge, Rasper Nor built a hidden retreat in the Delaris Mountains where he researched and practiced his Nethermancy. When the Horror Tyrannisis possessed Rasper Nor, it discovered and took over the retreat. In Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis's cabin aboard the *Shadow Skulker*, the characters may find a map of the Delaris Mountains that indicates the location of the retreat, which the gamemaster can use to create an adventure in which the characters travel to and explore the Nethermancer's sanctuary. Among the many possibilities for such an adventure, the gamemaster might populate the retreat with creatures and Horror-constructs from the characters' worst nightmares, or seed it with lethal magical and mundane traps. The Nethermancer's stronghold might also contain magical treasures of great power, such as evil charms left behind by departing Horrors or items that hold within them the power of legendary heroes. The retreat might even contain grimoires and ancient scrolls that give their owner power over Horrors and their constructs. If so, the characters can use these items to help rid the world of the Horrors and their dreadful legacy.

Cast of Characters

This section provides information and game statistics for the gamemaster characters who play a major role in **Terror in the Skies**. If necessary or appropriate, the gamemaster may change some of these statistics to suit the abilities of the player characters in his game.

Because these characters will likely appear more than once in the course of the adventure, their statistics and descriptions are grouped here for convenience. The gamemaster characters are presented in order of general importance to the story. Descriptions and statistics for other, minor characters are given in the encounter in which they make their first appearance.

Air Warden Drimsby

Gardius Drimsby has served as Travar's air warden for almost twenty years, most of which he spent fighting off bands of troll crystal raiders. He has never encountered anything as dangerous or vicious as the rakken. Fearing that the terrible creatures may be the first enemy he cannot defeat, Drimsby has unconsciously distanced himself from the trouble the rakken have caused. By taking the *Cloud Runner* to Talon Peak, Drimsby re-enters the forefront of the fray, and relishes his ability to finally strike a potentially decisive blow in the defense of the city he loves.

Drimsby is a Sixth Circle Air Sailor.

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Strength (12): 5/D8
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8 **Initiative**: 1/D4–2
Spell Defense: 10 **Physical Armor**: 10
Social Defense: 8 **Mystic Armor**: 1

Death Rating: 36 (72) **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 10 **Knockdown**: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 28 (58)

Combat Movement: 16 **Full Movement**: 32

Karma Points: 25 **Karma Step**: 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike (3): 8/2D6
Air Dance (6): 7/D12*
Air Sailing [D] (8): 14/D20+D4 (Air Legs)
Avoid Blow [D] (4): 9/D8+D6
Climbing [D] (6): 11/D10+D8 (Swinging in the Rigging)
Durability (6/5) (6): 6
Great Leap [D] (6): 11/D10+D8 (Vertical Jump)
Karma Ritual (6): 6
Melee Weapons [D] (6): 11/D10+D8
Riposte (6): 11/D10+D8
Taunt (3): 9/D8+D6
Thread Weaving (Air Weaving) [D] (5): 11/D10+D8
Throwing Weapons (6): 11/D10+D8
Unarmed Combat (6): 11/D10+D8
Wound Balance [D] (6): 11/D10+D8
Wind Catcher [D] (6): 12/2D10

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
* Talent step modified for –4 armor Initiative Penalty.

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Woodworking (3): 8/2D6
Wood Carving (3): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Airships (5): 11/D10+D8
Barsaive History (5): 11/D10+D8

General:
Maneuver (3): 8/2D6
Momentum Attack (3): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Streetwise (5): 11/D10+D8
Tactics (6): 12/2D10

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17)
Plate Mail (Phys 9; Init 4)

Broadsword (Forged +3; Damage 13/D12+D10; w/scabbard)
Dwarf Sword (Forged +2; Damage 10/D10+D6; w/scabbard)
2 × Throwing Axes (Damage: 8/2D6; Range 12–20–24)
2 × Daggers (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)

Thread Bracers (Rank 4; +2 Physical Defense; +2 Spell Defense)

Adventurer's Kit
Cloaksense Brooch
Craftsman Tools
Wood Carving Tools
Dwarf Winternight Cloak
Last Chance Salve
Navigation Charts (in map/scroll case)
Trail Rations (1 week)
Turban
Upandal's Blessings
Waterskin
Wealthy Traveler's Garb
Writing Kit

Loot

Small Scale Model Wooden Airships (worth 30 silver pieces), Gold Ring w/Ruby (worth 250 silver pieces)

Legend Award

1,100 Legend Points

Notes

The adept possesses the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Strength-only Tests
Sixth Circle: +1 Social Defense

LARK

A Second Circle human Sky Raider, Lark has flown with the Flying Patrol for the past few years, working hard to master the abilities of his Discipline. Despite being a Sky Raider, Lark resents being likened to the crystal raiders of the Twilight Peaks.

A daredevil by nature, Lark enjoys sports that challenge him physically, such as hull jumping.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (11): 5/D8
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (12): 5/D8
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 5
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 32 (40)
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 24 (30)

Combat Movement: 28
Full Movement: 56

Karma Points: 12
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Air Sailing [D] (3): 8/2D6
Avoid Blow (2): 8/2D6
Battle Shout [D] (2): 8/2D6
Durability (8/6) (1): 1
Fireblood [D] (2): 7/D12
Great Leap [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Karma Ritual (2): 2
Melee Weapons [D] (2): 8/2D6
Shield Charge [D] (2): 7/D12

Versatility (1): 1
Acrobatic Strike (2): 8/2D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Crystal Carving (1): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Creature Lore (1): 6/D10
Human History (1): 6/D10

General:
Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human
Streetwise (1): 6/D10
Wound Balance (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Crystal Buckler (Phys 1; Myst 1; ST 17)
Padded Leather (Phys 4)

Battle-Axe (Damage 12/2D10)
Short Sword (Damage 10/D10+D6)
2 × Daggers (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit
Climbing Kit
Crystal Carving Tools
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Waterskin

Loot

Silver Earring (worth 15 silver pieces), 15 silver pieces, 1 gold piece

Legend Award

110 Legend Points

Notes

The adept possesses the human racial ability of Versatility.

YORLK

Like Lark, Yorlk is a Second Circle Sky Raider. Unlike his human friend, the ork enjoys the connection between his Discipline and the barbarian trolls who make up most of its adherents. Yorlk is also a thrill-seeker, getting his kicks from flying airships.

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Strength (18): 7/D12
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (11): 5/D8
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 4/D6
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 6
Social Defense: 6
Mystic Armor: 3

Death Rating: 39 (47)
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11
Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 31 (37)

Combat Movement: 24
Full Movement: 48

Karma Points: 12
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Avoid Blow (2): 7/D12
Air Sailing [D] (4): 9/D8+D6
Battle Shout [D] (2): 6/D10
Durability (8/6) (1): 1
Fireblood [D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Great Leap [D] (2): 7/D12
Karma Ritual (2): 2
Melee Weapons [D] (3): 8/2D6
Shield Charge [D] (2): 9/D8+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Runic Carving (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Games of Chance (3): 9/D8+D6
Scourge History (1): 7/D12

General:
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Streetwise (1): 7/D12
Wound Balance (1): 8/2D6

Equipment

Crystal Buckler (Phys 1; Myst 1; ST 17)
Hide (Phys 5; Myst 1; Init 1)

Pole-Axe (Damage 15/D20+D6)
2 × Daggers (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tools
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb (w/fur cloak)
Waterskin

Loot

Gold Nose Ring (worth 15 silver pieces), 15 silver pieces, 6 gold pieces

Legend Award

125 Legend Points

Notes

The adept possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

TARLINNA

Though no one in Travar remembers it, Tarlinna is Mad Marnic's niece and has inherited the family aptitude for magic. Her Elementalist uncle taught her several protective spells when she was a child. Unfortunately for Tarlinna, Marnic attempted a spell powered by raw magic and attracted the attentions of a Horror, which drove him insane within weeks. With Marnic incapacitated, Tarlinna's tutelage came to an abrupt halt.

Tarlinna is eager to continue learning the Discipline of the Elementalist, especially after the death of her fiancé. She sees adventuring with the characters as a way to leave Travar and its painful memories behind her. Tarlinna is a First Circle Elementalist.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (9): 4/D6
Toughness (9): 4/D6
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (17): 7/D12
Charisma (15): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 3
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 3

Death Rating: 30
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 7
Knockdown: 4/D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 21

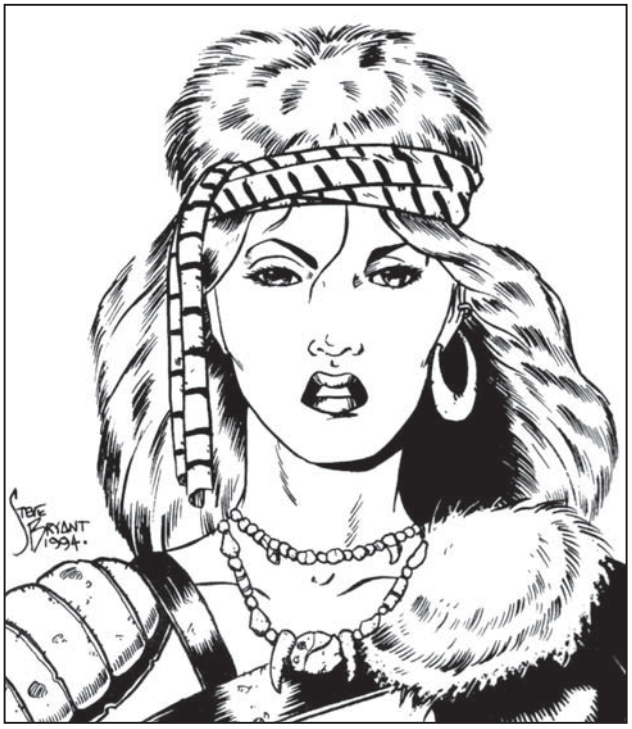
Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Karma Points: 10
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Read and Write Magic [D] (1): 7/D12
Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6
—Human, *Sperethiel*
Karma Ritual (1): 1
Spellcasting [D] (2): 8/2D6
Spell Matrix (1): 1
Spell Matrix (1): 1
Thread Weaving (Elementalism) [D] (2): 8/2D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.



Skills

Artisan:
Robe Embroidery (1): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Horror Lore (1): 7/D12
Magic Lore (1): 7/D12
Travar History (1): 7/D12

General:
Flirting (1): 7/D12
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (3): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Sperethiel*
Streetwise (1): 7/D12

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)
Dagger (Damage 6/D10; Range 9–15–18)
Adventurer's Kit
Tiger Bandana
Patterned White and Blue Dress
Embroidered Robe
Embroidery Tools
Grimoire
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb (w/fur cloak)
Waterskin

Spells

Air Armor [M], Earth Blend [M], Heat Food, Purify Water, Resist Cold, Resist Fire

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix.

Loot

Gold Earrings (worth 30 silver pieces)

Legend Award

110 Legend Points

Notes

The adept possesses the human racial ability of Versatility.

RADLIN

A young elf with considerable courage but little experience, Radlin has not yet achieved his goal of becoming an adept. His brush with death aboard the *Crimson Dawn* has left him with plenty of guilt about his survival and a desperate need to prove himself. As a recent recruit to the Flying Patrol, he remains unsure of his abilities.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (11): 5/D8
Toughness (9): 4/D6
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 4
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 30
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 7
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 21

Combat Movement: 32
Full Movement: 64

Skills

Artisan:
Tattooing (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Airships (2): 7/D12

General:
Air Sailing (1): 7/D12
Melee Weapons (1): 7/D12

Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Sperethiel*

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17)
Leather (Phys 3)

Broadsword (Forged +1; Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit
Tattooing Tool
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Waterskin

Loot

Silver Earring (worth 15 silver pieces)

Legend Award

45 Legend Points

Notes

The character possesses the elf racial ability of Low-Light Vision.

Rasper Nor

The human Nethermancer Rasper Nor looks every bit of his ninety years, but the presence of the Horror Tyrannisis within his physical shell allows him to move with the speed and strength of someone half that age. Long, white hair brushes his shoulders and cascades from his pointed chin and nose. Rotting teeth jut out of a snarling mouth framed by thin, cracked lips. In the only unmistakable, physical sign of Tyrannisis's presence, Rasper Nor's pitch-black eyes have no whites, and resemble those of a shark.

Because Rasper Nor and Tyrannisis once existed as separate entities, they each have their own game statistics. As long as Tyrannisis remains within Rasper Nor's body, the Nethermancer's statistics apply. Note that Tyrannisis can use his Horror powers in any form he takes.

Attributes

Dexterity (12): 5/D8
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Perception (18): 7/D12
Willpower (18): 7/D12
Charisma (17): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 1/D4-2
Spell Defense: 11
Physical Armor: 10
Social Defense: 10
Mystic Armor: 3

Death Rating: 39 (67)
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 31 (52)

Combat Movement: 24
Full Movement: 48

Karma Points: 20
Karma Step: 10/D10+D6

Talents

Animal Possession (4): 11/D10+D8
Astral Sight [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Durability (4/3) (7): 7
Enhanced Matrix (5): 5
Frighten (7): 14/D20+D4
Karma Ritual (6): 6
Lifesight [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Read and Write Magic [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Read and Write Language (2): 9/D8+D6
—Human, Windling
Spellcasting [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Spell Matrix (7): 7
Spell Matrix (7): 7
Spell Matrix (7): 7
Spell Matrix (7): 7
Spirit Dodge [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Spirit Hold [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Spirit Talk [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Summon [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Thread Weaving (Nethermancy) [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Willforce (7): 14/D20+D4

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:
Robe Embroidery (4): 11/D10+D8

Knowledge:
Horror Lore (7): 14/D20+D4
Scourge History (7): 14/D20+D4

General:
Melee Weapons (3): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (1): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (3): 10/D10+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, Windling
Taunt (4): 11/D10+D8
Wilderness Survival (4): 11/D10+D8

Equipment

Storm Armor (Rank 4; Phys 10 [Phys 13 vs. fire]; Init 4; see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 347)

Banesword Screech (Rank 1; Damage 11/D10+D8 [16/D20+D8 versus last race slain by sword—a windling soul; see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 344])
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)

Grimoire
Peasant's Garb

Spells

Nethermancy (any up to Seventh Circle): Blind [E], Constrict Heart [M], Friendly Darkness [M], Spirit Grip [M], Wither Limb [M]

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix.
[E] Denotes a spell currently attuned to an Enhanced Matrix.

Loot

210 gold pieces and 7 gems worth D20 silver pieces in a chest aboard the *Shadow Skulker*

Legend Award

4,625 Legend Points

Notes

The adept possesses the human racial ability of Versatility.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests
Sixth Circle: +1 Spell Defense
Seventh Circle: +1 Social Defense

Commentary

This Horror inhabited the Nethermancer Rasper Nor's dying body, keeping the magician's physical shell alive throughout the centuries of the Scourge.

Using Rasper Nor's memories and abilities in addition to its own Horror powers, Tyrannisis has spent centuries trying to remove the Tome of Banishment from its tomb in the windling kaer so that it might use the arcane knowledge contained in the book to summon more Horrors and their minions to ravage Barsaive.

Rules

If Rasper Nor dies, his death drives Tyrannisis from the Nethermancer's body. A tattered, shadowy form wafts out of the Nethermancer's nose, mouth, and ears, gradually manifesting into Tyrannisis's True form. This process takes 2 combat rounds, during which time the Horror's Physical Defense is halved to 6. Once manifested, the enraged Horror will fight his enemies to the death. Unable to command the Nethermancer's abilities, Tyrannisis can only cast spells available to a Third Circle Elementalist—Rasper Nor's game statistics no longer apply. Because its manifest form is not completely tangible, the Horror cannot wear the Storm Armor or wield the banesword, Screech.

TYRANNISIS

DEX: 8 **STR**: 6 **TOU**: 6
PER: 8 **WIL**: 8 **CHA**: 7

Initiative: 8
Number of Actions: 2
Attack (2): 10
Damage:
2 × Claws (6): 12

Physical Defense: 12
Spell Defense: 10
Social Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 6
Mystic Armor: 4

Death Rating: 38 (66)
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 6

Combat Movement: 24/64[+]
Full Movement: 48/128[+]

[+] The second value is the Horror's flying Movement rate.

Karma Points: 20
Karma Step: 10

Powers: Animate Dead (4): 12, Astral Sight (4): 12, Corrupt Karma (4): 12, Durability (4), Forge Horror Construct (5): 13, Karma Tap (2): 10, Horror Mark (7): 15, Manifest, Possession (3): 11, Spellcasting (3): 11, Thread Weaving (Elementalism) [T] (3): 11, Thought Worm (1): 9

Spells: Elementalism (Third Circle)

Legend Points (2): 2,100

Equipment: None

Loot: None

INFECTED

Diseases of the body I can cure. Diseases of the mind? More difficult. Perhaps impossible.

• Doctor Quanlir, Physician of Jerris •

Charboyya the dwarf paced through his suite of rooms for what felt like the thousandth time, listening absently to the busy chatter that drifted up from the floor below. He owned the finest trading house in Bartertown—by the Passions, he did. A fine house, for which he'd sacrificed much and sweated hard. But just now, he found it worth less to him than a mouthful of stale bread after a long day's journey. Had he fewer worries, Charboyya might have laughed at the irony.

"The very finest fabric in the house, my dear Marchesi!" boomed a voice from below, momentarily drowning out the rest. Charboyya smiled briefly as he recognized the bass rumble of his most enthusiastic salesman. Lanteer was a t'skrang wanderer who every month seemed to have a new explanation for why he made his home so far from the Serpent River. But the lizard-man loved nothing more than driving a good bargain, and Lanteer was the closest thing to a true friend Charboyya had known since leaving his village many long years ago.

Thinking of his village reminded Charboyya of his worries. He forced himself to stop his restless pacing and buried his hands in his bushy, red hair, pressing his bare toes against the thick, soft carpet that covered the floor of his sleeping room. How different the carpet felt from the hard, unyielding soil of the savanna that surrounded Hanto, one of the countless tiny villages that dotted the lowlands like fleas on a dog. Much like a dog, the land seemed determined to shake off the villagers, or so Charboyya often thought. But for almost a century, folk like Charboyya's family and their fellow villagers struggled, driven by an indomitable determination to survive. Eventually they had beaten the land into a stalemate, if not submission.

Charboyya felt a rush of pride remembering his people's quiet courage, but he also suffered a creeping sense of shame. How little he had understood his fellow villagers, and what scant value he had given their love and concern for him. As one of the first generation born above ground, he had believed the elders of Hanto permanently scarred by their time in the kaers, their vision forever stunted by the terrors they had experienced. They had longed so much to restore the simple life of their ancestors that, once freed, they approved of no other way of life.

Charboyya cared nothing for farming, however. He had heard that beyond the walls of Hanto lay a whole world for the taking, a new world full of endless possibilities. But most of the villagers followed the lead of the elders and shunned the new, the exciting, the different. They preferred to waste time striving to recreate a way of life that had probably never existed except in the desperate dreams of their kaer-bound grandparents. Charboyya had scorned such faint-heartedness, forgetting the harsh realities that fostered the elders' fears. Like all of Barsaive's small settlements, Hanto faced the constant threat of attack by bandits, scorchers, slavers—even Horrors. Its people had good reason to fear the unfamiliar. Young and brimming over with his own wisdom, Charboyya had judged them hard-hearted and narrow-minded. He had left them in anger, believing they ridiculed his ambition to make his fortune in the new Barsaive. He had been too angry and too proud to see the truth.

Wisdom gleaned during the passage of years gave Charboyya new eyes, however, and now he saw that his family and friends had not scorned him. They had feared for his safety, feared that chasing foolish dreams would bring him only disillusionment. His success had proved their concerns unfounded. Happy in his new vocation, Charboyya had long ago forgiven his folk their doubts and now felt himself not quite whole unless he had occasional word of life in Hanto. Charboyya's successful trading house and industrious workers filled the place in his heart that a wife and children might fill for another dwarf, but he still thought of his family and friends in Hanto often and fondly. When he

had first begun to grow rich, Charboyya had vowed to the Passion Garlen that he would use his wealth to safeguard Hanto against any threat. Fortunately, no such threat had ever appeared—until now.

Charboyya strode across his sleeping chamber and sat down in front of a small cabinet of intricately carved, polished wood. One of his best-loved possessions, the elf-made cabinet had cost him a pretty silver penny. Most days, he stopped for a moment to admire its beauty and run a callused hand lightly over its lacy designs. But not today. Gnawing fear left no room in his mind for the contemplation of beauty. Charboyya pulled open the cabinet's top drawer, almost spilling its contents in his haste. The drawer was filled with letters from Hanto, written by his kin and old friends. He had spent far more silver than was prudent on this indulgence he allowed himself, hiring messengers to convey letters to Hanto and bring back replies. Such a journey through Barsaive's untamed lowlands posed many a danger to the messengers, and they charged a hefty fee for their services. But Charboyya did not begrudge the price, for the letters meant more to him than a cabinet full of gold.

With trembling hands he paged through the notes. Several were from his younger brother Emberica, full of temper and rebellion. His mother's letters still gently advised him to come home, pick up a hoe, and spend his labor at honest work. Orweia, a human and his childhood confidante, whimsically recounted the travails inflicted on her by her rambunctious twin sons and her precocious daughter, Aardelea. Near the bottom of the stack he kept a few stiff, formal notes from Chereca, Hanto's headwoman. Once, Charboyya had thought to marry her. But Chereca refused to leave Hanto, and Charboyya would not return.

Charboyya clutched the precious letters to his chest, crumpling a few in his anguish. Several weeks had passed since he last heard from the village, and the silence had filled him with a sense of foreboding. Charboyya took a deep breath, forced himself to lay down the letters and slowly smoothed the crumpled pages. You don't know for certain anything's happened in Hanto. The messengers may have met with ill luck upon the road or are waiting out bad weather. Or they may have just as likely absconded with your coin, for all you know.

Staring down at the letters in his lap, Charboyya sighed. No matter how often he tried, he couldn't make himself believe any of those comforting explanations. He had to find out the truth, no matter the cost.

Charboyya rose, still holding the letters, and began to pace again. He must hire a second party to journey to Hanto and bring him word. That meant spending coin he'd not set aside for this purpose. He could raise it by reducing his orders to the dyer and the weaver. They'd surely complain, but that mattered nothing compared to the safety of his village. And should the first party of messengers straggle into Bartertown just as the second set out, Charboyya would gladly be proven a spendthrift. Please the Passions, his worries were but phantoms of events that would never come to pass.

Carefully, lovingly, Charboyya placed the letters back in their drawer and locked the cabinet. He drew his cloak out of a closet, threw it around his shoulders and thrust his feet into sturdy, leather boots. Surely someone could recommend an honorable and worthy party of messengers, and Charboyya could wait no longer.

▲ ▲ ▲

Burning with rage, Emberica hefted his hoe and stalked toward the strangers' leader. No longer would he stomach that black-robed carrion crow lording it over his village, treating the free people of Hanto as a Theran treats his slaves! He would show them how an honorable dwarf behaves, by speaking his mind before striking. If the strangers had the wit to quit the town before angry words became violent deeds, so much the better for them. If not, so much the better for him! Emberica itched to strike a blow at the invaders. He would not allow these ruffians to imprison the people of Hanto in their own homes for a moment longer!

As Emberica drew near, the black-clad leader turned, and before the dwarf could strike a blow the figure raised a massive arm and sent him flying across the village green with a single, backhanded blow. Emberica slammed head-first into the wooden wall of a hut. Head spinning, he tried to sit up, but collapsed back against the wall. He felt blood trickling down the side of his mouth. The hoe lay broken at his feet. He stretched one hand toward the longer piece, but his arm fell weakly back into his lap.

A shadow fell over him. Emberica looked up, dazed with pain, the figure swimming in front of him. His attacker glared down at him in icy fury. "You will obey us or die. Do you understand, fool?"

Slowly wiping the blood from his mouth, Emberica nodded.

Plot Synopsis

The tiny village of Hanto lies in the wilds of central Barsaive, just south of Lake Vors. Like the people of many an isolated hamlet in these first generations after the Scourge, the villagers of Hanto desired nothing more than to farm the lands of their forebears in peace. Sadly, even that simple desire could not be fulfilled. Too little time had passed since the evil days when Horrors ravaged Barsaive, and many perils still lurked in the wild hinterlands. The people of Hanto learned not to trust the stranger at the gate, the traveler on the road—a stranger might be a bandit bent on thievery, an ork scorcher looking to blood his sword, or even a disguised Horror come to claim new victims. Undoubtedly, such suspicions saved the villagers from many dangers but also made them close their hearts and minds against anything new or different. Anything of which the people of Hanto knew little when they settled here, they shunned—including most of the outside world.

Unlike most villagers, one among them sought the world beyond the village walls: the dwarf Named Charboyya. Young, proud, and determined to make his fortune in the wide world, Charboyya left Hanto and became a cloth merchant. His business prospered, and he became one of the richest traders in Bartertown. Though Charboyya traveled far from his village, he still considered himself a child of Hanto and a loving son to his family. That he might know of the occupation of their days and tell them of his, Charboyya gladly spent some of his considerable wealth hiring messengers to carry letters back and forth from Hanto. For many a year, his family and friends wrote to their beloved wanderer, and all remained well with them.

The first hint of trouble surfaced a mere eight months ago, when a girl in Charboyya's village, Aardelea, began to exhibit strange, amazing magical powers. Though untrained in the use of magic, she could move objects by will alone and perform many other wonders. Aardelea's magic even saved the life of her young nephew one day when, using nothing more than the power of her mind, she lifted the boy out of a deep well into which he had fallen.

It happened that a wandering elven Troubadour witnessed this event. The Troubadour knew of certain folk who called themselves the Grim Legion, joyless and implacable vigilantes who saw the taint of the Horrors behind every mystery and paid well for news of unexplained magical wonders. The Troubadour told them of Aardelea and pocketed his fee. A small group of Legionnaires traveled in haste to Hanto and upon their arrival, declared the village under quarantine. Claiming that the powers displayed by the child Aardelea must be Horror-spawned, the Legionnaires stopped all traffic from leaving the village, on the grounds that the village's supposed Horror-taint posed a threat to all Barsaive.

Though frightened and angry, the villagers dared not fight the Grim Legion. The Legion's arrival also trapped Charboyya's messengers. Bolder and quicker to fight than the villagers, the messengers attempted escape. Their strongest fighters died in the ensuing battle. The rest, badly wounded, fled into the wilderness. Lacking the strength or means to return to Bartertown and their employer, they resorted to banditry. Charboyya, fearing the worst when his messengers did not return at the appointed time, chose to hire a second band of adventurers to discover what has befallen the messengers and the village.

Now begins the adventure of the heroes of this tale. Learning of Charboyya's need for adventurers, the heroes arrange with a friend to meet with him. Charboyya tells them of his plight and promises to pay them well if they discover the fate of his missing messengers and his village. The adventurers travel from Bartertown to Hanto, through wild lands dotted with villages whose inhabitants are wary of strangers. Each village they pass on their long journey shuns them, for fear they may be bandits or lackeys of Horrors. They encounter many dangers on the road, including an attack by the lost messengers. After a long journey fraught with peril, the adventurers arrive in Hanto to confront the Grim Legion that holds the village in its iron grip.

The adventurers enter the village and learn the truth of Aardelea's magic; the child has been touched, not by Horrors, but by a dying spirit set to safeguard a treasury of

Adventure Hook

Gamemasters who want to set the characters up prior to meeting Charboyya may want to use this adventure hook. During their stay in Bartertown, the owner of the inn where the group is staying approaches them for help. He has problems with a local band of bullies who force protection money out of him every other week. The innkeeper is unable to pay the next rate, so he asks the characters to have the thugs understand that they aren't welcome here. In return, the innkeeper offers them free lodging, although they'd have to pay for food and drink. As a reward, however, the innkeeper offers each of them a set of fine new clothes—tailored to them by his friend, Charboyya (who will be glad to do his friend a favor).

How they deal with the bullies is left open to the characters. The gang is made up of orks and a couple of trolls who know their territory quite well, but don't have any adepts among their ranks. Gor and Hilak (the leader and his right hand) are both skilled fighters, and they'll definitely try to intimidate the heroes. However, they aren't stupid and will be scared away if the characters call their bluff and enter a fight. It is possible that the characters make new enemies if they allow them to escape.

magical knowledge. The adventurers make their way to a cavern where Aardelea often spent her hours daydreaming, and in the child's hideaway they find the book whose guardian granted her it's magic. Armed with this knowledge, the adventurers must defeat the Grim Legion—by persuasion or guile if they can, by force if they must.

Charboyya's Heroes

In this encounter, the dwarf merchant Charboyya hires the characters and briefs them on their mission. Before departing Bartertown, the characters may equip themselves for the journey to Hanto.

Setting the Stage

Once the characters approach Charboyya's store, read the following aloud:

You walk into the vast trading house of the silk merchant Charboyya, and a whirl of color dazzles your eyes. Truly, your prospective employer seems to deserve his reputation as one of Bartertown's most prosperous traders. Customers fill the room from wall to wall and even lounge against the central staircase, eyeing the countless bolts of fine silks displayed by the merchant's enthusiastic workers. From the snatches of conversation you can make out above the cheerful din, the merchant's people are as expert in the cut-and-thrust of barter as a Swordmaster is in the art of swordplay. Nearby, a flamboyantly dressed ork displays a length of brilliant, crimson silk for a well-heeled caravan master. Next to him, a wizened old man in threadbare robes gently runs his wrinkled fingers over a length of heavy golden cloth held out to him by a slender elf maiden. The elf spies you, smiles, and rings a small bell on the table in front of her.

The bell's clear tones have scarcely died away when a middle-aged dwarf with a well-tended red beard and finely cut clothes descends the stairs. The bright colors of his suit tell you that the dwarf finds his own merchandise to his liking. The confidence of his step and the firmness of his handshake proclaim him anything but a fop.

"I am Charboyya," he says, and gestures toward a narrow door at the back of the trading floor. "Let us discuss our business in my office."

In stark contrast to the bright, bustling public room, Charboyya's office seems almost drab in its simplicity. A few wooden chairs stand opposite his small worktable, which is piled high with ledger books and loose papers. Charboyya invites you to seat yourselves, then opens a drawer in the table and brings out a bowl of nuts, setting these on top of the piled letters and bidding you take some if you wish. Pleasantries obviously concluded, Charboyya sits down on the edge of his chair and begins to speak.

"I have heard that you have faced and conquered many dangers, and that you deal honestly with your employers. I have need of such honorable and bold Name-givers to undertake a mission of great personal importance. Though I have made my fortune in Bartertown, I was born in the village of Hanto, a small settlement in the wild lowlands south of Lake Vors. I left Hanto when I was young to make my way in the world, but found that I missed my family and friends. For years, I have hired adventurers to carry letters back and forth between Hanto and Bartertown. The last band of couriers I hired has not returned in a timely manner, and I fear that some dire evil has befallen the village of my birth.

"The road to Hanto is difficult. Seen on a map, it appears to be a mere nine days' ride from Bartertown, but much of the terrain is wild and overgrown. Allowing for the usual hazards of travel, to go from Bartertown to Hanto and back should take twenty days' ride or thirty days walking. My lost messengers rode fine horses, yet they have been gone these thirty days. I know that they may have met with mischance on the road, but I cannot help fearing for the safety of my village.

"I must know for certain that my family and friends are well. I wish you to travel to Hanto, discover what has happened and bring me word. I can warn you of many hazards you may face along the road and will answer any questions I can. If you accept employment, we shall negotiate a fair price for your services. Can you answer me now?"

Themes and Images

Play up Charboyya's distress, as well as his honesty and essential goodness. Portray him as the salt of the earth, the kind of person for whom other people naturally, willingly go to the mat. The player characters will find it easier to play a major role in the action if they identify with Charboyya and want to succeed on his behalf.

In addition, emphasize the safety and prosperity of Bartertown. This bustling, noisy, busy city represents Barsaive at its most civilized. The muggings and fleecing of newcomers common to a place like Kratas, for example, rarely happen in Bartertown. The sense of prosperity, safety, and the overall friendliness of Bartertown will help provide a sharp contrast with the wild lowlands the characters must traverse to reach Hanto.

Behind the Scenes

In this introductory encounter, the characters can question Charboyya for details about the mission, interview his employees to determine his honesty as an employer, ferret out information on the missing couriers, and purchase equipment for the journey to Hanto.

Questioning Charboyya

For Charboyya's description and game statistics, see **Cast of Characters**, p.190. Charboyya has no reason or desire to deceive the player characters and will openly and honestly answer any questions they may have about their mission. If asked about specific dangers in the lands near Hanto, Charboyya mentions the village's isolation and describes dangers that plagued earlier messenger parties:

"The land is wild and empty, and so almost anything can happen. The first couriers I sent to Hanto fell prey to a village that ensnared passing travelers for Theran slavers. A party I sent just a year ago lost several members to a strange, carnivorous plant unknown to me or any in these parts. Of course, any band of heavily armed wanderers in those lands also risks being mistaken for bandits or worse, unless they can prove otherwise. Folks thereabouts are suspicious of every stranger—with reason."

If asked about the missing couriers, Charboyya describes them:

"A troll Named Abakule led them, seconded by a windling Archer. Lu Pi, I believe her Name was. Abakule was gruff in manner, but conducted herself honorably toward me. The rest of the band included several humans and an ork, but I cannot recall their Names. My friend Jemboyla, a spice merchant for whom they guarded several important shipments, recommended them to me. They seemed honest and skilled, and I hope I have not sent them to their deaths."

If the characters ask Charboyya where to find Jemboyla, he directs them to her trading house, half a mile down Royal Road from Charboyya's establishment.

If asked about his friends and family in Hanto, he asks for word of his mother, Laveriel, and his brother, Emberica. He cautions the characters against offending Emberica, warning them of his brother's hot temper. He mentions his childhood playmate, Orweia, and her family, and also Chereca, the village headwoman. He concludes by saying that all the people of Hanto are precious to him, and word of any would be welcome.

Setting a Price

Charboyya intends to pay the player characters a total fee that amounts to 600 silver pieces each. Before offering that figure, this shrewd merchant asks the characters to quote him their fee. If they name a sum within 200 silver pieces above or below Charboyya's figure, he agrees immediately. If the player characters quote a total price lower than 400 silver pieces each, Charboyya becomes concerned that he may be dealing with amateurs. To reassure himself, he quizzes them about their experience as adventurers, asking them to describe previous assignments, employers, and successful exploits. Convinced of their abilities, he then agrees to the too-low fee.

If the adventurers propose a total price greater than 200 silver pieces above Charboyya's figure, the bargaining begins. To simulate the salesmanship required to increase the dwarf's offer, the player whose character speaks on behalf of the group makes a Haggle Test against Charboyya's Social Defense. If the test succeeds, Charboyya raises his price by 5 percent, regardless of how much the party demands. If the character wishes to continue bargaining, he must make another Haggle Test. Each successful result leads Charboyya to add another 5 percent to the fee. As soon as the character fails at his negotiating test, the last sum reached becomes Charboyya's final offer, up to a maximum of 900 silver pieces per character.

Charboyya offers to pay 5 percent of the total fee in advance. Using the same tests mentioned above, the player characters can negotiate for a higher advance. As with the fee bargaining, each successful test increases the advance by 5 percent, to a maximum of 20 percent. On reaching an

agreement of price and advance money, Charboyya wishes his new employees good fortune and instructs them to return to him when they are ready to leave Bartertown. At that point, he will give them letters to take to Hanto, a map of the safest route he knows, and a set of medallions that identify them as his representatives. At this second meeting with Charboyya, give the players the crudely drawn map of the route to the village (see **Player Handouts**, p. 356). The letters are single sheets of parchment, folded and sealed with wax. The medallions, wooden circles a few inches in diameter, are stamped with a crude likeness of Charboyya. They have no resale value.

Interviewing Charboyya's Workers

Before they leave the trading house, the player characters may decide to try to find out if Charboyya really is as honest as he seems. Though none of Charboyya's employees will chat with the party while on duty, the elf Keleshanne and the ork Gamuudge gladly agree to a meeting later in the day.

Meeting with Keleshanne

Keleshanne, the elf maiden described in **Setting the Stage** (p. 143), wants a fling. Her betrothed, a roguish gambler, has left town on an extended journey and won't return for several months. Bored to tears and starving for some fun, she may see one of the male adventurers as a likely temporary partner. If one of them makes a successful Flirting or Charisma Test, Keleshanne agrees to meet him at dusk for a drink at the Juggling Shadowmant, a pub several doors down from Charboyya's trading house. Her manner suggests romance in the offing, and she hints strongly that she prefers the potential object of her affections to arrive solo. If none of the males makes a successful Flirting or Charisma Test, Keleshanne makes a date with any elf or human male with a Charisma value of 13 or greater.

If the character keeps the date with Keleshanne, he finds Charboyya's business to be the last thing on her mind. Before moving on to more serious matters (like romance), she tells the adventurer that Charboyya is an excellent employer, generous with his pay and far less stuffy than most dwarfs. He has seemed very worried about something for the past few weeks, but she has not asked what troubles him. After all, Charboyya is entitled to his privacy.

Throughout the evening, Keleshanne makes frequent Seduction Tests in an effort to get the player character to visit her small house in Bartertown's sprawling residential area. She shows no interest in a permanent relationship, and rejects her temporary lover if he seeks to continue the affair after the adventure ends.

Keleshanne

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (8): 4/D6
Toughness (10): 5/D8
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (17): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 31
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 4/D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 22

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60

Skills

Artisan:
Singing (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Court Dancing (1): 7/D12
Elven Love Songs (1): 7/D12

General:
Conversation (3): 10/D10+D6
Etiquette (6): 13/D12+D10
Flirting (4): 11/D10+D8
Haggle (1): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (4): 10/D10+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*
Speak Language (3): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Sperethiel*
Seduction (2): 9/D8+D6
Trading (1): 8/2D6

Equipment

Dagger (Damage 6/D10; Range 9–15–18)
Belt Pouch
Elfweave Robe
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Loot

Silver Ring (worth 25 silver pieces)

Legend Award

60 Legend Points

Notes

Keleshanne possesses the elf racial ability of Low-Light Vision.

Meeting with Gamuudge

New in town and lacking for friends, Gamuudge eagerly accepts any invitation from the characters for an ale after work. The lonely ork has a crush on Keleshanne, but knows better than to approach her. Though few make their opinions obvious, many of Gamuudge's fellow workers look down on him because of his race. Charboyya treats him as a kindred spirit because the ork also came from a tiny, outland village, but as his employer, Charboyya cannot be a true friend. Thrilled to find companionship of any kind, Gamuudge proves quite talkative with a brimming tankard in front of him. If asked about Charboyya, he says:

"Good fellow. Hired me soon's he talked to me, put me right to work. Glad to work, me—kicked around a long time, not getting nowhere at anything. Charboyya treats me good, not like some. Back home, people treat ever'body the same. Here, some folk look at orks like we're less than garbage. Charboyya's different. Treats you like you are on the inside, not the outside."

Gamuudge can also provide information about isolated, lowland villages like Hanto. If asked, he says:

"Me, I'm from Burnpatch. Small place, like Charboyya's village. Back home, orks and elves and humans and dwarfs all say they're Burnpatchers first, anything else second. Outsiders, they figure are foul folk or bandits. They'll run you through with a pitchfork unless you walk real careful. Guess ever'body got somebody they don't trust."

If asked why he left Burnpatch, Gamuudge says:

"Got bored, sticking plants in the ground all day. Also had a few bad words with somebody, used to be my friend. In the Grim Legion now, he is. Bad words with them people's not good, so I left."

Any character who makes a successful Perception Test can tell from Gamuudge's expression that he still feels very angry about his quarrel with his friend. In order to convince him to discuss the Grim Legion, a character must make a successful Conversation Test or Charisma Test against Gamuudge's Social Defense. If the test succeeds, the ork says:

"You ain't heard of the Grim Legion? Back home, they're crawling all over the place. Bunch of crazy folk, I call 'em. They swear to root out Horrors and crush 'em. Think they can do anything they please, 'cause they're fighting Horrors all the time."

For additional information on the Grim Legion, see **On the Grim Legion**, p.148. If the player characters want to know the details of Gamuudge's run-in with the Legion, a character must make a second Conversation or Charisma Test. If the test succeeds, Gamuudge continues with the following:

"Had a friend from Burnpatch, we grew up like brothers. Ork, Named Kwamm. He was like me; wanted to get out and do things, be somebody. Picked a bad way to do it, he did. Joined the Grim Legion, and came back to Burnpatch acting like he was king of somewhere and pushing folk around. So I called him out, and we roughed each other up some. Got mad, Kwamm did. Said he'd bring his friends to teach me respect for the Legion. Me, I figured I'd best not wait for 'em. So now I'm here."

For a different version of these events, see Kwamm's description in **Cast of Characters**, p.192.

Gamuudge is clumsy as well as unsophisticated. During one of his speeches, he stands up or gestures to emphasize his words, accidentally jostling the table and knocking a full tankard of ale into an unfortunate player character's lap. This mishap should happen to the adventurer whose reaction to the accident you feel will be funniest. Gamuudge apologizes profusely. If the scene is working, try having the poor ork wreak further slapstick havoc with his bumbling attempts to set things right.

Gamuudge

Attributes

Dexterity (5): 3/D4
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (15): 6/D10
Charisma (12): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 4
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 35
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 27

Combat Movement: 12
Full Movement: 24

Skills

Artisan:
Sculpting (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Dwarf Trade Routes (1): 6/D10
Farming (1): 6/D10

General:
Haggle (1): 6/D10
Read and Write Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Trading (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Short Sword (Damage 10/D10+D6; w/scabbard)

Belt Pouch
Sculpting Tool
Traveler's Garb

Loot

10 silver pieces

Legend Award

45 Legend Points

Notes

Gamuudge possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*. For example, his *gahad* is set off by other orks acting uppity and self-righteous, but is never set off by slights against his race by *ujnorts* (non-orks).

Investigating the Couriers

After questioning Charboyya and his employees, the characters may want to learn something about the last couriers the dwarf merchant hired. Their most direct source of information is the spice merchant, Jemboyla. To speak with her, the adventurers must travel to Jemboyla's trading house on Royal Road. At the trading house, the character doing the talking must impress the spice merchant's snobbish office manager, a dwarf Named Cezlarica, by making a successful First Impression, Etiquette, or Charisma Test against Cezlarica's Social Defense of 6. (For the rest of Cezlarica's statistics, use those given for the dwarf merchant in the **Gamemaster Characters** chapter on p. 227 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.) While waiting for Jemboyla, the characters notice that her entire staff consists of dwarfs.

Jemboyla dresses and acts in a simple, no-nonsense style. Currently busy preparing a shipment to Haven, she can spare only a few moments to speak to the adventurers. Any character who makes a successful Perception Test against Jemboyla's Social Defense of 8 recognizes that she is trying to hide her disdain for the adventurers as she speaks. For additional statistics, use those given for the dwarf merchant mentioned above, but raise Jemboyla's Charisma step to 6/D10.

Jemboyla claims to have barely known the couriers.

"They worked for me, that's all," she says. "Funny, I'm usually right about people. The troll woman seemed competent enough. I'm sorry they let Charboyya down."

If asked how she met the missing couriers, Jemboyla says she heard of them through the bartender at the Juggling Shadowmant, a troll Named Brainbiter.

Talking to Brainbiter

A former adventurer who gave up that hazardous life when he lost a foot on an ill-fated expedition into Parlainth, Brainbiter owns the Juggling Shadowmant as well as tending bar. He loves chatting with customers, and frequently offers help to adventurers for old times' sake. If the player characters ask Brainbiter what he knows of the missing couriers, Brainbiter replies:

"Abakule came into the bar a few months back, said she was looking for steady work. Tough, she was—had the spark in the eyes, the iron in the spine that I had once. I used to go adventuring, you know. Faced death and laughed at it and lived to tell the tale more times than I can count. I remember one time, I—but you don't want to hear about that. You want to hear about Abakule. She had a motley band following her; a few seemed a little wet behind the ears, if you know what I mean. But Abakule and that windling she works with knew their way through a maze backwards, if you take my meaning. The windling surprised me—so flighty, most of 'em, but not this one. I figured Abakule and her band deserved a decent job, so I sent her to the spice merchant, Jemboyla. The one who thinks the dwarfs hold up the sky and make the earth spin. Pays well, for all she's so prideful. I heard they're missing. Too bad, that is. But that's the business, if you know what I mean."

Brainbiter does not know anyone else who knew Abakule or her allies. He can, however, tell the characters the Names of a few of the missing couriers. Two of the humans, a brother and sister, called themselves Aetheela and Damien Blacklog. The ork called herself Bojazi Kofeeld.

Many seasoned adventurers spend time at the Juggling Shadowmant, and they all feel a vested interest in squelching any other patron foolish enough to threaten violence in Brainbiter's establishment. Regular drinkers at the Shadowmant are quick to avoid trouble or stop it before it

On the Grim Legion

How much of the following background information on the Grim Legion the players learn depends on the level of success their characters achieve on Knowledge Tests. Because the Grim Legion has a reputation throughout Barsaive, all the player characters know something of the group without benefit of Knowledge Tests. When the characters first hear the Legion mentioned, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"The Grim Legion. You recognize that name. Some say the Legionnaires are heroes, ready to lay down their lives to free Barsaive from Horrors and anything tainted by Horrors. Others scorn them as glorified bandits who justify their greed and violence with the name of a higher purpose. Still others pity them, seeing them as well-meaning Horror hunters, tainted and driven mad by the dark powers against which they fight and the awful sights they have seen. You have heard that every large city has its Grim Legionnaires, though the degree of their influence varies from place to place. Some are merely drunken loudmouths, others are dangerous fanatics. You have seen a few in Bartertown, standing out from the crowd in their black leather or blackened metal armor decorated with silver studs. They swaggered down the streets like Theran overlords, and most gave them a wide berth."

Making Knowledge and Persuasion Tests

Characters with Knowledge skills that might apply directly to the Grim Legion, such as Barsaive History, Cults and Organizations, or History of the Scourge, make Knowledge Tests against a Difficulty Number of 5. Indirectly related knowledge skills, such as Horrors or Legends and Lore require a test against a Difficulty Number of 7. All available information that can be gleaned by a successful Knowledge Test appears arranged by result level. The player character learns all information up to and including the information listed for the result level achieved; for example, a character who achieves a Good result learns the information listed for that result level and also for an Average result. The characters learn false rumors at lower levels of success and learn the truth at higher levels. If a player achieves a result level that gives him several levels' worth of information, explain that the higher-level information is more reliable.

The player characters may make Knowledge Tests to obtain information about the Grim Legion at any point after they hear of the Legion. The player characters may also obtain the following information from members of the Grim Legion in Hanto by making successful Persuasion Tests. Several Legionnaires possess the Knowledge skill of Grim Legion History, and any of these characters can share the history they know with the player characters. If a player asks an appropriately skilled Legionnaire about the history starts; they face enough danger adventuring and come to the Shadowmant to relax. If the player characters take it into their heads to start a fight with Brainbiter or another patron, the bulk of the other drinkers immediately attack them to subdue the troublemakers.

Use enough combat-capable archetype characters from the **Gamemaster Characters** chapter on p. 215 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** to defeat and disarm the player characters.

Brainbiter

Attributes

Dexterity (4): 3/D4
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Strength (13): 6/D10
Perception (11): 5/D8
Charisma (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 4
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 6
Initiative: 3/D4
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 34
Wound Threshold: 9
Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Combat Movement: 8
Full Movement: 16

Skills

Artisan:
Music (Drum) (1): 6/D10

of the group, that player character makes a Persuasion Test against the Legionnaire's Social Defense. The result level achieved by the player character determines how much information the character learns.

Depending upon which Legionnaire the player characters talk to, you may need to paraphrase certain statements to reflect the Legionnaire's attitudes. Moltaa, for example, would not describe the actions of any Legion band as insane or extreme; instead, she might describe some groups as "more dedicated to the cause than others."

Average Result

The Grim Legion is a group of fanatical Horror hunter adepts who answer to no authority but their own. They travel across Barsaive in large, heavily armed bands, ready to take on any Horror in combat, no matter how great the odds against them. Unfortunately, they pose as great a danger to the common citizen as to local Horrors. They expect gratitude and unquestioning respect from others at all times and demand food, lodging, weapons, equipment and even coin whenever it strikes their fancy. They accuse any who resist of being Horror-tainted, harassing them unmercifully and sometimes even killing them.

Good Result

The Grim Legion includes both good members and bad members. Unfortunately, scattered among the righteous Horror-slayers are criminal elements who take advantage of the Legion's legendary reputation and extort whatever they want from local people. Throughout the Legion, these two factions constantly battle to gain the upper hand. Though the crooked Legionnaires boast greater numbers, the righteous members wield more power. After all, a warrior who can take on a Horror can easily handle a bunch of bullies who need to wear black leather to intimidate others.

Excellent Result

In general, members of the Grim Legion go to great lengths to appear mysterious, often claiming connections to ancient and powerful secrets that only they can comprehend. The Legion encourages rumor mongering, as long as the tales told portray them as powerful and unknowable. Despite what many people say, the Grim Legion is not a single, united group. In fact, new bands of Grim Legionnaires spring up constantly-anyone can found his own Grim Legion band by outfitting himself and a few friends in silver-studded black leather and then swearing to fight Horrors. Many of the false rumors about the Legion are started and spread by so-called Legionnaires who actually know very little about the original group.

Any given group of Grim Legionnaires may be half-crazy heroes or shiftless swindlers, tough veterans or greenhorns who donned their leathers the day before yesterday. In general, Legionnaires who roam the countryside tend to be tough, skilled, and truly devoted to their cause, whereas those

Knowledge:
Bartertown Lore (1): 6/D10
Business Contacts (1): 6/D10

General:
Avoid Blow (2): 5/D8
Climbing (2): 5/D8
Conversation (4): 9/D8+D6
Haggle (2): 7/D12
Melee Weapons (2): 5/D8
Read and Write Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Troll
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Troll
Unarmed Combat (2): 5/D8

Equipment

Club (Damage 9/D8+D6)
Belt Pouch
Drum
Traveler's Garb

Loot

15 silver pieces

Legend Award

40 Legend Points

Notes

Brainbiter possesses the troll racial ability of Heat Sight.

who congregate in or near cities are more often merely thugs or fools.

The original Grim Legion was founded during the Invae Burnings (see p. 360 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**) by a dwarf Nethermancer/Warrior Named Verwol, who united the warring tribes and cities of Barsaive to fight the insect spirits. Verwol coined the Grim Legion motto, "When in doubt, hack 'em to bits."

Extraordinary Result

The group now known as the Grim Legion first appeared during the dark period of Barsaive's history known as the Burning. At that time, the area we now know as Barsaive contained countless warring tribes and city-states, who banded together to fight a sudden infestation of bizarre insect creatures later recognized as harbingers of the Scourge. In southern Barsaive, where the infestation was worst, an unprecedented number of generals, armies, and guerrilla fighters ceased trying to slay each other and fought on the same side.

Though the province-wide famine that gripped the land in the aftermath of the Burning dashed any hopes of genuine political unity, it did not diminish the personal bond between veterans of the battle against the insect spirits. Many of these fighters remained together in small units, eventually naming themselves the Proud Legion. Unfortunately, some bands of the Proud Legion turned predator when the threat of the Horrors subsided, setting in motion the conflict between heroes and opportunists that plagues the Legion to this day. As the centuries wore on, the term "Proud Legion" fell into disuse. By the time of the Orichalcum Wars, it existed only in myths and songs about long-dead heroes of the past and as a sarcastic insult applied to extortionist mercenary bands.

The myths and songs outlived the insults; when the Horrors began to appear in force, many of the heroes who sought to eradicate them revived the traditions of the Proud Legion. As the Horrors' onslaught grew worse, a stubborn dwarf Nethermancer and Warrior, Named Verwol, Named his indomitable band of Horror-slayers the Grim Legion. Convinced that he and his fellows could only hope to defeat the Horrors by matching their viciousness and harboring no weaknesses to exploit, Verwol and his followers began to wear black clothing and adopted an intimidating manner. The practice of Nethermancy also became a central part of Grim Legion strategy. Though scholars consider it unlikely that Verwol actually uttered the famous phrase, "When in doubt, hack 'em to bits," those words accurately describe his approach to fighting Horrors. As more units around Barsaive copied Verwol's style, the Legion hanged, burned, or put to the sword countless innocent Name-givers whom they suspected of being Horror-tainted. Anyone who dared speak out against the Grim Legion's methods was considered tainted and hunted down.

As Barsaive's people took refuge in the kaers, the Grim Legion followed them

Preparing for the Journey

Before setting out for Hanto, the characters may wish to buy equipment from the Bartertown merchants and try to learn other useful information. True to its Name, Bartertown is a great place to buy all manner of items. The characters may purchase any product listed in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 432 of the **Player's Compendium** at the listed price or something close to it. Keep in mind, however, that more exotic items may be in short supply.

Characters looking for information discover that merchants make excellent sources. Particularly friendly tradesmen may offer any or all of the following information in response to the travelers' questions about the lowlands and the Grim Legion.

Traveling Through the Lowlands

"I was once a peddler, and I traveled to many a small village in my day. The villagers are good people, taking care of each other. But to a stranger like me—well, a peddler in those parts of Barsaive had best know how to handle a short sword, if you take my meaning. I could never be sure whether folk'd buy from me or kill me."

"Lowlands? No profit in 'em. Backward lot—I'd let them alone."

"I suppose one must, however grudgingly, admire the bravery of those simple farm folk, firmly rooted in their unforgiving native soil, united by their fierce struggle to scrape a pathetic living from the earth by the sweat of their peasant

underground. In some underground communities, they served as an unofficial vanguard against the most subtle Horror intrusions. In many cases, Grim Legion forces successfully destroyed Horrors who breached kaer defenses. Often, however, they also persecuted harmless eccentrics and any citizen who threatened their political power.

In modern times, dozens of Grim Legion bands roam both the countryside and city streets, ever vigilant against real or imagined Horrors. When the Grim Legion passes, the wise man crosses the street if he can do so without attracting their attention.

The Legion has no central organization, hierarchy, or governing council to determine who can become a Legionnaire. Instead, this disparate collection of fighting units identifies itself with a cause and a style, and each unit's captain follows no authority save his or her own. In fact, history speaks of many instances in which Grim Legion units fight one another, particularly when one group fails to adhere to another's standards of conduct.

Adventure Hook

Gamemasters may use this hook to showcase that not all Grim Legionaires are misguided thugs. While talking to Gamuudge or Brainbiter, a human Troubadour Named Khelvan overhears parts of their conversation. He approaches them, excuses himself for his curiosity, and tells them where they can find a group of Grim Legionnaires. He speaks highly of the legionaires, but admits that their task demands them to be rough and harsh. Khelvan often talks to them, and sometimes shares what he picks up to support them in their quest to eradicate the Horrors. The Grim Legion has a permanent camp on the outskirts of Bartertown, where various groups of Grim Legionnaires meet from time to time. The camp is used to recruit and train new members as well as for sharing information between the groups. If the characters want first-hand information about Kwamm, Khelvan recommends going there.

The Grim Legion's camp is surrounded by a makeshift fence, and contains about a dozen tents. A large skull occupies the entrance, which is guarded by two ork Legionnaires. The camp is currently led by Hiq, a dwarf Horror Stalker (see p. 174 of the **Name-giver's Compendium** for information on this Discipline). While the guards at the camp's entrance are somewhat rude, Hiq turns out to be very polite. He tries to recruit the character's to his cause, and gladly shows them what his own group of Legionnaires have achieved so far (his tent features a nice collection of Horror skulls).

Gamemasters may use Hiq to relate any of the information presented above to the characters (in case they don't have the appropriate Knowledge skills or fail their tests). Of course, Hiq emphasizes the good and heroic parts of the Legion's history. He and his men are honest fellows, and their word can be trusted.

brows. Born of ignorance though it may be, such bravery is genuine. For myself, I cannot imagine living anywhere but a city."

"I was born in one of them villages. We live hard lives there; it makes you hard inside if you stay too long."

The Grim Legion

"One lot of 'em caused quite a spot of trouble in town, until a few weeks ago. Pack of glorified thieves, if you ask me. They'd pilfer what they chose from any stall in the bazaar, claiming they were "borrowing" what they needed for the fight against the Horrors. Hah! The magistrate ran them off by cooking up a tall tale about Horror taint in Kratas. They'll be back soon enough, though. Mark my words."

"Some people say the Grim Legion are thieves, or greedy, or power-hungry. Folk who talk like that have never seen a six-year-old girl turn into a hideous, insect-legged wolf and leap for her mother's throat. I have; and I say, anyone who fights the Horrors is all right in my book. If the Legion needs supplies from me, I'll give them. It's the least I can do."

"Right lot of crazies, the Grim Legion. Ever heard them talk? They sound so flamin' pompous, I want to bust out laughing."

Troubleshooting

Little can go wrong this early in the adventure, unless the adventurers choose to reject Charboyya's offer. If this unlikely event takes place, create a compelling reason for the group to go to Hanto. Perhaps an acquaintance of someone's gamemaster character ally has gone there and disappeared, or an adventurer might come down with a mysterious illness for which the only known cure lies in Hanto. Because such storylines often feel contrived, try not to use them on players who object to being herded through the game.

The gamemaster can also adapt various parts of this adventure for future adventures. The encounters on the road to Hanto, for example, might apply to any overland journey the player characters take in the future. The Grim Legion may control the characters' next chosen destination, and most of the plot line involving Hanto and its magical child might be usable with a few name changes.

Remember to portray Bartertown as a safe haven. Even if the player characters go looking for trouble, try to keep them out of it. Insulted guardsmen choose to dress down the player characters verbally instead of attacking them, cheated merchants use legal rather than violent means of reprisal, tavern patrons cannot be bothered to fight a bunch of loud-mouthed fools, and so on.

The Road to Hanto

This encounter describes the road to Hanto and several dangers that the adventurers might face on their journey. The section also provides guidelines for keeping the story on track if the characters wander off the road in search of additional trouble.

Setting the Stage

Once the characters are on their way across the plains, read the following aloud:

> *Four or five days you've spent on the road, so far without incident. The monotony of the savanna, with its endless seas of grass and expanses of flat earth, has lulled you into an undoubtedly false sense of security. The countryside looks peaceful enough, but you know better.*
>
> *Keeping Charboyya's warnings in mind, you have not approached any of the small villages whose cooking smoke you've seen climbing into the sunny skies. You simply plod onward, following your rough map as best you can, almost hoping for attack by some enemy just to relieve the boredom.*

Themes and Images

Emphasize the silence, emptiness, and isolation of the countryside. If and when you choose to have the adventurers encounter other people, play up the locals' hostility toward strangers.

Keep the player characters off-balance; make them wonder when the other shoe is going to drop.

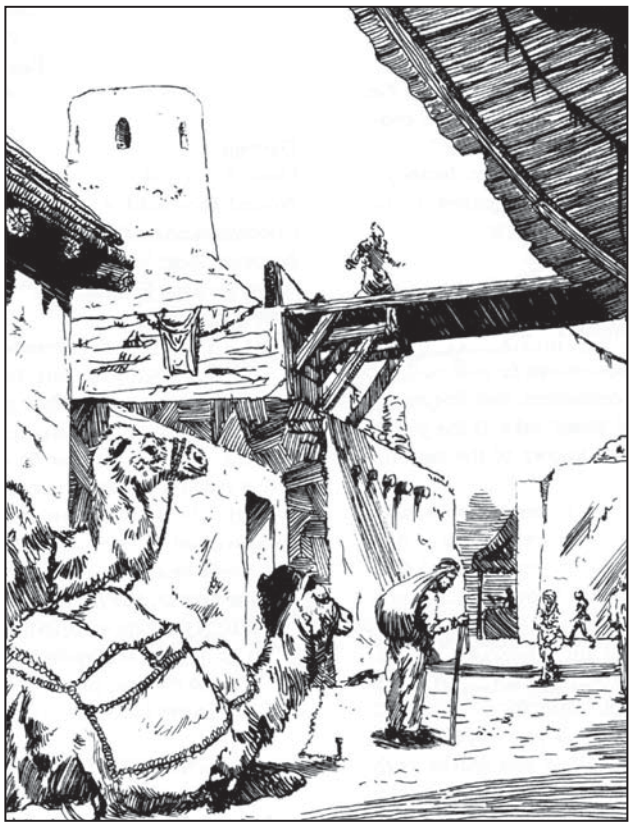
Behind the Scenes

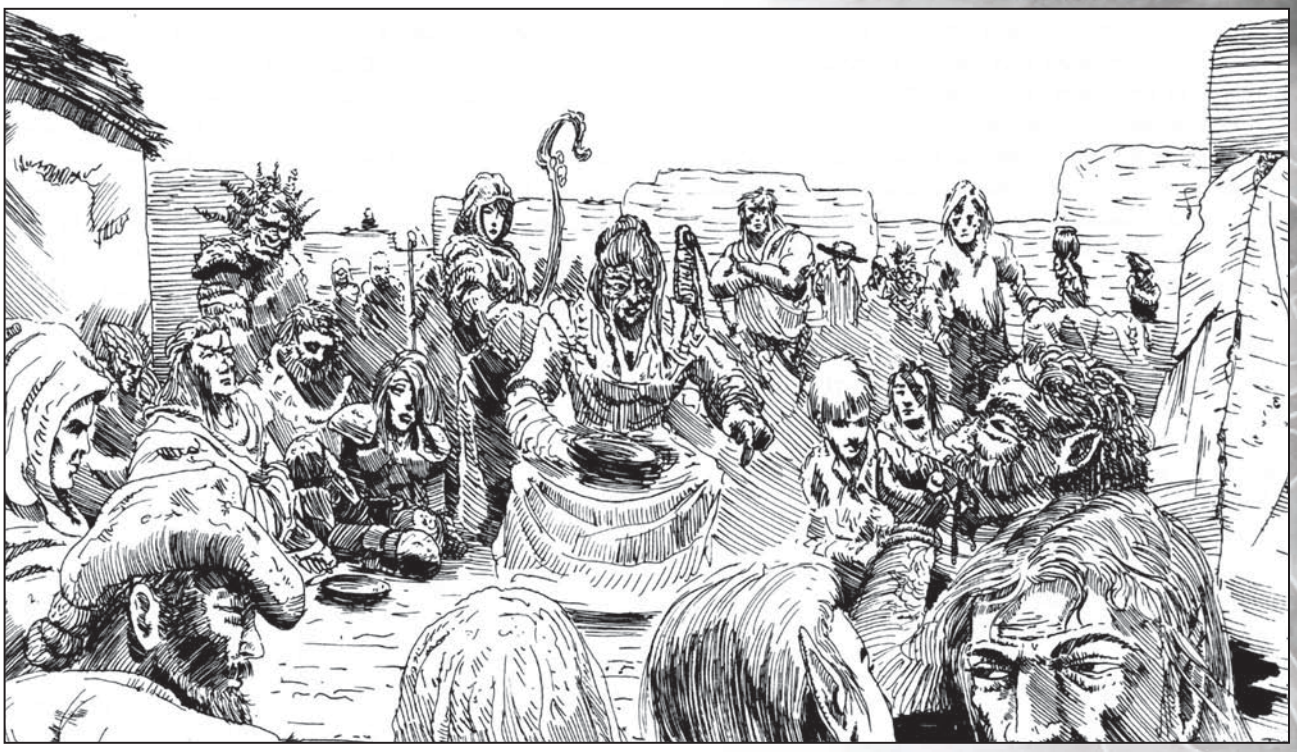
This section describes the characters' journey from Bartertown to Hanto and offers several possible encounters. They may meet wary villagers, creatures that lurk in scattered copses of trees or behind the few rocky outcroppings that thrust out of the tall prairie grasses, bandits who roam the wild countryside, and so on. The trip to Hanto takes several days under the best conditions, roughly 15 days walking or 9 days riding. Give the player characters the feel of a long, arduous journey by describing the sameness of the daily routine: rise at dawn, breakfast on trail food, walk or ride for several hours under a cloudless sky, rest and eat around noon, travel along the never-ending prairie for several more hours, make camp before dusk, eat, post sentries, and sleep.

In addition to setting the stage for the characters to encounter other travelers, villagers, bandits, creatures, and so on, the gamemaster may also wish to revisit ongoing plot threads from the current or previous campaigns. If someone is carrying a cursed magical item, for example, it chooses this (rather opportune) moment to display its malign powers. If the player characters seem to be spoiling for a fight, defuse their aggressive impulses by allowing the slavering monster of your choice to leap from the bushes or tall grass and attempt to lunch on the travelers.

Lowland Settlement Encounters

When the adventurers enter or pass close to a lowland village during the journey to Hanto, play encounters with





the following details in mind. No true roads or trails cross the flat, open savannas. The grasslands simply go on for miles, occasionally interrupted by stony patches or jutting rock formations. The characters may have to go around these obstacles, if they loom particularly large, and can easily lose their bearings. The closest things to roads on the savanna are paths beaten by the hooves of herd animals. If the adventurers follow these paths, they will eventually reach a village and are likely to meet locals along the way.

Hundreds of tiny villages dot Barsaive's plains. These hamlets commonly include dwarfs, humans, elves, and orks. Members of other races may live in these farming communities, though they are rare in this part of Barsaive. Within these settlements, the residents feel greater loyalty to their villages than their races and relate poorly to all strangers. Villagers may trust outsiders from nearby communities more than city folk, though feuds between villages are not unknown.

Though the hostility of country folk toward city folk predates the Scourge, that dark time strengthened this instinctive distrust. In the years just before the Scourge, envoys from the villages approached the leaders of Barsaive's great cities in order to join them in their vast kaers and citadels, as they couldn't afford the Rites of Protection and Passage. They argued that only the largest kaers and citadels could survive the Horrors' onslaught and claimed that the villagers would die needlessly if left without protection. Of course, the cities needed farmers to grow food for the kaers, but had not enough space for all of them. Many families were left behind.

When the people of Barsaive emerged from their kaers, the farmers among them learned the bitter truth that most of their ancestors had fallen victim to the Horrors. Many families sought to resettle the open plains as a result—they left their former kaers behind, bringing life back to the scorched earth. The remnants of the Horrors plagued these new settlements in the early days after the Scourge, but when bandits and slavers began to prey on them as well, the villagers learned not to trust anyone. If you wish, explain the villagers' hostility to the characters by having a villager relate some or all of this bitter history to the adventurers.

Each of the lowland villages appoints a single, highly respected man or woman to act as the community's leader and deal with every sort of trouble. Though the whole village makes its decisions through discussion and consensus, the headman or woman carries out these decisions and acts as village spokesperson to outsiders. The residents of most villages speak passable Throalic, spiced with a few loan words that remain from the mother tongues of the different races who entered the kaers.

Approaching a Village

Most savanna villages consist of several round huts made of kiln-fired brick and thatched roofs. The huts are arranged in a rough circle around a flat, open, communal eating area with a fire pit in the center. This "village green" serves as a gathering place for the evening meal, storytelling, observances to honor the Passions, public settling of grievances between individuals, and so forth.

In the isolated regions of Barsaive, it is customary to perform a greeting ritual when approaching a village (see p. 231 of the **Player's Compendium** for more information), to prove that the travelers are free of Horror taint. Characters using their Artisan skills as part of a greeting ritual should make his Artisan Skill Test against a Difficulty Number of 5. If the test succeeds, the character proves himself free of Horror taint and the locals will allow him to enter the village.

Still, if the adventurers enter any village along the road to Hanto, they meet with considerable suspicion. Parents order their children inside their huts. The elderly and

infirm shuffle indoors as fast as they can. Able-bodied men and women grab sharp farm implements such as pitchforks or hoes; a few of them may even wield swords and spears. Despite their immediate show of strength, the villagers generally prefer to avoid trouble, hoping that their seeming readiness to fight will discourage potential attackers. Even if the adventurers insult them, the villagers will not strike the first blow.

The headman or woman will intercept the adventurers before they approach too close to the village, bidding them go swiftly on their way. If the adventurers refuse to leave, perhaps claiming need for shelter, first aid, and so on, the headman or woman gives something like the following reply:

> *"We intend no offense, but you are strangers. Too often in the past, bandits and foul folk masquerading as honest heroes have done us harm when we aided them. Why should we believe you are who you claim to be?"*

If the player characters attempt to use their social skills to impress the village leader, the gamemaster determines the leader's ability to resist the characters' attempts at persuasion by choosing a suitable Charisma step and Social Defense rating for the leader. For example, the gamemaster may decide that the headman has a Charisma step of 4 and resists influence with a Social Defense of 6. If the gamemaster can't be bothered doing this, simply assume the village leader has a Charisma step of 6 and a Social Defense of 7.

Player characters may also use the following talents and skills to sway a village leader into offering them hospitality: Acting, Bardic Voice, First Impression, and Lasting Impression. The deeply felt prejudice of country folk, however, make them somewhat less susceptible to such attempts to influence them. The villagers' responses vary according to the result level of any test an adventurer makes using the above-mentioned skills or talents. Appropriate responses for each result level appear below, and may be read aloud or paraphrased.

The adventurers may make only one such test per village; no matter how many characters possess suitable persuasive skills or talents, only the first attempt by a single player character has any effect.

Pathetic: If the character achieves a Pathetic result, the leader gets angry and calls for the villagers to drive the characters away, crying "You are obviously touched by Horrors! It is our duty to ensure you harm no others."

Poor: If the character achieves a Poor result, the village leader says, "The more you speak, the less I trust you. Go your way, and cease wasting my time."

Average: On an Average result, the leader says, "I hope you are as honest as you seem. I cannot risk misjudgment and welcome you despite my misgivings, but we offer you our good wishes. May the Passions smile on your mission."

Good: A Good result produces the following reply: "I believe you are sincere, but cannot risk the well-being of my people on my judgment alone. We will give you water if you need it and allow you to rest a moment on the village green. I warn you not to abuse this hospitality."

Excellent: On an Excellent result, the village spreads as much of a feast as they can manage for the adventurers but refuses to let them spend the night. The leader says, "Your words bear the ring of honesty and courage. Will you share with us a humble meal and perhaps tell us of your exploits before you depart?"

Extraordinary: An Extraordinary result breaches the wall of suspicion and leads the villagers to offer a night's shelter as well as food. The leader apologizes for doubting the characters' intentions, saying, "Would that all strangers who pass our way were true-hearted heroes such as you! We will gladly offer you food and a bed for the night; you are welcome to partake of our best, little though it is."

On a Pathetic result when trying to win them over, or if the adventurers provoke the villagers into fighting, use the human, dwarf, ork, or elf villager statistics provided in **Friends Indeed**, p. 159.

Additional Encounters

If it suits the campaign, create other types of encounters on the road. The adventurers might pass a band of slavers herding their wares to market, for example, or meet fellow adventurers returning from a dangerous escapade in a kaer filled with dreadful creatures, or even become the target of a bandit ambush. We suggest you outline these mini-encounters as part of your preparation for the adventure, and use statistics that enable the player characters to win easily if fighting breaks out.

The primary purpose of the encounters on the road to Hanto is simply to give the adventurers a taste of the various experiences of traveling in Barsaive (and to keep them on their toes).

Reading Charboyya's Letters

If the adventurers still harbor some doubts about Charboyya's frankness in sharing all he knew, they may choose to read the letters he sent with them, in hopes of learning more about the situation they face.

The medallions the characters received match the seal on the letters, so the adventurers should find it easy to melt the sealing wax and re-stamp the seal once they have finished reading. If the players choose this course of action, give them the **Player Handouts** on pp. 357–358.

Troubleshooting

Ideally, the player characters will not resort to combat in this encounter. If they attack any villagers, the locals fight desperately to safeguard their homes and families. Though few of the villagers can realistically hope to defeat a band of adepts, you may want to fudge dice rolls in the villagers' favor to teach the adventurers the futility of senseless violence.

Friends Indeed

In this encounter, the leader of Yellowspring meets the adventurers and urges them to stay the night in his village. His friendliness conceals a sinister motive—Yellowspring village is expecting a raid from a neighboring village, with which they have a bitter feud.

Setting the Stage

Once the characters are in the vicinity of Yellowspring, read the following aloud:

You follow a faint trail through the tall, waving grasses, praying for some new sight to shake you out of your boredom. Above the seed-laden grass tops, a thin finger of smoke rises—a village must lie nearby. If earlier experience is anything to judge by, you see no point in attempting to contact its inhabitants. You can see a cluster of close-grouped huts like a dark smudge in the distance. The road leads you toward the tiny community, and as you draw closer, you see a figure on horseback waving to you. He spurs his horse and gallops out to meet you. As he approaches, you see that he is a bald, ebony-skinned ork, his face crisscrossed with age lines. A few feet from you, he pulls up his mount and holds out his hands in greeting. "Hail, travelers! Pardon my presumption for accosting you, but I hunger for news of the outside world. I am Rhamduc, headman of the village of Yellowspring. If you permit, I would dearly love to ride and speak with you awhile. Will you indulge an old ork?"

Themes and Images

Rhamduc's friendliness alone should unsettle the player characters; no one acts this kindly toward strangers in the lowlands. If the characters accept the invitation to accompany Rhamduc back to his village, play the ork and his fellow villagers as kind and sympathetic during the first part of the encounter. Lulling the characters into a false sense of good fellowship will heighten the sense of betrayal when the adventurers learn of Rhamduc's true plans.

Behind the Scenes

Rhamduc is the leader of Yellowspring, a village locked in a mortal feud with its neighbor, Cherrypit. A recent midnight raid against Cherrypit cost the ork headman several of his best fighters. Expecting the Cherrypit men and women to launch a retaliatory raid at any time, Rhamduc spent all day riding the trails in search of help. A clever and worldly ork, Rhamduc hopes to trick the adventurers into spending the night in Yellowspring so that they will feel compelled to fight the Cherrypit raiders.

If the player characters try to give Rhamduc the brush-off, he tries to reassure them of his good intentions with a line like the following:

"I do apologize for disturbing you. No doubt you've already run afoul of local folk—I can't blame you for your suspicions. I lived a few years in Bartertown, so I know what it's like to take civility for granted. Bit of a shock to you out here, eh? Look, if you need any supplies, I can get them for you. No one else will, that's certain. Most folk out here don't believe in hospitality."

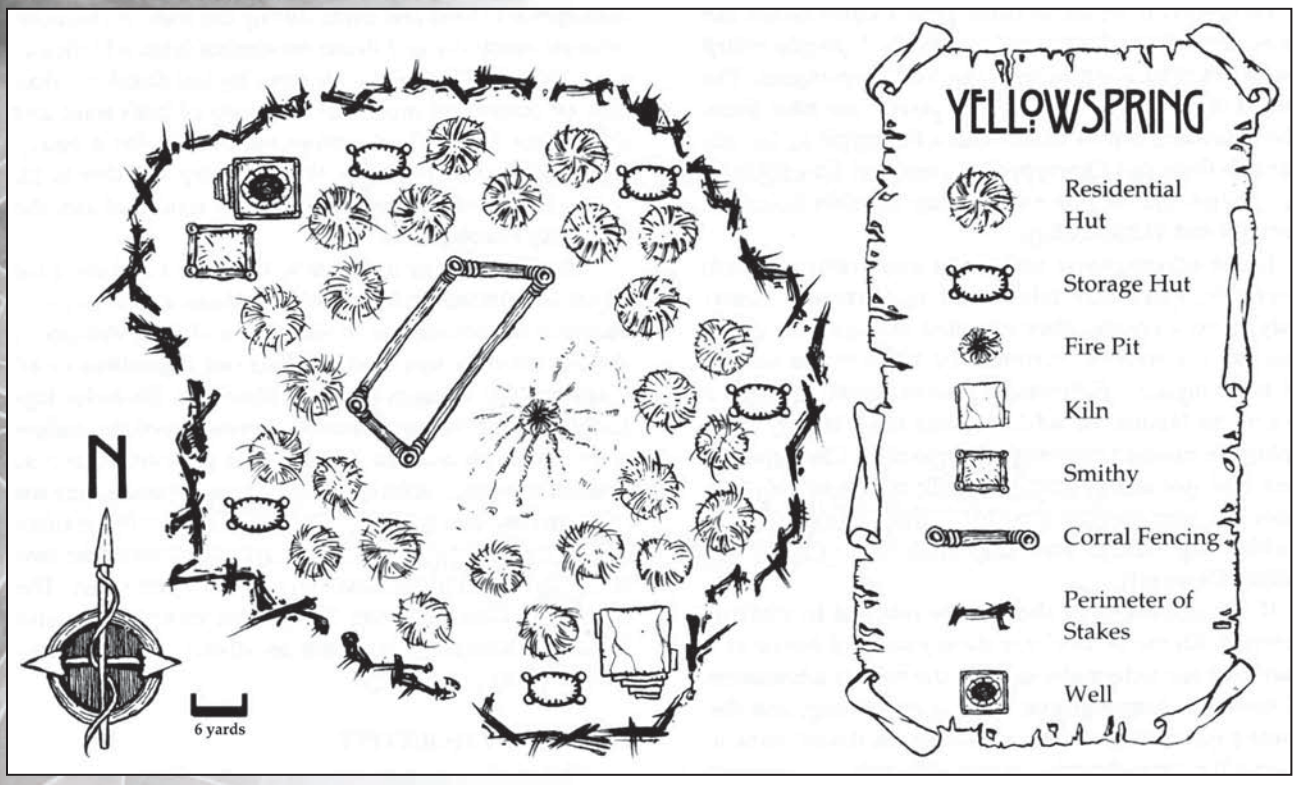
If the adventurers continue to reject Rhamduc's friendly overtures, he bids them farewell. Go to the next encounter, **Charboyya's Betrayers**, p. 161. If the adventurers return Rhamduc's greeting and seem inclined to chat or join him, Rhamduc tells them a bit about himself as they travel toward Yellowspring. Read the following aloud:

"I left Yellowspring in my youth to find my fortune. Wealth eluded me, alas, and I returned to my village some years later to find a wife and settle down. It's a good enough life, but I miss many things about the city: the music, the taverns, the endless parade of new faces. Where are you from, friends, and what brings you to this drab corner of Barsaive?"

Though Rhamduc is certainly interested in the adventurers' journey, he concentrates mostly on appearing trustworthy rather than trying to squeeze information out of them. In particular, he hopes that in talking about their journey, the adventurers will give him an opening to invite them to stay the night in Yellowspring. He may ask outright if they need shelter, or simply ask how many days they have spent on the road. He may even resort to telling them that a storm is approaching, in hopes of getting them to ask for beds in the village.

To earn the characters' trust, he may ask questions about Bartertown that seem to prove he did actually spend some time there, such as, "Are the Therans much of a problem there? Did you happen to see an elven tavern dancer Named Melaria, a performer at the Red Wyrm Tavern? Is the Red Wyrm still standing?" and so on.

If asked, Rhamduc knows nothing about Hanto or Charboyya's lost couriers. He answers any other questions about himself or his village as honestly as he can, but care-



fully fails to mention the feud with Cherrypit. He offers his opinion on the Grim Legion only if asked:

> *"We've not had much trouble with them in Yellowspring, but they hold quite a bit of power in these parts. Fear of the Horrors overshadows some people's better judgment, and they invite these people to take control. Myself, I prefer to keep out of their way."*

Rhamduc

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Strength (14): 6/D10
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Perception (16): 7/D12
Willpower (12): 5/D8
Charisma (17): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 9
Physical Armor: 2
Social Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 38
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 10
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Combat Movement: 24
Full Movement: 48

Skills

Artisan:
Sculpting (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Farming (2): 9/D8+D6

General:
Conversation (1): 8/2D6
Hunting (2): 7/D12
Melee Weapons (2): 7/D12
Missile Weapons (2): 7/D12
Read and Write Language (1): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Speak Language (2): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Equipment

Padded Cloth (Phys 2)

Broadsword (Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
Shortbow (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 30–60–120)
Quiver (w/20 shortbow arrows)

Belt Pouch
Farming Tools
Sculpting Tool
Peasant's Garb

Loot

10 silver pieces

Legend Award

70 Legend Points

Notes

Rhamduc possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*. For example, Rhumdac's *gahad* is triggered by insulting his village or questioning his competence as headman. However, he has learned taunts and generalizations against orks are common in the outside world and so they never trigger such a dramatic response with him.

Welcome to Yellowspring

If an opportunity to offer a night's lodging does not come up naturally in conversation, Rhamduc simply invites

the adventurers to stay. If the adventurers seem reluctant to accept the invitation, Rhamduc trots out a clever lie to make his offer of hospitality more credible. He claims he is motivated by the thought of future profit, asking if the adventurers think that an inn might draw customers in the lowlands.

> *"I've often wondered if I might add to Yellowspring's coffers by offering shelter for coin. Not that I'd dream of charging you, of course—I desire only your opinion and a chance to discuss the matter with folk who might well stay at such a place. A headman like myself, who knows somewhat of the ways of the world, might make a profit where others cannot."*

A typical savanna village, Yellowspring contains the usual round huts and communal village green. Like many of their counterparts, the residents of Yellowspring keep their cattle and horses corralled inside the ring of huts. Though this arrangement certainly creates less-than-sanitary conditions, it is a necessary precaution against raiders. The villagers store their food in small quantities in several huts, rather than in a communal storehouse, for the same reason. Other buildings in the village include a kiln, a primitive smithy, and several storage sheds containing farming tools.

As the adventurers enter the village, any one of them who makes a successful Perception (4) Test notices an irregular circle of sharpened stakes sticking up about a foot out of the ground and pointing outward, encircling the village. The adventurers will not have seen such a stake-wall in any other village. The line of stakes breaks off in many places, and Rhamduc leads the adventurers through one of these breaks. Because the flat terrain around Yellowspring offers no cover, raiding parties usually strike at night. Darkness, of course, makes the stakes difficult to avoid. On closer inspection of the stakes, the characters notice that the points are covered with horse dung. Any character who makes a successful test using a Knowledge skill related to Healing or Folk Medicine against a difficulty number of 7 realizes that the dung is intended to infect anyone wounded by one of these stakes.

As Rhamduc escorts the adventurers into the village, the people emerge from their huts. A mixed group of dwarfs, humans, orks, and elves, the people appear curious but more reserved than Rhamduc. Unlike their leader, they will not speak to the adventurers unless spoken to. When Rhamduc bids the villagers to prepare a welcoming feast, they set willingly to work. Some of the men slaughter one of the mangier-looking horses and begin butchering it for the occasion.

At this point, the adventurers can get acquainted with Yellowspring and its residents. All the adults know of Rhamduc's plan and take care not to hint at the expected raid from Cherrypit. If an adventurer asks any adult villager about the stakes, the villager says something like:

> *"You can't be too careful, can you? We put those in a couple of years ago after some thieves tried to take our horses during the night."*

However, if an adventurer asks a child about the stakes, the child tells them about the bad people called Cherrypits who want to hurt the Yellowspringers. The children do not know why the bad people are after them. If the characters ask an adult what a Cherrypit is, the villager tells them that Cherrypit is the Name of the neighboring village. He denies any trouble between Cherrypit and Yellowspring.

If the adventurers announce any desire to visit Cherrypit, Rhamduc tries hard to dissuade them: "They're very hostile; they've killed strangers on sight. Some say Cherrypit's corrupted by Horrors; I'd not set foot there myself." If Rhamduc knows about the party's mission to Hanto, he adds, "More than likely, your employer's missing messengers stopped in Cherrypit for a rest and got slaughtered." If this statement simply makes the adventurers more determined to go to the neighboring village and they decide to go, skip to **Visiting Cherrypit**, p. 158.

If the adventurers show little interest in visiting Cherrypit, Rhamduc declares them guests of honor at a lavish feast (by village standards). The food is wholesome and tasty, the home-brewed ale rich and strong, and the company quite congenial. For every young dwarf, human, ork, or elf among the adventurers, Rhamduc commands an attractive, unattached villager of the appropriate race and gender to sit near them and engage the adventurer in conversation. One of these innocent, young villagers might develop a genuine crush on an adventurer, especially if the player character uses Flirting or Seduction skills. Rhamduc assigns older adventurers table companions with similar interests—a local fighter trading brawling stories with a warrior, a magically talented villager to chat with a sorcerer, and so on. If you wish, invent gamemaster characters specifically tailored to appeal to each player character.

As the evening draws to a close, Rhamduc informs the player characters that each of them will sleep in a specific hut on the northern side of the village as guests of various families. Rhamduc expects the Cherrypitters to attack from the north and wants his new fighters on the spot. As the player characters bed down for the night, any character who makes a successful Perception Test against his host's Social Defense may notice that the villagers seem a bit nervous. The host villagers all have a Social Defense of 5 or 6, at the gamemaster's discretion. If asked why they seem so nervous, members of the host families initially deny these feelings, but if pressed, pass it off as a normal part of life on the savanna.

If an adventurer decides to stay up all night, he must make a successful Toughness Test to do so. The Difficulty Number varies according to the character's indulgence in food and drink during the feast. A character who ate sparingly and drank no alcohol faces a Difficulty Number of 5. If he ate greedily but drank no alcohol, or consumed moderate amounts of both food and drink, the Difficulty Number rises to 9. For a heavy drinker who ate sparingly, the Difficulty Number is 12. For a character who overindulged in food and ale, the Difficulty Number is 15.

If an adventurer attempts to leave the hut during the night, the character's host family awakens and attempts to convince the adventurer to stay safe and snug indoors. If the adventurers insist on heading out regardless of all

warnings, the villagers summon Rhamduc. Rhamduc logically assumes that the seasoned heroes sensed the danger from Cherrypit and are riding out to pre-empt it and so assembles several able-bodied villagers to accompany the adventurers. This impromptu group of night riders intercepts the raiding party from Cherrypit between the two villages, and battle occurs out on the open plain. The attacking Cherrypitters fall victim to surprise, and Rhamduc immediately orders an all-out attack to press his momentary advantage.

Visiting Cherrypit

If the adventurers decide to visit Cherrypit at any point before the raid occurs, no one from Yellowspring offers to accompany them. Rhamduc gives them incorrect directions, telling them that Cherrypit is located an hour's walk to the northwest when it actually lies one hour's walk to the northeast. By following Rhamduc's false directions, the adventurers end up at a giant rock formation that is eroding from deep scratches made by a Horror's claws. If they return to Yellowspring and confront Rhamduc on his misdirection, he feigns innocence: "Northwest? I'm sure I said northeast. Everyone knows it's northeast." If Rhamduc defends his innocence within earshot of another villager who heard him give the original directions, the other villager backs up the headman's story.

If the characters do manage to stumble on Cherrypit, its headwoman, a human Named Noha, tells them to leave. If the adventurers try to explain their presence, Noha says:

> *"You come from the southwest, where Yellowspring lies. The village of Yellowspring has sworn to see every one of us dead, but we have no intention of dying to suit them. If you are kin or friends to them, then you are our enemies."*

If a player character asks Noha to explain why the Yellowspringers want to kill the people of Cherrypit, she impatiently tells them that the Yellowspringers claim valuable pasture land that has belonged to Cherrypit from time immemorial. She then commands them to leave one last time; several young men and women of Cherrypit brandish pitchforks and axes to encourage the adventurers' speedy departure. If a map of Cherrypit is needed, use the map of Yellowspring on p.156, turning it to face the appropriate direction and omitting the stakes.

Noha

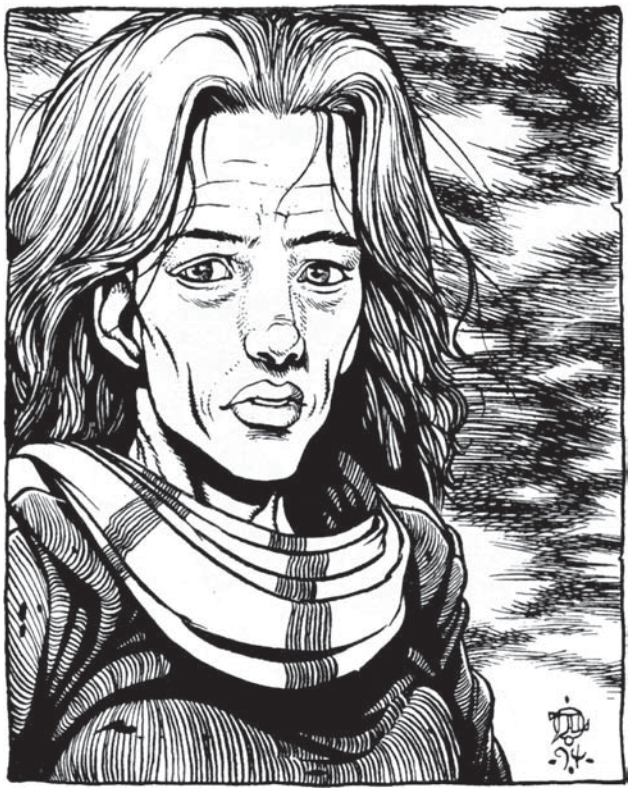
Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Strength (12): 5/D8
Toughness (11): 5/D8
Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (12): 5/D8
Charisma (15): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 2
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 32
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 24



Combat Movement: 22 **Full Movement**: 44

Skills

Artisan:
Pottery (3): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Farming (2): 8/2D6

General:
Animal Bond (4): 10/D10+D6
Animal Training (2): 8/2D6
First Impression (1): 7/D12
Hunting (1): 6/D10
Melee Weapons (1): 6/D10
Missile Weapons (1): 6/D10
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human

Equipment

Padded Cloth (Phys 2)

Short Sword (Damage 9/D8+D6; w/scabbard)
Shortbow (Damage 8/2D6; Range 30–60–120)
Quiver (w/20 shortbow arrows)

Belt Pouch
Farming Tools
Guard Dog
Pottery Tool
Peasant's Garb

Loot

5 silver pieces

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Night Attack

Any player characters who remain awake roughly four hours after sundown may hear hoof beats approaching. To hear the advancing riders, a character must make a successful Perception (5) Test. To determine how far away the riders are from Yellowspring when the character first hears them, subtract the Difficulty Number from the Perception Test result. The difference represents the number of combat rounds the characters have to prepare before the raiders arrive. Adventurers who are sleeping four hours after sundown are abruptly awakened by a crackling sound and the smell of burning straw. The raiders have reached the village's perimeter and begun torching the roofs of the huts. Fifteen raiders arrive from Cherrypit, some of whom do battle with Yellowspring defenders. You need not run the entire battle. Instead, concentrate on skirmishes involving the player characters. Assume that the villagers battle each other by posturing and parrying, doing each other no serious harm.

Each adventurer may engage a single, mounted raider, whose race is determined by the gamemaster. Approximately one-third of the raiders are dwarfs, with another third being humans. The remaining raiders are evenly elves or orks. Game statistics for raiders of each race appear below. All raiders wear padded cloth armor and all dwarf raiders carry hand-axes. The gamemaster should determine the weapons wielded by raiders of other races from those shown in the villager statistics, below; most of them have hoes or pitchforks (see **Improvised Melee Weapons** on p. 411 of the **Player's Compendium**), but some bear short swords or hand-axes. About one-third of the raiders carry slings; another third have Shortbows.

These raids are disorganized acts of vengeance rather than carefully planned military operations. The Cherrypitters want to draw a little blood, set fire to a few huts and vanish into the night. They have no stomach for a fierce battle resulting in real casualties; if any raiders die, the rest flee. If one of their number is seriously injured, the Cherrypitters immediately stop fighting, try to retrieve him and flee. As mounted fighters, the Cherrypitters can make Charging attacks and can also use Split Movement to make ride-by attacks (see **Mounted Combat** in the **Combat** chapter on p. 413 of the **Player's Compendium**). If the characters want to retrieve their mounts (if any) from the corral for this battle, they must leave the fight to do so.

VILLAGERS

Attributes

Dexterity (12): 5/D8
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (9): 4/D6
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 2
Social Defense: 6
Mystic Armor: 0
Death Rating: 34
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Combat Movement: 20 D/24 H/ 26 EO
Full Movement: 40 D/48 H/ 52 EO

D, E, H, O Dwarf, elf, human, ork Movement rates, respectively

Skills

Artisan:
Pottery (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Farming (2): 7/D12

General:
Hunting (1): 6/D10
Melee Weapons (1): 6/D10
Missile Weapons (1): 6/D10
Speak Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)

Equipment

Padded Cloth (Phys 2)

Raider Weapon (chosen by gamemaster:
one melee weapon D, one missile weapon):
Hoe (Damage 9/D8+D6; improvised weapon*)
Pitchfork (Damage 9/D8+D6; improvised weapon*)
Short Sword (Damage 10/D10+D6)
Hand-Axe D (Damage 10/D10+D6)
Shortbow (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 30–60–120)
—with Quiver (w/20 shortbow arrows)
Sling (Damage 8/2D6; Range 20–40–80)
—with Belt Pouch (w/15 sling stones)

D All dwarfs use a hand-axe as their melee weapon.
* See p. 411 of the **Player's Compendium**

Belt Pouch
Farming Tools
Peasant's Garb
Pottery Tools

Draft Horse/Pony D
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

D All dwarfs use ponies as their mounts.

Loot

D4 copper pieces

Legend Award

45 Legend Points

Notes

Dwarf villagers possess the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight. Elf and ork villagers possess the racial abilities of Low-Light Vision. Ork villagers also possess the ork racial ability of *Gahad*.

Commentary

Use these statistics for the villagers of Cherrypit and Yellowspring. Again, one third of the villagers are dwarfs,

Adventure Hook

During their journey through the never-ending prairie, the characters unknowingly walk into a field of carnivorous plants. The plants are hard to spot, and most travelers don't realize their mistake until it is too late. The characters must kill the surrounding plants before they can backtrack and find a way around the field.

Strangler vines usually thrive on insects and rodents, but these vines are large enough to capture Name-giver's. The characters may find the skeletons of last year's group inside the plants. Use the following game statistics for the strangler vines:

Strangler Vines

Strangler vines grow low to the ground, cleverly hidden between prairie grass. These plants grow a network of vines radiating out from their centers (usually 2 to 5 yards in diameter, although people claim to have seen plants measuring 10 yards or more). Strangler vines commonly grow in large fields of twenty or more plants, with narrow paths between individual vine networks. These paths often form a small labyrinth that can confuse even wary travelers.

The strangler vine roots deep into the earth, and there is a mouth-like opening at the plant's center. The mouth covers a large sac hidden beneath the earth. Strangler vines grapple their targets and draw them towards the mouth, eventually pulling them into their sac. The mouth isn't able to bite, but the poison contained in the sac paralyzes their victims until they rot to death.

Detection Difficulty: 7
Disarm Difficulty: NA
Trap Initiative: 10/D10+D6
Trigger Condition: Stepping onto a network of vines (usually 2–5 yards in diameter)

Trap Effect: The vine makes a Step 12/2D10 Grappling attack against the target. If the test succeeds, the vine plant starts pulling the target towards its center. Doing so usually takes 1–3 combat rounds, after which the target is swallowed. The poison contained in the sac is described below.

Strangler Vine Poison

Type: Paralysis **Spell Defense**: 7
Onset Time: Instant **Step Number**: 11
Duration: Effect Test hours

This poison takes effect as soon as the target breathes it. A trapped character may hold his breath for a while to avoid the poison's effect, but to do so he must know that he is trapped by a strangler vine—from previous encounters or by making a successful Botany (6) Test.

Escaping the Sac

Conscious characters who have been pulled into the sac may climb out by making a successful Climbing (5) Test. Unless the plant is dead, any character climbing out risks being grappled again.

Killing the Plant

Killing a strangler vine from within is actually quite easy, but can only be done by a conscious character inside the sac. The plant's core sits below the sac, protected by a shell resembling that of a large coconut. The shell has a Barrier Rating of 5 and the core has a Death Rating of 20 (see the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 106 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

one third are humans, and the remaining third are equally elves or orks.

Aftermath

When the Cherrypitters break off their attack and ride away into the night, the adventurers must decide what to do next. If they killed any raiders in the fight, an excited Rhamduc tries to convince them to pursue the fleeing Cherrypitters, making wild claims that Cherrypit is inhabited by insane, foul folk who ought to be destroyed. Improvise this speech so that it sounds as if Rhamduc could be making up the whole story. If the player characters agree to Rhamduc's scheme, allow them to plan their assault and have the Cherrypitters respond accordingly. If attacked on the plain, the raiders try to flee. If attacked in their village, every Cherrypitter fights to the death. If the adventurers wreak havoc in Cherrypit, Rhamduc all but dances with glee, saying:

> *"Ha! That'll teach the scurvy swine! Steal our land, will they? They'll not steal from Yellowspring again, that's for certain!"*

This little speech should tip off the player characters that they've been had. If they accuse Rhamduc of acting dishonestly, he shows no remorse and maintains that his deception was justified. If the characters become angry and

attack Rhamduc, he and his villagers defend themselves as best they can. They will most likely lose, pointlessly spilling more blood. If the characters recognize Rhamduc's game before doing serious harm to Cherrypit and demand that he explain his true motives, he claims that Cherrypit is nothing but a village of land-thieves. At this point, the adventurers can swallow their anger, leave Yellowspring and continue toward their goal, or they can try to mediate the dispute between the villages.

Negotiations

To mediate the dispute, the player characters must persuade both Rhamduc and Noha to talk to each other and then accept an agreement brokered by the group. Resolve the interactions involved in this task with roleplaying or Interaction Tests per the following instructions.

Rhamduc considers the adventurers to be the worst kind of fools; if he tricked them into attacking Cherrypit, that success merely strengthens his opinion. To talk him into negotiating, the adventurers must convince Rhamduc of their wisdom and confidence, which requires a Good result on an Interaction Test (see p. 92 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). Next, they must convince him that peace with Cherrypit would benefit Yellowspring, despite the fact that Rhamduc seems to have the upper hand in the conflict. This also requires a Good result. Finally, the adventurers must convince Rhamduc that Cherrypit will honor any commitments made during negotiations. This last achievement is a particularly tall order, and so requires an Excellent result.

Noha regards the adventurers as Hostile if she or other villagers know that they defended Yellowspring (see **Gamemaster Character Attitudes** on p. 90 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). In this case, a player character must achieve an Excellent result on a Making An Impression or First Impression Test to persuade Noha to negotiate (see p. 92 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). If the player characters helped pursue the raiders or raided Cherrypit, Noha sees them as Enemies. In this case, a player character must achieve an Extraordinary result on one of these tests. If the adventurers did not fight Cherrypitters or if Noha does not know of their involvement, she regards them as merely Unfriendly. In this case, persuading her to negotiate requires a Good result on a Charisma Test. After persuading Noha to talk with Rhamduc, the player characters must convince her that mediation is not another of Rhamduc's tricks. This achievement requires a Good result on a Charisma Test. Finally, they must convince her that Rhamduc will honor any commitments he makes. This requires an Excellent result.

If successful up to this point, the characters should propose a solution to the land dispute. Base the result level required for the gamemaster characters' agreement on the feasibility of the solution suggested, then have the principal mediator among the player characters make a Charisma Test against each leader's Social Defense. If one or the other village leader rejects the proposal, the mediator may then propose an alternate solution and make a second Charisma Test. Because Rhamduc has a higher Social Defense than Noha, he is more likely to refuse a compromise; if so, the second proposal must appear more favorable to Rhamduc than the previous one, but not so much so that Noha balks at it. If the result of the second Charisma Test is sufficiently low, the player characters may lose the agreement of both leaders.

Troubleshooting

If the player characters decide to pass Rhamduc by without stopping, let them. Such a decision proves that they are swiftly learning the realities of the lonely savanna and cannot be easily distracted from their mission. The gamemaster may want to reserve this encounter for use in a later campaign, adding a stronger hook when he runs it to make the adventurers interested in resolving the villages' feud.

The adventurers may also figure out the truth of the situation before the raid and immediately offer to mediate or simply leave. If they make either of these choices, they have avoided senseless violence through intelligent reasoning. Good for them. If it comes to a fight, the poorly armed and barely trained villagers should not pose a serious threat to the adventurers. However, feel free to let a villager get in a lucky shot or blow. After all, the savanna is a dangerous place.

Charboyya's Betrayers

In this encounter, the remnants of Charboyya's missing band of couriers assault the characters in an attempt to steal rations and equipment.

If the characters capture and question their attackers, they can learn vital information regarding the fate of Hanto.

Setting the Stage

Allow the adventurers to camp for the night. Six hours after sundown, make a Perception (8) Test for the player character standing watch. If the test succeeds, read the following aloud:

> *The silent night presses in on you like a heavy, velvet cloak. Against the blanketing darkness, the banked coals of your small fire glow feebly, allowing you to glimpse only your companions' huddled forms. You hear a soft sound somewhere in the dark beyond you, a sound that chills your blood: the whisper of a long blade being drawn from a leather scabbard.*

If the test fails, read the following aloud:

> *The silent night presses in on you like a heavy, velvet cloak. Against the blanketing darkness, the banked coals of your small fire glow feebly, allowing you to glimpse only your companions' huddled forms. Suddenly, from the corner of your eye, you see a bolt of yellow flame arc toward you. You flinch instinctively, though the bolt lands a few feet*

to your left, in the middle of your encampment. It is an arrow wrapped in a bundle of burning cloth.

The smell of singed fabric and lamp oil tickles your nose, and the night turns bright as sunrise out to a distance of fifty yards or more.

Themes and Images

This encounter contrasts the (presumably) noble player characters with individuals who once thought and acted like them, but have fallen on hard times—both materially and morally. Try to make the adventurers realize that they could end up equally desperate and violent unless they take care in their dealings.

Behind the Scenes

The surviving members of the last of Charboyya's couriers have resorted to banditry, convinced that they will not make it back to civilization without better gear and a few healing aids. A sneak attack on an adventuring party might provide exactly what they need. They fire a burning arrow into the adventurers' encampment to create enough light to see the player characters, then they fire arrows and spells at them from a safe distance.

The attackers have taken cover in a trench roughly 100 yards from the player characters' encampment and hope to avoid fighting at closer quarters. All three of the attackers are suffering from unhealed wounds taken in their escape from Hanto.

Bojazi Koofeld, First Circle Ork Archer

Attributes

Dexterity (18): 7/D12
Strength (19): 8/2D6
Toughness (17): 7/D12
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (7): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10
Initiative: 7/D12
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 2
Social Defense: 5
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 40
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11
Knockdown: 8/2D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 32

Combat Movement: 38
Full Movement: 76

Karma Points: 7
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Avoid Blow (1): 8/2D6
Direction Arrow [D] (1): 7/D12
Karma Ritual (1): 1
Missile Weapons [D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Mystic Aim [D] (1): 7/D12
True Shot (2): 9/D8+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:
Tattooing (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Cara Fahd History (1): 7/D12
Legends and Heroes (1): 7/D12

General:
Climbing (1): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Swimming (1): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Padded Cloth (Phys 2)

Broadsword (Damage 13/D12+D10; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 9–15–18)
Longbow (Damage 12/2D10; Range 60–120–240)
Quiver (w/10 longbow arrows)

Adventurer's Kit
Charboyya's Medallion
Oil Flask
Rags and Twine
Shovel
Tattooing Tools
Peasant's Garb

Loot

Gold Nose Ring (worth 15 silver pieces)

Legend Award

125 Legend Points

Notes

Bojazi possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*. She currently has 11 Damage Points and 1 Wound, and has 2 Recovery Tests left.

Damien Blacklog, First Circle Human Archer

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Toughness (10): 5/D8
Willpower (9): 4/D6
Strength (13): 6/D10
Perception (12): 5/D8
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 6
Initiative: 6/D10
Physical Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 31
Wound Threshold: 8
Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 22

Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Karma Points: 6
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Avoid Blow (1): 7/D12
Direction Arrow [D] (1): 6/D10
Karma Ritual (1): 1
Missile Weapons [D] (2): 8/2D6
Mystic Aim [D] (1): 6/D10
True Shot (2): 8/2D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:
Music (Lute) (1): 5/D8
Wood Carving (2): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Underworld Rumors (2): 7/D12

General:
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human
Streetwise (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Padded Cloth (Phys 2)

Broadsword (Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Longbow (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 60–120–240)
Quiver (w/10 longbow arrows)

Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tools
Charboyya's Medallion
Lute
Rags and Twine
Peasant's Garb

Loot

5 silver pieces

Legend Award

90 Legend Points

Notes

Damien possesses the human racial ability of Versatility. He currently has 8 Damage Points and 1 Wound, and has 1 Recovery Test left.

Aetheela Blacklog, First Circle Human Wizard

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Willpower (16): 7/D12
Strength (8): 4/D6
Perception (17): 7/D12
Charisma (8): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 5
Initiative: 5/D8
Physical Armor: 2
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 38
Wound Threshold: 10
Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 4/D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Combat Movement: 22
Full Movement: 44

Karma Points: 6
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Karma Ritual (1): 1
Read and Write Magic [D] (1): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language [D] (1): 8/2D6
—Human
Spellcasting [D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Spell Matrix (1): 1
Spell Matrix (1): 1
Thread Weaving (Wizardry) [D] (1): 8/2D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Body Painting (1): 5/D8
Robe Embroidery (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Legends and Heroes (1): 8/2D6
Magical Theory (1): 8/2D6

General:
Melee Weapons (1): 6/D10
Read and Write Language (1): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human

Equipment

Padded Cloth (Phys 2)

Short Sword (Damage 8/2D6; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 6/D10; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit
Charboyya's Medallion
Embroidery Tool
Grimoire
Painting Tool
Rags and Twine
Peasant's Garb

Spells

Astral Sense [M], Dispel Magic, Divine Aura, Flame Flash, Iron Hand, Mind Dagger [M], Wall Walker

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix.

Loot

5 silver pieces

Legend Award

110 Legend Points

Notes

Aetheela possesses the human racial ability of Versatility. She has prepared and cast Astral Sense prior to the attack, and uses it to sense the locations of the player characters to target them with her Mind Dagger spell if they approach the trench her party is hiding in. Aetheela currently has 10 Damage Points and 1 Wound, and has 2 Recovery Tests left.

Battle by Night

If the sentry heard Aetheela drawing her sword in **Setting the Stage**, he has 4 rounds to act before Bojazi fires the flaming arrow into the encampment. Once in place, the arrow illuminates the encampment and much of the surrounding landscape. Any player character remaining within 50 yards of the arrow may be targeted by the bandits without the standard penalty for actions performed in the dark.

Bojazi and Damien concentrate their fire on the two player characters closest to them, while Aetheela stands ready to whip a Mind Dagger at anyone who charges the trench. The pale moonlight gives a –1 partial Darkness modifier to all sight-based Action Tests (see p. 408 of the **Player's Compendium**). The bandits are in a trench, which provides them with a +2 partial Cover modifier to their Physical and Spell Defense (see p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**). If any player character moves toward the arrow to put out the flames, Bojazi and Damien simultaneously fire on that individual. A character or characters must pour a large quantity of sand or water on the thick, oil-soaked rags to extinguish the flame. This requires a full combat round to complete.

Because the bandits intend to steal from their opponents rather than kill them, they stop shooting at the player characters once the characters go down. The bandits only fire at characters charging them, shooting back, or running away. A clever player character might lure the bandits out of their trench by feigning death.

At the end of the third combat round, Aetheela calls out in Throalic:

> *"Throw down your weapons, put up your hands and we'll stop shooting!"*

Surrender

If the player characters surrender, Damien orders them to approach the trench one at a time. As each character reaches the trench, Damien and Aetheela tie him up with twine and gag him with moldy rags. Bojazi stands guard, ready to fire at anyone who makes a sudden move. The bandits strip each character of his gear and take the adventurers' horses (if any). The bandits head off into the night, leaving the adventurers tied up with only a day's worth of food and water. Fortunately, none of the bandits knows how to tie good knots. Any character who makes a successful Shackle Shrug (4) Test can slip his bonds after 30 minutes of patient wriggling; characters without the Shackle Shrug talent or skill can escape with a successful Dexterity (7) Test.

Just before the bandits leave, the character with the highest Perception notices that all three bandits wear medallions identical to those that Charboyya gave the adventurers. Alternatively, the bandits notice the characters' medallions, point, and snicker. Bojazi even goes so far as to spit on one of the characters. At this point have them roll Perception Tests, the character with the highest result sees their captors' own medallions as the bandits are walking away.

Fighting Back

If the adventurers fight back, they should be able to defeat the bandits. If the fight shifts to hand-to-hand

combat, the bandits' injuries slow them down considerably. If fighting outside the trench or at close quarters within it, the bandits lose the advantage conferred by their flaming arrow. In melee combat, the player characters' attacks ignore the +2 partial Cover modifier provided to the bandits by the trench (see p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**).

The bandits' reaction when the adventurers head for the trench depends on how well the fight has gone for them so far. If they took several player characters down with arrows, they fight until one of them goes down. At that point, the rest drop their weapons. If the bandits have failed so far to incapacitate any of the adventurers, they flee, hoping to escape from the adventurers under cover of darkness.

These three surviving bandits are followers by nature, forced by circumstances to take care of themselves. If questioned about their activities, they all look at the ground like scolded children and wait for someone else to answer first. Bojazi, a sullen, headstrong woman with a wild mop of reddish hair, acts as if she is the wronged party. Damien Blacklog puts on an arrogant front and smirks nervously. But for his too-sharp chin and heavy brows, he might be good-looking. His younger sister Aetheela is pretty in an inconspicuous way, but believes she is devastatingly attractive. She attempts to use her feminine wiles to make any male adventurer go easy on her, pouting when she fails to get her way.

Talking to the Bandits

To notice Charboyya's medallions in the illumination of torchlight, a player character must make a successful Perception (5) Test. If asked about them, Damien answers:

"Filthy rich merchant in Bartertown gave them to us. Said all he needed us to do was deliver letters. He never said half of us would get killed doing it. If I see him again, I'll kill him with my bare hands." At further prompting, Damien continues, "The rotten little dwarf told us to take letters to his village. He never told us to expect the Grim Legion."

If asked about the Grim Legion, Aetheela eventually says:

"Crazy folk, they are. Can't reason with them at all. Horrors, Horrors, Horrors, that's all they ever talk of. They go out looking for them, on purpose!

Daft, isn't it? They say anybody that acts against them must be foul folk. That's how they justified killing our friends."

If this is the first time the players have heard of the Grim Legion, see **On the Grim Legion**, p.148, for guidelines on providing the characters with additional information.

If the characters ask what happened in Hanto, Bojazi answers (after considerable prodding):

"We been there a day, maybe, when the Legion march in. Say they's takin' over the place. Quarantine, they say—fancy word for nobody leaving. 'Cause this girl from the village, she got funny powers nobody ever heard of, so the Grim Legion say she's Horror-tainted. Say whole village is Horror-tainted, and nobody leavin' 'cause they might spread it. Well, buunda *to that, we say. They take our armor to keep us there, but we sneak out. Try to, anyway. They shoot at us, screamin' and yellin'. Our leader, Abakule, dies so we can get free. Them crazy people hurt Lu Pi bad—she die next day."*

None of the bandits recall the Name of the magically gifted child or know anything about her powers.

If asked to explain why they have turned outlaw, an angry Bojazi says:

"How we gonna live, hah? This lousy, rotten country chew us up 'less we steal. Need better gear from somebody just to get back somewhere decent. You do any different?"

If the adventurers ask for details about the specific Grim Legion members occupying Hanto, Damien answers:

"Worst one's an obsidiman Nethermancer—Mordu, Moltii, or something like that. You can't reason with that one. One look in her eyes was enough for me; nothing but craziness there. Far as I could tell, an ork Named Kwamm was the Nethermancer's second in command. He's worse than crazy rockface, to my way of thinking. She just wants to kill Horrors; Kwamm, he's crazy for power."

If asked how the villagers reacted to the quarantine, Bojazi replies:

"Some of 'em want to fight the Legion, some say ride 'em out. Loudest mouth against the Legion's a dwarf, Emberica. Headwoman—don't remember her Name—says keep quiet and the Legion'll go away. Not so smart as she thinks, that dwarf. Think she know everything, just like any dwarf."

Once they have answered the player characters' questions, the bandits ask to be set free and promise to leave the adventurers alone. If they think the adventurers plan to kill them, they plead for their lives, promising to pay ransom when they get back to Bartertown. If forced to accompany the adventurers back to Hanto, the bandits complain bitterly, fearing that Moltaa will order them killed (and she will). In this case, the bandits spend all of their time plotting to escape and flee at the first opportunity.

Adventure Hook

Once back in Bartertown, the heroes run into Bojazi again (assuming he survived their previous encounter). The ork asks for their help, claiming he is haunted by evil spirits. The gamemaster can, if he desires to be this cruel, also have him say that the Blacklogs have been killed by the spirits in their sleep. Bojazi is restless since then, and tries to stay awake—in fact, he hasn't slept in a few days. Needless to say, Bojazi is desperate.

Investigation of the matter (by watching over Bojazi while he sleeps, for example) reveals that the spirits he talked about are actually a group of windlings using illusionism magic and other tricks to scare Bojazi to death. The windlings are vengeful relatives of Lu Pi (the group's former windling Archer), blaming Bojazi and the Blacklogs for Lu Pi's death.

The characters have to protect Bojazi and calm the windlings down, explaining why Lu Pi died. This might shift the windlings' attention to the Grim Legion, but disguising themselves as evil spirits is probably a bad prank to play on a group of adepts dedicated to rooting out and eliminating the Horrors...

If the adventurers plan on turning them over to some legitimate authority at the next village, they find this impossible—no village will take strangers as prisoners. If, however, the characters give them some supplies before sending them on their way, the gamemaster can reward such kindness later or even with an additional Legend Award at the end of the session.

Troubleshooting

Some bandits may not survive to be questioned. If you must put one gamemaster character's dialogue in another's mouth, reword it slightly to match the speaker's style of talking. If a bandit gets lucky and kills an adventurer, the gamemaster can either fudge rolls to let the character survive or allow the player to replace his dead character with a local-born equivalent once they reach Hanto.

If the adventurers end up hog-tied with only a day's worth of food and water, have a kindly hermit or some other plot device happen by and free them. He can give them a few rusty short swords, but no armor or other equipment. Also, if the characters have more than the three bandits and their mounts can reasonably carry, the gamemaster can select exactly what they leave behind near the adventurers.

Hearts of Stone

The characters arrive in Hanto and meet the Grim Legion members who control the village. From this point on, the player characters' decisions determine the sequence of encounters.

Setting the Stage

Once the characters approach the village of Hanto, read the following aloud:

On the horizon you spy yet another cluster of village huts. According to your map, this should be Hanto. Weary of the long journey, you hope against hope that you have reached your destination. As you approach, you notice that this cluster of round, brick, thatch-roofed huts is surrounded by a high corral. The wind carries a gentle jingling to your ears, and as you draw closer you see straight sapling poles strung with several strands of heavy rope. Hundreds of tiny, silver bells hang from the topmost strand.

A half-built brick structure, nearly three yards high and twice as large as any village hut, blocks the pathway into the village's central circle. Two men stand atop the structure mortaring bricks into place, one an ork and the other a human. Naked to the waist, they are sweating heavily under the relentless sun. Both wear black leather breeches, lined down each leg with silver studs.

At the foot of the structure, looking up at the workers, stands an ork in black battle armor decorated with identical silver studs. If you stare hard at the design, you see that the studs on his breastplate form stylized, grinning skulls. He unbuckles his breastplate and fans himself with it. Spying you, he meets your gazes with a cool look of challenge.

Behind him, a female troll and a male ork, dressed in less opulent versions of this ork's armor, stand ramrod straight. The hot wind is blowing toward you and carries the sickly sweet stench of rotting flesh. You suddenly realize why the two sentries stand so still and silent. They are undead.

Themes and Images

The Grim Legion's use of cadaver men to control Hanto points out the hypocrisy of this organisation. In their zeal to fight Horrors, they have come to resemble them. Show the players both sides of the Grim Legion. If the adventurers seem to approve of them, emphasize their fanaticism and ruthlessness. If the characters regard them as purely evil, play up their noble aims.

Behind the Scenes

The ork removing his breastplate is Kwamm, Swordmaster and second-in-command of this band of the Grim Legion. The workers are Second Circle Warriors, a human Named Lo-Arr Brand and an ork called Gzoog Chainbreaker (see **Cast of Characters**, p. 195, for game statistics). The cadaver ork was a visiting peddler killed while trying to escape Hanto. The cadaver troll used to be Abakule, leader of the luckless couriers. The Grim Legion's leader, Moltaa, reanimated them using the powers of her magic helmet, adding blood magic to keep them "alive" for a year and a day.

Meeting Kwamm

Unless the characters continue on past the village when Kwamm sees them, the ork straps his breastplate back on and strides over to meet them, one hand on the unusual hilt of a well-made broadsword. He warns them that the village is under quarantine and suggests they move on unless they want to remain indefinitely. Kwamm's speaking style is blunt and businesslike, concealing his violent nature under a veil of impersonal, military jargon. Miserly with his words, he does not volunteer information or engage in small talk except when doing so accomplishes some ulterior purpose. If asked the Name of the village, he replies:

"The locals call it Hanto. Move along."

If asked under whose authority the village is quarantined, he replies:

"Grim Legion. Move along."

If asked to identify himself, he says:

"Kwamm. Grim Legion."

If asked why the village is quarantined, Kwamm spits on the ground from the corner of his mouth and says:

"Horror taint."

Like most Legionnaires, Kwamm enjoys impressing other people with hints of terrors beyond mortal comprehension. If asked for more details of the Horror infesting Hanto, he claims that such details are restricted information. If asked why, he says that disclosure will set off a panic. If asked who has made these decisions, he says, "Grim Legion."

If the player characters ask him about a group of couriers from Bartertown, Kwamm's expression hardens and he asks why they want to know. The adventurers may attempt to come up with a convincing lie rather than admit their connection to the couriers. Resolve this interaction with roleplaying or by having the adventurers' spokesman make a Charisma Test against Kwamm's Social Defense. If the result indicates a successful Half-Truth or Fabrication (see the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 92 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**), Kwamm says that they were in the village when the Legion imposed the quarantine, but they refused to abide by regulations. Jerking his thumb toward the cadaver Abakule, he says:

"That's what's left of them."

The adventurers' lie may come back to haunt them; if Kwamm finds out that they misled him, he becomes Unfriendly toward them and openly doubts anything else they tell him. If the adventurers identify themselves as couriers from Charboyya, Kwamm tells them to wait and disappears into the village to confer with Moltaa. As soon as Kwamm leaves, have each of the characters make a Perception (5) Test. Any character who makes a successful test notices that the Legionnaires working on the tower have put on their armor during the adventurers' conversation with Kwamm. They join the cadaver men at the gate in the fence, blocking the adventurers' path to keep them from following Kwamm.

After five or so minutes pass, Kwamm returns. He says that he will take Charboyya's letters and deliver them to their addressees and instructs the adventurers to return the next day for any replies. If the adventurers agree to Kwamm's proposal, he stuffs the letters into his belt and waits for the adventurers to move off. When they return the next day, Kwamm informs them that the Legion cannot allow replies "for security reasons," but claims that all to whom the letters were addressed are alive and well. He then dismisses the adventurers.

Entering the Village

If the characters insist on entering the village to deliver their messages personally, Kwamm reminds them that Hanto is under quarantine and advises them that if they enter, they cannot leave until the Legion lifts the quarantine (if ever). If the characters persist after this warning, Kwamm stands aside dramatically. Just before they pass him, he holds his arm out to block their way and says, with a threatening look:

"You understand what I told you, don't you? I can't be responsible for what might happen if you try to leave."

If the characters assure him of their good faith, he continues:

"Then you won't mind leaving your armor and weapons with me as security for your good behavior. My men can deal with any raids or Horror. You risk nothing, as long as you behave."

If the characters agree to Kwamm's demands, he waits for them to toss their armor and weapons at his feet, then allows them into the village. Kwamm takes his prizes to the storage hut marked on the Hanto map. It lies within clear sight of the cadaver men, who have standing orders to attack any person attempting to enter the storage hut except for members of the Grim Legion.

Starting a Brawl

During the initial meeting at the gate, the adventurers may try to pick a fight with Kwamm or with the other four Legionnaires present. As a professional soldier, Kwamm

does not start fights unless severely provoked. The adventurers can insult Kwamm to their hearts' content; nothing affects him unless they bring up his fight with Gamuudge, the ork from Bartertown.

Mention of that fight triggers Kwamm's *gahad*, an overwhelming physical response all orks have to certain passionate impulses (see p. 49 of the **Player's Compendium**). If an ork fails to satisfy his immediate desire when in the grip of a *gahad* attack, he suffers serious physical discomfort. If struck by an attack of *gahad*, Kwamm may resist his response by making a Willpower Test against a Difficulty Number determined by the nature of the provocation. If a character refers sneeringly to the fight with Gamuudge, the Difficulty Number is 15. If a character does not mention the fight specifically, but insults Kwamm in a way that echoes Gamuudge's taunts on that occasion (see **Cast of Characters**, p. 192), the Difficulty Number is 12. If Kwamm's test fails, he must act on his desire to lash out at whoever offended him or else suffer a physical effect similar to a hangover.

At some point within the span of his *gahad* hangover, Kwamm's heart begins to pound like a jackhammer as adrenaline surges through him. Because he must compensate for the distraction of the adrenaline rush, the *gahad* reaction incurs a –1 penalty to all of Kwamm's tests for each level of difficulty to resist the temptation to strike out: Very Easy, Average, Hard, Very Hard, and Heroic. Suppressing his reaction to a direct reference to the fight with Gamuudge is Heroic, for example, and incurs a –5 penalty; resisting a verbal crack that reminds him of Gamuudge's insults is Very Hard, and incurs a –4 penalty. Each *gahad* hangover lasts roughly one hour per Difficulty Level.

Rather than resisting his *gahad* rush, Kwamm may accept his response and challenge the offending character to a duel in one hour, allowing the player character to choose the weapon. Though Kwamm would love to kill his opponent, *gahad* does not overwhelm all sense of professionalism, and so he demands that the opponents duel until one duelist either falls unconscious or surrenders. Kwamm is willing to negotiate the site for the duel and settle for a fight to first blood.

If the offending character refuses to fight, Kwamm considers his honor satisfied, and his *gahad* subsides. If the offender continues to harp on the Gamuudge incident without agreeing to the duel, Kwamm screams in rage and attacks the character, intent on fighting until his opponent either surrenders or lapses into unconsciousness (for Kwamm's game statistics, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 192). If Kwamm accidentally kills the character during this fight, he feels no remorse. Unless the offender's companions join the fray, the other Legionnaires stay out of the fight, treating it as Kwamm's personal business. In fact, they stand around and watch, enjoying the spectacle. Gzoog Chainbreaker and Sork Sorjinka (for game statistics, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 195 and p. 196, respectively) approach the other player characters and offer wagers on the outcome. Needless to say, they bet on Kwamm.

If the characters attack anyone else, even before speaking with Kwamm (as they well might when they smell the cadaver men), Kwamm immediately blows the whistle hanging from a cord around his neck to summon reinforcements (see **Reinforcements**, p. 170). Without waiting for help to arrive, Kwamm orders the cadaver men forward as Lo-Arr and Gzoog put on their armor. The player characters may slip through the fence ropes and outflank the two unarmored Legionnaires; if forced to fight without armor, Lo-Arr and Gzoog try to withdraw as soon as the reinforcements arrive.

Game statistics for the two Grim Legion cadaver men appear below. These statistics differ from those given for standard cadaver men (p. 448, **Gamemaster's Compendium**) to reflect the nature of the living beings from which these cadaver men were so recently made.

Leycur Gewgaw, Ork Cadaver Man

DEX: 4 **STR**: 7 **TOU**: 7
PER: 4 **WIL**: 5 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 1/D4–2 **Physical Defense**: 6
Number of Actions: 1 (4; see text) **Spell Defense**: 6
Attack (3): 7 **Social Defense**: 10
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 7
Claws (3): 10 **Mystic Armor**: 1

Death Rating: 40 **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 11 **Knockdown**: 7
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 20 **Full Movement**: 40

Legend Points: 165

Equipment: Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Loot: None

Commentary

Leycur Gewgaw was a traveling ork peddler who became trapped in the village when the Legion arrived. Gzoog Chainbreaker cut him down from behind when he tried to escape. Moltaa reanimated him as a cadaver man and dressed him in Legion armor to stand watch over Hanto. Leycur serves as the perfect sentry and also as an example to Hanto's residents of the high price of resistance.

Rules

Moltaa's control over Leycur prevents the cadaver ork from speaking to anyone. Although Leycur's unnatural resurrection has driven him mad, he retains enough of his

conscience that, if released from Moltaa's mystic control, he would kill himself rather than harm the people of Hanto. In his fractured mind, a blind, headlong dash toward Moltaa or Kwamm constitutes the perfect method of suicide.

Like all cadaver men, Leycur goes into a berserker rage if wounded, making 4 attacks per round until the character who wounded him is dead or until 10 combat rounds have passed. See the **Horrors** chapter on p. 448 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on cadaver men.

Abakule, Troll Cadaver Man

DEX: 4 **STR**: 8 **TOU**: 7
PER: 4 **WIL**: 6 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 1/D4–2 **Physical Defense**: 6
Number of Actions: 4 (see text) **Spell Defense**: 5
Attack (3): 7 **Social Defense**: 11
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 7
Claws (3): 11 **Mystic Armor**: 2

Death Rating: 42 **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 12 **Knockdown**: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 18 **Full Movement**: 36

Legend Points (2): 360

Equipment: Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Loot: None

Commentary

Moltaa killed Abakule, then revived the troll as a cadaver man. Abakule struggles desperately to maintain a fragment of her former personality to deprive Moltaa of total victory. Because of Abakule's fierce determination, Moltaa does not control the cadaver troll as completely as she does Gewgaw. Abakule cannot directly disobey Moltaa's wishes, but she can speak to the adventurers if none of the other Legionnaires are watching (see **Speaking With Abakule**, p. 171).

Rules

Abakule harbors so much pent-up fury that she *always* makes 4 attacks per combat round. Even if she realizes that she is tearing apart an enemy of her enemy, she lacks the self-control to stop herself from attacking.

When enraged, she almost always uses the Aggressive Attack combat option (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 403 of the **Player's Compendium**) and ignores Wound, Harried, or Knocked Down penalties.

Reinforcements

If at any point fighting breaks out between the player characters and any Legionnaires, the following reinforcements appear. For statistics and complete descriptions of these members of the Grim Legion, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 190. Several members of the Grim Legion have created a True pattern for the group and woven threads to it as well. The effects of these threads are described in **Cast of Characters**, p. 190. (For more information regarding this use of thread magic, see p. 271, **Player's Compendium**.)

Moltaa, Sixth Circle Obsidiman Nethermancer

Moltaa grew up well acquainted with the dreadful deeds of the Horrors. At an early age, she vowed to rid the world of all traces of the Horrors' corruption, a vow that led her to her present position as leader of the local Grim Legion. Unfortunately, Moltaa tends to see Horrors behind any activity she cannot explain.

Gzoog Chainbreaker, Second Circle Ork Warrior

This escaped slave joined the Grim Legion because he heard that it offered unlimited possibilities to steal without fear of repercussions. Gzoog loves to gamble and is friendly by nature, but gets straight to business when there is work to be done.

Dalya Red Roses, Fourth Circle Elf Beastmaster

Dalya joined the Grim Legion late in life and truly believes that the Legion exists only to drive the Horrors from the world. Of all the Legionnaires, Dalya is the kindest and best-intentioned.

Lo-Arr Brand, Second Circle Human Warrior

A simple country boy, Lo-Arr joined the Grim Legion to impress a former sweetheart. Kwamm has helped Lo-Arr learn the art of the warrior, so that he may better serve the Legion.

Sork Sorjinka, Fourth Circle Ork Cavalryman

Sork dedicated her life to the Grim Legion after a Horror decimated her scorcher tribe, killing all of its members except the young cavalrywoman. Sork has sworn never to drink spirits or marry until the Horrors no longer inhabit Barsaive. Of all the Legionnaires save Moltaa, Sork is the most fanatical.

Maloniel, Third Circle Elf Thief

Maloniel is the group's newest recruit. The young elf joined the Grim Legion out of a desperate need to impress others. She hasn't found the camaraderie she expected in this group, however, and has no way of knowing that the other Legionnaires view her as simply the latest in a long line of Thieves—all of who died serving under Moltaa.

Arrkhard Gahh, Second Circle Troll Sky Raider

Arrkhard joined the Grim Legion after the Passion Thystonius appeared in a vision and instructed him to do so. The Sky Raider believes devoutly in the cause and constantly seeks new conflicts and challenges to honor Thystonius.

Speaking With Abakule

If the adventurers think to speak to her, Abakule proves a source of useful information. Abakule cannot initiate contact with them, however, because Moltaa has commanded her to guard the village entrance day and night. But if Kwamm tells the characters Abakule's identity, they may wish to speak to her, because they knew of her previously. The characters may also figure out Abakule's identity themselves or ask a villager for the cadaver men's former identities.

The heat is slowly mummifying both cadaver men, leaching the moisture from their bodies. Abakule's throat is as dry as sand, which makes her speech difficult to understand. The few words she manages to speak come out in a harsh, scratchy hiss. Every ten syllables or so, her throat closes up and she must swallow hard before she can continue.

If any characters discreetly approach Abakule and speak to her, she tells them everything she knows that might bring harm to the Legion. The pain and horror of her undead existence are slowly driving her insane, and so she can only respond to direct questions.

Asking about the Grim Legion

Having carefully studied them before and after her death, Abakule knows quite a bit about the Legionnaires. If the player characters ask her opinion of particular Legionnaires, she offers the following comments, interspersed with choking coughs and gasps.

"Moltaa—crazy, crazy—made me this way! Kill her, kill her! Then kill me!"

"Kwamm—wants to run things. See it in his eyes. Wants to be king of the mountain."

"Lo-Arr, stupid young kid… seen hundreds like him. Few years from now he'll be dead or as crazy as Moltaa."

"Gzoog doesn't care—just putting in time."

"Sork-crazy like Moltaa, crazy. Horrors killed her family—she wants blood…"

"Dalya? Don't know why a nice old lady like her stays with this bunch of crazies."

"Maloniel is very young and very doomed. Reminds me of the Blacklogs and Bojazi—brains enough to become an adept, but not enough to stay alive as one."

"Arrkhard's crazy too, thinks Thystonius is with him. I saw Thystonius since I died—he's on my side."

Asking About the Couriers

Abakule gives a halting account of her couriers' botched escape from the village. Arrkhard Gahh knocked her down with a couple of well-placed sling stones, and Moltaa finished her off with a few Bone Shatter spells. If the characters tell Abakule of Lu Pi's death, the troll demands that the adventurers promise to kill Moltaa. If told about her former followers-turned-bandits, she shakes her head and apologizes:

"Had a feeling they might turn bad. Good at following orders, but… I should have chosen better."

Asking About Hanto

Abakule offers the following assessments of some of the villagers, again interspersed with choking sounds:

"Chereca's village headwoman. Thinks she'll wait them out if she cooperates. Wrong. They'll never leave. Kwamm's building a fort."

"Emberica has the right idea. Fight back."

"Aardelea? Nothing tainted about her. Strange, but not because of Horrors."

If the gamemaster feels that using Abakule in this fashion reveals too much information, he can easily cut short the conversation. Have a Legionnaire wander by and notice the adventurers, causing Abakule to clam up. Or her throat may simply stop working for a while.

Divide and Conquer

As the characters interact with the various members of the Grim Legion and talk to Abakule and the villagers, they may discover that this band of Legionnaires contains some dissension within its ranks. Moltaa feels that they should fight the Horrors by seeking them out and battling them wherever they hide. Beyond destroying the Horrors and all they represent, Moltaa has little personal ambition.

Kwamm, however, has different ideas. He joined the Grim Legion as a way to gain personal power, and his ambitions clash with Moltaa's. Kwamm wants to build a base of operations from which to battle the Horrors and sees the occupation and quarantine of Hanto as the perfect opportunity to set his plan into motion. Kwamm intends to use the finished tower as a Grim Legion fortress, which he will command. Though he has taken no action as yet, he intends to challenge Moltaa for leadership of this band of Legionnaires.

The descriptions of the various Legionnaires (**Cast of Characters**, p. 190) indicate who each would choose to side with in the event that the ranks split. The adventurers may need to take advantage of these tensions and force a split to rid Hanto of the Grim Legion. **End Games**, p. 184, provides guidelines on how the characters might do this.

Troubleshooting

To prevent the player characters from attacking the Legionnaires immediately and without provocation, use earlier encounters to establish the reality of the Legionnaires' tough reputation. Gamemasters preparing to run this adventure for a group accustomed to solving all problems through combat should emphasize the Legion's formidable strength every time any gamemaster character speaks of the Grim Legion.

If attacked immediately, the Legionnaires attempt to subdue opponents and interrogate them later. An unprovoked attack also puts the players at a significant disadvantage when attempting to deal amicably with the Legion later on in the adventure. If a player character dies in a fight with the Legionnaires, allow the player to introduce a new character from Hanto.

If the adventurers balk at entering the quarantined village, hint that Charboyya may not pay them unless they see for themselves that his family and friends are all right.

Quarantined

This section describes the village of Hanto and its residents under the Grim Legion's occupation.

Setting the Stage

When the player characters enter Hanto, read the following:

You pass through the gate in the corral, gagging slightly at the stench of the cadaverous sentries, and walk toward the village green. Momentarily forgetting the Grim Legionnaires in their midst, the people of Hanto rush out of their thatched huts and mill around you. Dwarfs, humans, orks, elves, all gather eagerly around the strangers. This odd behavior for such normally suspicious folk makes you uneasy…and you feel uneasier still at the wary, frightened glances that the villagers dart at the Legionnaires. They do not speak—you feel they dare not. They simply watch you, gather close, and smile. As you reach the edge of the fire pit in the center of the village green, a dwarf with eyes the color of blue flame looks up at you. As he spies the medallions you wear, his face lights up with a grin both joyous and fierce.

"By Thystonius, Charboyya's sent reinforcements!" he says, striding over and gripping the hand of the nearest of you in a rock-like handclasp. "Welcome to Hanto, warriors!"

Themes and Images

Play up the emotional reactions of the villagers: their fear, simmering anger, and desperate hope that the adventurers bring relief. Make the player characters sympathize with Hanto's plight by showing the brutal conditions of life under the Grim Legion's rule.

Behind the Scenes

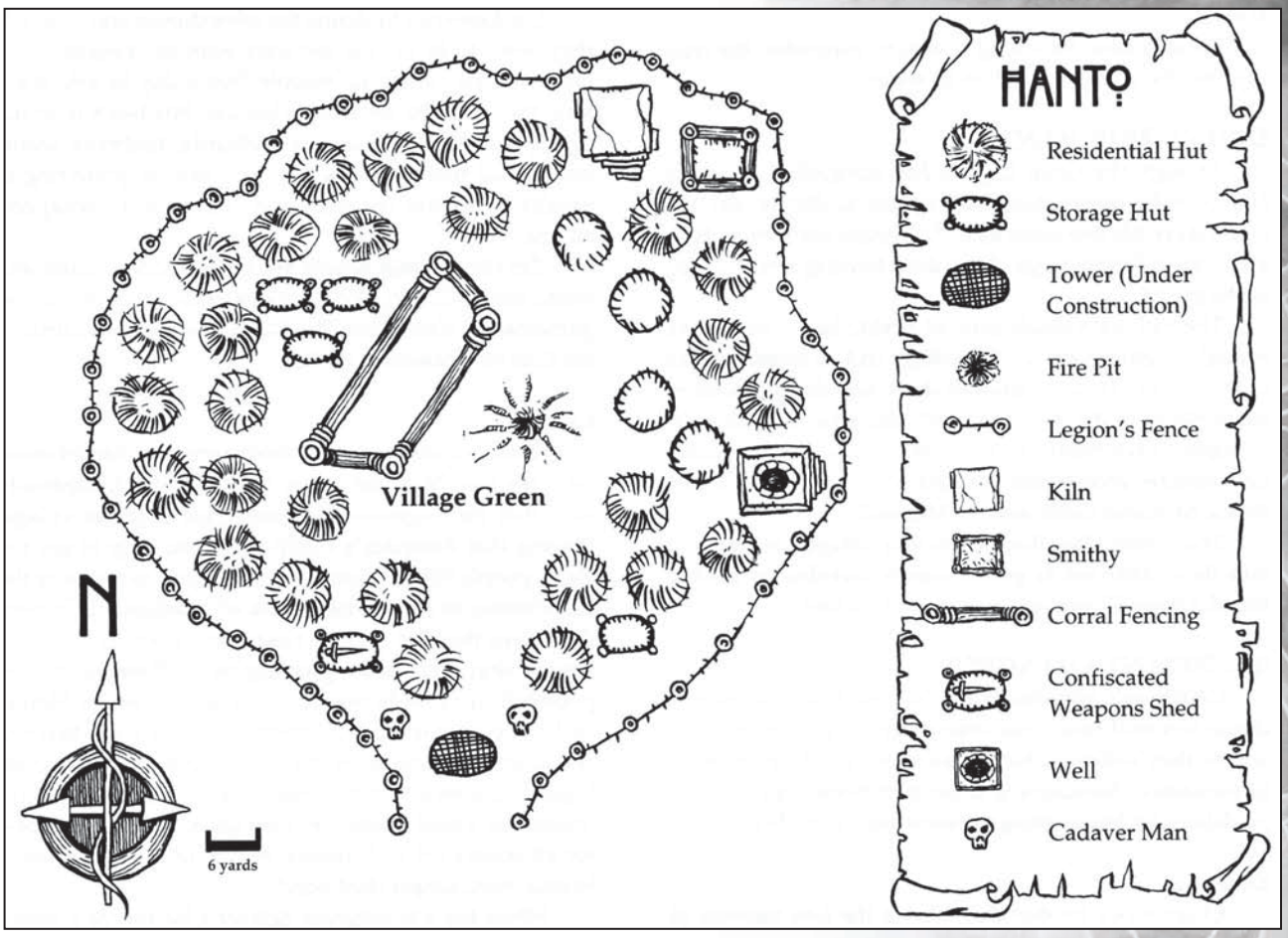
Though Hanto is just as isolated as any other lowland village in Barsaive, the villagers regard travelers somewhat less suspiciously because Charboyya has sent messengers every few months for many a year. The people of Hanto have become accustomed to the regular presence of outsiders, though they still tend to reject strangers who do not wear Charboyya's medallions.

Village Layout

Though Hanto physically resembles other savanna villages such as Yellowspring and Cherrypit (see **Friends Indeed**, p. 156), the Grim Legion has made some changes since their arrival. The following map and map key describe Hanto.

Fence

Constructed by the Grim Legion to keep the villagers within Hanto's confines, the fence is made of wooden poles with heavy rope strung in a tight pattern between



them. The Legionnaires have hung small bells along the top strand, which ring whenever anyone climbs the fence. To climb over the fence without ringing the bells, a player character must achieve an Excellent or better result with a Climbing (7) Test. All members of the Grim Legion, including the cadaver men, have standing orders from Moltaa to investigate any attempt to breach the fence.

Residential Huts

These small thatch-roofed huts of hardened mud brick are the homes of the villagers. One family usually lives in each hut, though the Grim Legion commandeered four for themselves.

Storage Hut

Slightly smaller than the residential huts, these buildings hold food, supplies, farming tools and so on. Because they contain supplies vital to the village's survival, these buildings are sturdily constructed and well protected. The Grim Legion uses one of these huts (the gamemaster determines which) to store confiscated weapons and armor.

The Legionnaires keep this building locked and have ordered their cadaver men sentries to attack anyone who goes near it.

Village Green

The village green is the central area where village gatherings take place. The green contains a large fire pit, where the villagers sometimes cook a communal meal, and a corral in which the village keeps its four goats, five cows, and four horses. The Grim Legion's mounts currently share the corral, as will the adventurers' horses (if any).

Tower

Kwamm's pet project, the 3-yard-high tower, is still under construction. Once the Legionnaires complete it, Kwamm hopes to use it and Hanto as his personal base of operations in the battle against the Horrors. For more information about Kwamm's plans, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 192.

Cadaver Men

The sentry posts of Abakule and Gewgaw, the Legion's two cadaver guards, are marked with two skulls on the map of Hanto. Game statistics for the cadaver men appear in **Hearts of Stone**, p. 169.

Kiln

The villagers use the kiln to fire the mud bricks they use to build their huts and sheds. Since beginning to build their tower, the Grim Legionnaires have forced some of the villagers to work extra hours making bricks for them. The kiln runs almost constantly these days.

Smithy

The villagers forge and repair their tools and few weapons at the smithy, which stands next to the kiln and shares its fire. One of the Grim Legion watches the smithy whenever anyone uses it to ensure that no villager forges a weapon.

Well

Located near the village's eastern perimeter, the well supplies the village with all of its water.

Daily Life in Hanto

Though the Grim Legion feel compelled to place Hanto under quarantine, they try not to disrupt the village's daily life any more than they deem necessary. They allow the villagers to go about their farming and herding under guard.

The village's small plot of arable land, just large enough to grow food for the village and its livestock, lies to the east of Hanto. A fence of short, wooden posts, most succumbing to dry rot, surrounds the area. Each day, 10 villagers leave Hanto to work the fields. Several Grim Legionnaires accompany the farmers, usually Dalya Red Roses, Arrkhard Gahh, and/or Maloniel.

The Legion also allows up to four villagers at a time to take their cattle out to graze, usually guarded by Lo-Arr Brand, Gzoog Chainbreaker, and/or Maloniel.

Important Villagers

Of Hanto's approximately 100 residents, the player characters will meet and interact mainly with those to whom they deliver Charboyya's letters. Each of these gamemaster characters is described below, along with guidelines for improvising conversations with them.

Emberica

Charboyya's brother Emberica is the first resident of Hanto to openly greet the characters. He assumed that the escaped couriers headed straight to Bartertown to inform Charboyya of the quarantine and believes that the player characters are highly skilled mercenaries sent by Charboyya to lead an armed revolt against the Legion. Although he is bitterly disappointed when he discovers that the adventurers are only a little stronger than the previous band of messengers, Emberica nevertheless urges them to help him stage a coup. The Legionnaires long ago confiscated all weapons in the village, but Emberica argues that hoes and pitchforks can do considerable damage if wielded with enough determination. If the player characters seem at all inclined to listen to him, Emberica further suggests that they help him break into the shed where the Legion has stored the villagers' weapons (see the map of Hanto on p. 173).

Emberica knows little about fighting tactics and holds the quaint belief that the villagers can defeat the Legion with sufficient righteous anger. His initial humiliation at Moltaa's hands (see **Prologue**, p. 141) only intensified his determination to drive the Legion from the village. The adventurers should deliver Emberica's letter and speak with him first, then move on to the other prominent gamemaster characters.

Use Emberica to shame the adventurers into action. If they seem to be getting too cozy with the Legionnaires, Emberica tries to stir up trouble. Every day he asks them how they plan to start the rebellion. His heart is in the right place, but his plans are foolhardy; Emberica scorns stealth and subtlety as the way of cowards, preferring to loudly curse his enemies and charge with weapons drawn.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (5): 3/D4
Charisma (5): 3/D4

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 2
Social Defense: 4
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 38
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 10
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Combat Movement: 22
Full Movement: 44

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Tailor (3): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Farming (3): 8/2D6

General:
Haggle (1): 4/D6
Hunting (2): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Missile Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Trading (1): 4/D6
Unarmed Combat (2): 8/2D6
Wilderness Survival (3): 8/2D6

Equipment

Padded Cloth (Phys 2)

Hoe (9/D8+D6; Improvised Weapon)
Sling (Damage 8/2D6; Range 20–40–80)
Belt Pouch (w/15 sling stones)

Craftsman Tools
Farming Tools
Felt Hat
Peasant's Garb

Loot

5 silver pieces

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Notes

Emberica possesses the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight.

Commentary

Known for his hot temper even as a child, Emberica had become an object of gentle mockery in the village until the Legion arrived. Some of the younger villagers have begun to rally around him, finding that for once they agree with his fury.

Chereca

Hanto's conscientious, serious-minded headwoman feels the weight of her heavy responsibilities, especially now that the Legionnaires have taken over her village. Fearing that Emberica's revolt will serve only to get too many people killed, Chereca does her best to convince the adventurers to squash this spark of rebellion. If Chereca discovers that the player characters plan to fight the Legion physically, she argues against it. Pointing out the potential division between the deranged zealot Moltaa and the power-hungry Kwamm, Chereca hints that the characters need not resort to combat to destroy the Grim Legion. Chereca secretly entertains a particularly dark thought as a final solution to their situation: it may be best for all concerned if Aardelea, source of Hanto's alleged Horror taint, simply died accidentally.

When the adventurers deliver Charboyya's letter, Chereca asks about him, interested in his well-being for old times' sake.

Attributes

Dexterity (8): 4/D6
Strength (10): 5/D8
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 5
Initiative: 4/D6
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 34
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Combat Movement: 12
Full Movement: 24

Skills

Artisan:
Singing (1): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Farming (2): 8/2D6

General:
Animal Handling (4): 10/D10+D6
Bardic Voice (4): 10/D10+D6
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)

Equipment

Belt Pouch
Farming Tools
Felt Hat
Peasant's Garb

Loot

5 silver pieces

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Notes

Chereca possesses the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight.

Commentary

Once Charboyya's childhood sweetheart, Chereca refused to leave Hanto with him. She eventually became the village's headwoman and is reasonably content with her life, but she has never entirely gotten over Charboyya. The safety and happiness of her villagers matters to Chereca more than anything; should the firebrand Emberica succeed in sparking rebellion against the Legion, Chereca would regard it as a personal failure as well as a tragedy. Preferring to wait the Legion out rather than risk her people's lives, Chereca will do almost anything in her power to keep a revolt from occurring.

Orweia

Orweia is Hanto's healing woman and the mother of Aardelea, the girl who sparked the accusations of Horror taint. Moltaa told Orweia at the outset that the Legion

intended to execute Aardelea if she turns out to be Horror-tainted, and Orweia will do anything to save her daughter. Fiercely protective of the child, Orweia grills the adventurers for their true opinion of the Legion and the quarantine before she allows them near Aardelea. To see the child, the characters must make a Persuasion Test with a Good result or better to convince Orweia that they can help. If the characters win Orweia's trust, she will give them any aid she can, even if she must endanger her fellow villagers.

If the characters do not approach Orweia about rescuing her daughter, she comes to them. She offers no plan of action, but simply wants to find out how their presence might influence her daughter's fate. If and when the characters choose to talk to Aardelea, go to **The Magical Child**, p. 177.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Willpower (15): 6/D10
Strength (7): 4/D6
Perception (15): 6/D10
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Initiative: 6/D10
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 36
Wound Threshold: 10
Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 4/D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 28

Combat Movement: 28
Full Movement: 56

Skills

Artisan:
Singing (1): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Farming (2): 8/2D6

General:
Arcane Mutterings (2): 8/2D6
Emotion Song (3): 9/D8+D6
Engaging Banter (1): 7/D12
Heartening Laugh (4): 10/D10+D6
Physician (4): 10/D10+D6
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)

Equipment

Bandanna
Belt Pouch
Farming Tools
Peasant's Garb
Sack (Large)

At Home:
3 × Healing Kits
3 × Physician Kits

Loot

5 silver pieces

Legend Award

55 Legend Points

Commentary

One of Charboyya's dearest childhood friends, Orweia delights in bringing laughter and good cheer to others. However, her lighthearted soul has grown considerably darker with the arrival of the Grim Legion. She had children late in life, and they became the most important people in her world after the death of her husband some two years ago. Fiercely protective of Aardelea, Orweia will dare anything to help her.

Laverium

Laverium plays no part in battling the Legion and lifting the quarantine; instead, she embodies the harm done to Hanto by the Legion's takeover. After the adventurers meet Laverium, either Orweia or Emberica should speak to the characters about her, blaming her mental state on the quarantine. According to them, Laverium seemed to go senile the day after Moltaa slapped Emberica across the village green.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Strength (13): 6/D10
Perception (6): 3/D4
Charisma (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 4
Social Defense: 6
Initiative: 6/D10
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 38
Wound Threshold: 10
Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Combat Movement: 22
Full Movement: 44

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Tailor (3): 9/D8+D6
Storytelling (3): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Farming (2): 5/D8
Old Wives' Tales (3): 6/D10

General:
Conversation (4): 9/D8+D6
Speak Language (1): 4/D6
—Dwarf (Throalic)

Equipment

Belt Pouch
Craftsman Tools
Farming Tools
Peasant's Garb

Loot

5 silver pieces

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Notes

Laverium possesses the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight.

Commentary

Charboyya's mother Laverium remains physically vigorous, but her once-strong mind has begun to fade. She lives in the past, in the days when Charboyya and Emberica were young, squabbling siblings.

She addresses all strangers with the Names of long-dead residents of the village, no matter how many times they correct her. She happily chats for hours with the adventurers if they sit still that long, mulling over decades-old gossip and trading stories.

Additional Villagers

If the gamemaster needs statistics for additional villagers, use those provided for the villagers in **Friends Indeed**, p.159. About one-third of the villagers back Emberica, another third support Chereca, and the remainder are undecided or don't care for either.

TROUBLESHOOTING

This encounter offers very little opportunity for the adventurers to make a wrong move. Delivery of the letters simply forces the adventurers to meet four of the five important villagers.

If they decide to attack the Legionnaires in this scenario, discourage them by constantly reminding them of the Legion's strength in subtle and not so subtle ways. If they insist on attacking anyway, let them suffer the consequences.

THE MAGICAL CHILD

In this encounter, the characters can discover the truth behind Aardelea's mysterious magical abilities. They may also learn the Legion's view of Aardelea and her powers.

SETTING THE STAGE

If the adventurers convince Orweia to bring them to Aardelea, read the following aloud:

Watching warily for Legion soldiers, you follow Orweia silently into the hut where the Legion has imprisoned her daughter. On the floor, slouched against the brick wall of the hut, sits a human girl of perhaps twelve summers, a beautiful child with dark eyes and features almost as fine as an elf's. She stares at the hut's earthen floor, scratching half-heartedly at it with a broken twig. She gives a long, bored sigh, blowing her bangs up from her forehead.

"Aardelea," says Orweia softly. The child looks up. At the sight of you, a dozen emotions flit across

her face: fear, anticipation, excitement, resentment, and a thread of wild hope. You feel sudden pity for the poor child, who has suffered too much, too young.

If the adventurers think of arranging a meeting with Aardelea on their own, but make no move to do so, read the following aloud:

A young Legionnaire, the one Named Lo-Arr Brand, approaches a hut at the edge of the village green. Orweia sits outside its door, sorting herbs, seemingly oblivious to Lo-Arr's approach. Lo-Arr speaks briefly to Orweia, who slowly raises her eyes and shoots him a blistering glare. She enters the hut, emerging seconds later with her arm around the shoulders of a beautiful, sulky looking human girl. The child looks perhaps twelve summers old, her features as fine and delicate as an elf's. She hangs back in the doorway of the hut, and you sense that her sulkiness hides fear.

Lo-Arr takes her arm, pulls her away from Orweia and leads her to the village square where Moltaa awaits. Her massive arms folded and her face impassive except for her burning eyes, Moltaa reminds you of a volcano that might erupt at any moment. You move to draw closer to the pretty, frightened child, but Gzoog Chainbreaker steps into your path. "Touched by a Horror," he says.

Themes and Images

Portray Aardelea as sympathetically as possible. Make the player characters want to help this lovely, frightened, vulnerable little girl escape the clutches of the Grim Legion.

Behind the Scenes

As described in the **Plot Synopsis** (p.142), Aardelea came to the attention of the Grim Legion when a passing Troubadour saw her perform an amazing magical feat and sold his story to Moltaa's band of Legionnaires. Immediately convinced that she had found a child capable of manipulating raw magic and therefore Horror-tainted, Moltaa led her band to Hanto and placed the village under quarantine to "keep the Horror's influence from spreading."

In truth, Aardelea owes her unusual powers not to a Horror, but to a benevolent, if unusual source of magic. A precocious child who loves to explore her surroundings, Aardelea found a small, sealed cavern on the edge of Hanto's pastureland, empty but for a few decaying relics of a forgotten age. Among these seemingly valueless artifacts was an ancient book of magical knowledge, inhabited by a spirit. The book's creators, afraid that the magical powers and learning they possessed might vanish during the Scourge, conjured this spirit and captured it in the book, commanding it to aid any who found the tome to decipher it. After centuries of solitude, during which the book fell victim to the elements and slowly rotted, the spirit became desperate to contact a living mind and reveal its treasured secrets before they all disappeared. The arrival of bright, curious Aardelea granted the spirit its dearest wish. It spoke directly to Aardelea's mind and, without her conscious knowledge, taught her to use several talents from the decaying magical tome.

Though Aardelea initially knew nothing of her new powers, the spirit instilled in her the subconscious ability to use them. When Aardelea daydreamed about what it might feel like to wield magic, a rock she was staring at slowly rose from the ground. Convinced at first that someone was playing a joke on her, Aardelea found to her delighted surprise that she could control the rock's movements. She displayed her powers for her fellow villagers, who nervously counseled her mother to forbid her to use them in front of strangers. When her small nephew fell into the well, however, Aardelea acted without thinking and lifted him out despite the presence of a visiting Troubadour.

As part of the Legion's quarantine, Moltaa subjects Aardelea to daily interrogations and experiments designed to force the Horror that supposedly possesses her to manifest itself. So far, Aardelea has kept her cavern a secret and Moltaa's persistent questioning is beginning to make Aardelea wonder if she really is possessed. She tries her best to resist Moltaa's probing and conceal her other powers, trying to drag the investigation out as long as possible. She fears that the Legion will do something terrible to her when they solve the mystery.

Talking to Aardelea

To convince Aardelea to talk to them, the adventurers must seem both trustworthy and competent. To overcome Aardelea's fear, a player character must make a Charisma (10) Test. If the test succeeds, Aardelea tells the adventurers about the cavern and the book that spoke to her mind. She can describe the cavern's location precisely; the entrance lies near a rock spire, roughly two miles northwest of Hanto. For a description of the cavern, see **Aardelea's Cavern**, p.180. Aardelea's Elsewhere Sense power allowed her to overhear Moltaa and the others discussing the best way to dispose of her if necessary. If the player characters speak to her, she repeats this overheard conversation to them, but tries not to reveal how she heard it.

Viewing Aardelea Astrally

The characters may wish to examine Aardelea from astral space to discover the nature of her powers. To do this, a character must make an Astral Sensing Test against Aardelea's Spell Defense. Aardelea's magical abilities protect her against probing and detection spells and powers; this ability manifests when Aardelea feels frightened and attempts to hide the truth about her magic. Depending on how the characters approach her and what they say to her or her mother, this ability may not appear. In this case, use the Spell Defense given in Aardelea's game statistics (see **Cast of Characters**, p.200).

If the test succeeds, the sensing character detects a pattern similar to that of an adept, but lacking the form and power of a Discipline. The pattern has a blue tint, a side effect of the spirit's power; the magical book to which the spirit was tied is entitled The *Book of Blue Spirits*. If the

character achieves an Excellent result or better, he notices that Aardelea's pattern resembles that formed by a loosely woven set of magical abilities, more closely resembling the pattern of a magical creature than an adept.

Talking with Moltaa

The characters can also learn something of Aardelea's powers by talking with Moltaa, though they cannot learn the truth this way. Moltaa is reluctant to discuss the subject because she believes that even talking about a Horror or its minions gives the evil being power. To persuade her to talk, a character must achieve a Good result or better on a Persuasion Test against Moltaa's Social Defense. If the test succeeds, Moltaa shares what little she has learned of Aardelea thus far. Moltaa cannot detect the slightest sign of a Horror's presence in Aardelea. Having tried and failed many times to view the child's pattern using her Astral Sight talent, Moltaa feels sure that the Horror possessing Aardelea is preventing her from seeing the little girl astrally, although she has no proof to support this assumption.

If the characters ask Moltaa to describe her method of examining Aardelea, Moltaa dismisses such inquiries, insisting that the characters cannot possibly understand the nuances of the Nethermancer Discipline. If the adventuring group includes a Nethermancer, Moltaa describes to that character a number of her experiments with Aardelea, none of which have yielded results. If the characters suggest that the lack of results may mean nothing exists to detect, or if they in any way imply that Moltaa's methods might be lacking, the obsidiman becomes agitated and ends the discussion (see **Pushing Too Far**, below).

If asked to describe Aardelea's powers, Moltaa confesses that she has never seen the little girl use them. She learned of one of the child's abilities from a traveling Troubadour and has no idea what other powers the girl might possess. Though Aardelea and Orweia have admitted nothing about Aardelea's powers, some of the villagers spoke of the child's powers with members of the Grim Legion. A few, gullible villagers have even begun to believe themselves that Aardelea owes her powers to a Horror.

Pushing Too Far

The characters should take care when talking with Moltaa and investigating Aardelea. Though Moltaa manages to keep her impatience hidden, her lack of progress makes her oversensitive to interference, real or perceived, from the characters. If they act skeptical or suggest that her methods are faulty, she immediately refuses to continue the conversation. If the characters wish to speak with her again or speak with Aardelea, they must wait until the next day to do so. If the characters harass Moltaa, she may place them under arrest or order the other Legionnaires to attack them. In either case, a character must achieve an Excellent or Extraordinary result on a Persuasion Test to convince Moltaa that the adventurers mean no harm.

Troubleshooting

Though the player characters should interview Aardelea at some point, try to delay that event until after they meet the Legionnaires and some of the other villagers. Such meetings will help them recognize the strength of the forces arrayed against the child. Also, these meetings should make them realize that discovering the truth of Aardelea's magical abilities is the key to saving Hanto.

If the characters attempt to contact Aardelea before they learn sufficient other information, have Orweia put them off. The characters should try to maintain as neutral an attitude as possible with regard to Moltaa and the Grim Legion. If they provoke a fight, the Legion will most likely defeat them. The characters may fail to learn about the cavern, but that knowledge is not vital to the story. The adventure can end any number of ways, and not all of the possibilities require the adventurers to discover the truth behind Aardelea's powers. Knowing that truth, however, does give the story a more satisfactory conclusion, and so you may want to nudge players toward learning more from Aardelea.

Aardelea's Cavern

This encounter describes Aardelea's hidden cavern and the book from which she gained her mysterious powers.

Setting the Stage

If and when the characters ask Aardelea to describe the cavern entrance, read the following aloud:

> *"It's on the edge of our pasture, less than an hour's walk to the northwest. You can't miss it. This big, sharp rock sticks up out of the grass, and there's a hole in the ground about fifty yards away from the rock. It looks like a smashed gopher home. But if you squeeze into it, it opens into a huge cave."*

Themes and Images

In this encounter, emphasize the sad, slow decay of once-great treasures as represented by the spirit of the magical book. As the book rots away, the spirit slowly loses its mind.

Behind the Scenes

If the adventurers try to sneak out of Hanto and find the cavern, they must pass through the fence without ringing the warning bells strung along the top. The Legionnaires are particularly vigilant during the day, and so the characters may need to come up with a diversion to escape unnoticed during the daylight hours. At night, however, light sources may give the characters away.

The characters may get permission to leave Hanto temporarily, though Moltaa grants such permission reluctantly. If they want to avoid telling Moltaa about their cavern-hunting expedition, they can ask to go out with a party of herdsmen. To achieve this, the characters must first convince Chereca that they do not intend to cause trouble or

try to make a break for it. Chereca chooses which four villagers take the livestock to graze each day.

To convince her to choose one of the player characters as part of that group, an adventurer must make a Persuasion Test with a Good or better result. Next, he must convince the Legion guards to allow him to join the herders by making a second Persuasion Test with an Excellent result or better against the highest Social Defense among the guards, +1 for each guard present beyond the first.

If a character has become Friendly with Maloniel and attempts to persuade the Thief to allow him out for the day, the required result level drops to Good. To get permission to go herding from Kwamm or Moltaa, a character must achieve an Extraordinary result on a Persuasion Test. No more than three of the characters can go herding at once, and Aardelea may not leave the village under any circumstances.

Once outside the village, the characters can ask the villagers to lead them to the site Aardelea described. When they reach the entrance, the guards who accompany the herding party will forbid the player characters to enter the cavern unless a character achieves an Excellent result or better on another Persuasion Test. If the test fails, the characters may try to subdue the guards and then enter the cavern, but this tactic puts them in serious trouble when they reenter the village. A furious Moltaa orders them placed under 24-hour guard.

Alternatively, while near the cavern a single character may attempt to sneak in unnoticed. To do this they will need a diversion and even then the Grim Legionnaires should be allowed a Perception Test with a Difficulty Number set by the gamemaster based on the quality of the diversion. This also risks the lone character becoming injured on his climb down, though such a gambit may cause the Legionnaires to allow the other characters to enter to save their friend who "accidentally" fall into the pit. Obviously, let the characters come up with such plans themselves.

A second angle the characters may try is to tell Moltaa about the cavern and ask for her help in exploring it. In this case, Moltaa, Arrkhard Gahh, and Maloniel take up to three player characters and head off to explore the cavern. Moltaa allows the characters to enter the cavern while she and her followers stand guard on the surface. Moltaa assumes that the cavern is crawling with dangerous Horrors and hopes to learn something from the anguished screams of the adventurers as the Horrors rip them to shreds.

Aardelea's Cavern

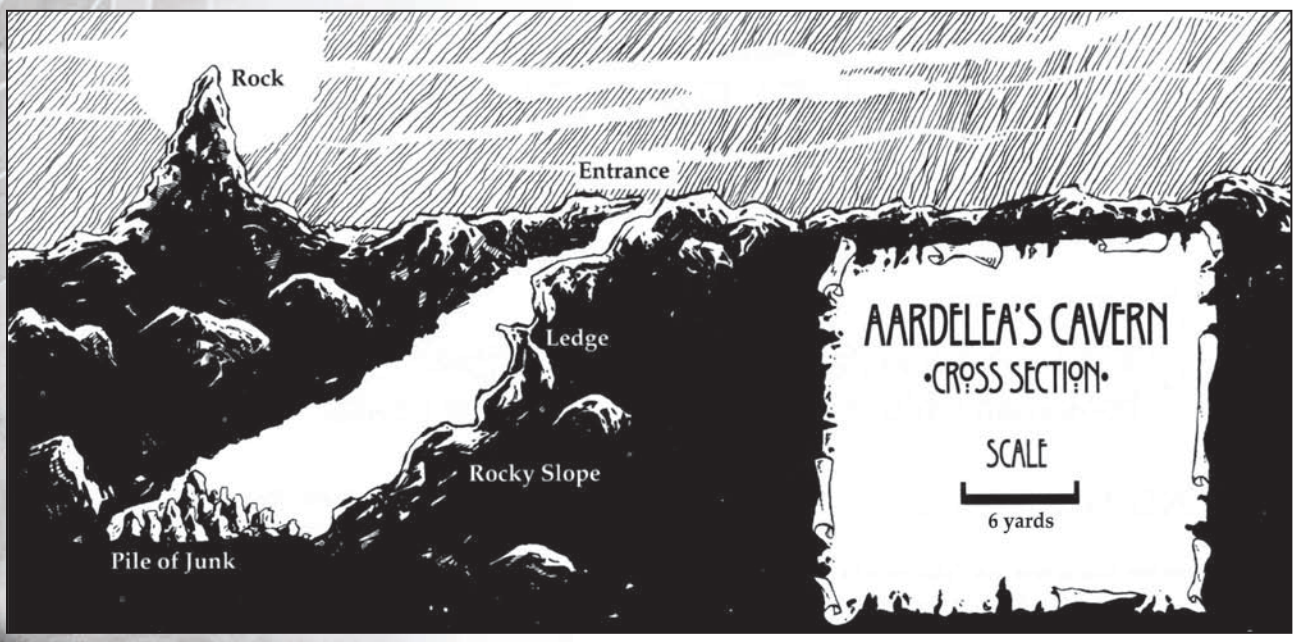
Use the cavern map and the descriptions below to describe the cavern's features when the player characters enter and explore the cave.

Entrance

The entrance to the cavern is a small, diagonal fissure in the rock covered by a thin layer of soil. Tiny Aardelea found it easy to slip through, but most adults must wriggle and struggle to make it through. Trolls and obsidimen are too large to fit into the crack; a windling can crawl right in. An ork, human, elf, dwarf, or t'skrang character must make a Climbing Test against a Difficulty Number equal to 7 plus the Initiative Penalty of any armor the character is wearing if it has been recovered (see p. 439, **Player's Compendium**). If the test fails, the character gets stuck halfway down the fissure and must unwedge himself by struggling back to the surface. This takes a number of rounds equal to the difference between the Climbing Test result and the Difficulty Number.

Ledge

The fissure ends abruptly in a 2 yard drop to a narrow ledge. To catch the ledge at the end of the drop, a character must make a Climbing Test against a Difficulty Number of 6 plus the Initiative penalty for the character's armor. If the test fails, the character misses the ledge and bounces down the cavern wall, at least as far as the rocky slope (and possibly past it). This fall inflicts Step 10/D10+D6 damage. No armor protects against this damage. To clamber down



from the ledge onto the gentle slope of the cavern floor, a character must make a Climbing (5) Test. If the test fails, the character makes an undignified slide down the cavern wall to the rocky slope, suffering Step 3/D4 damage. No armor protects against this damage.

Rocky Slope

Adventurers who climb safely off the ledge can walk down the rest of the gently inclining cavern floor to this rock-covered slope. To walk safely down the rocky part of the slope, an adventurer must make a Dexterity (6) Test. If the test fails, the character slips and bounces down the incline, smacking into small boulders and sliding over rocks. This fall inflicts Step 5/D8 damage. No armor protects against this damage.

Characters already sliding when they reach the rocky slope must make a Climbing (9) Test to keep from sliding farther and suffering additional damage.

Junk Pile

This vast heap of rotting, crumbling, ancient objects includes tapestries, carpets, books, and furniture. None of the artifacts are usable, and most are not even recognizable. When the characters reach this area of the cavern, each hears a voice inside his head. It seems to speak in the native tongue of each character, but in an unfamiliar accent, halting and disjointed:

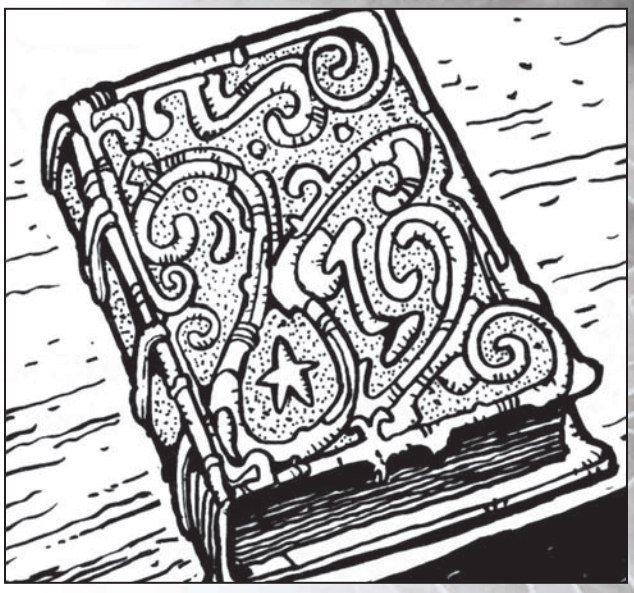
"Finally… has arrived to… myself… waiting so long! I, I… my pages, my leather… disappears… take… to your greatest… where the… knowledge for… hungry and… age!"

The rambling words are the telepathic plea of the *Book of Blue Spirits*, a tome of magical lore. Ancient sages who feared their knowledge would be lost to the ravages of time created the book, then conjured a spirit to watch over the volume, granting the spirit the ability to telepathically transmit its thoughts to others so that an adept in some distant time might perpetuate their magical knowledge. Unfortunately, slow rot set in with age, and the spirit's mind fragmented as the book's pages crumbled. It used its waning strength to reach out to Aardelea and transmit some of its contents to her. That effort, however, taxed it severely and accelerated its deterioration.

Examining the Book

The book that granted Aardelea her powers has decayed over the centuries. When Aardelea dug it up and exposed it to the air, this deterioration accelerated. Still, the characters may have a chance to examine the tome closely, either astrally or by attempting to decipher its writing, during the remaining days of the book's existence. The player characters can find the book buried in the junk pile by gauging the volume of the voice in their heads. The closer they get to the book, the clearer and louder the voice sounds. When a character finds the book, anyone touching it can communicate telepathically with its spirit.

The *Book of Blue Spirits* is a large tome, 2 feet high by 1 foot wide by 4 inches thick, bound in leather. Finely-wrought inscriptions of orichalcum similar to elven runes



grace its front cover. Not wholly elven, the runes consist of written *Sperethiel* combined with other, unrecognizable symbols. Similar runes, though much more intricate and complex, decorate the pages of the book.

Speaking with the Book

If the characters ask the book about Aardelea's strange powers, it replies:

"Yes, I gave them to… child. These powers… forgotten magic of the… My last… knowledge… rot and die. Three… Sense, Mind… Matter… already forgotten… the last. Library… please!"

The gamemaster may continue improvising the book's dialogue in this halting, word-skipping manner until the player characters figure out the secret of Aardelea's powers.

If the adventurers take the book out into the open air, it begins to crumble rapidly, turning to dust within seven days. If they take the book to Moltaa, it tries to communicate with her. She confiscates it, regarding it as an evil trick of some unknown Horror. The adventurers must convince her otherwise or persuade Aardelea to pretend that her powers have disappeared once the book crumbles to dust. For more information on these potential solutions, see **Endgames**, p. 183.

If the adventurers choose to burrow through the rest of the junk pile, the process takes one hour. After a diligent search, they may find a trap door that leads to a small, 3-foot by 2-foot space. The space contains a wooden strongbox, magically treated to resist the aging effects of time. If the characters open the box, they find inside it a sculpture wrapped in felt and fine linen. The sculpture is in the form of a common dragon, made of obsidian, 9 inches long by 5 inches high and about 3 inches thick. It weighs roughly 20 pounds and is in excellent condition. Light refracts off its curves and indentations in many different colors.

The sculpture has no magical powers, but does have an astral aura. To astrally examine the sculpture or its box, a character must make a successful Astral Sensing Test against the sculpture's or strongbox's Spell Defense of 12.

Examining the Writing

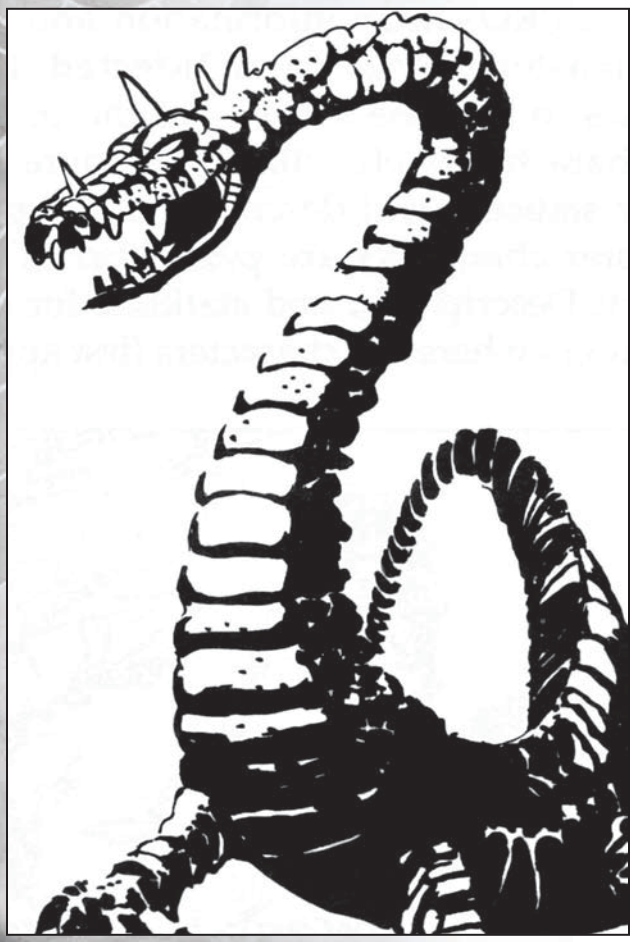
Any player character with the Read and Write Language (*Sperethiel*) talent or skill or an appropriate Knowledge skill can attempt to decipher the book's runes by making a test against a Difficulty Number of 21. Appropriate Knowledge skills include Ancient Languages, Ancient History, or Dragon Lore. The information learned depends on the result level that the character achieves on the test. Any result level above Average means the character also learns the information available at lower result levels.

Average: An Average result indicates that the runes are a combination of written *Sperethiel* and some other, unidentifiable script. The character can make no distinction between the runes on the book's cover and those on its pages.

Good: On a Good result, the character can translate some of the writing on the cover into the words, "Book," "Blue," and "Spirits." The character can also tell that the contents are formulas and rituals similar to those found in contemporary grimoires, but far more complex.

Excellent: On an Excellent result, the character recognizes the *Sperethiel* runes as an ancient form of the written language, believed to have died out in Barsaive. He also notices that the unknown script resembles ancient hieroglyphs used to indicate dragons.

Extraordinary: On an Extraordinary result, the character finds and can read the three pages of text that describe the powers Aardelea has demonstrated. The character's rough translation, however, does not extend to information regarding how to use or teach the use of these abilities. Among the non-elven symbols, the character can recognize several that represent dragons and dragon magic.



Astral Examination

The *Book of Blue Spirits* has a Spell Defense of 21. A result of 7 or higher on an Astral Sensing Test indicates a magical presence within the book, but a character must achieve a result equal to or greater than the book's Spell Defense to learn anything useful.

The gamemaster may read aloud or paraphrase the following to any player whose character succeeds at an appropriate talent or magic test:

> *"As you gaze at the pattern of this book, the supposed source of Aardelea's mysterious powers, you slowly begin to sense that it is gazing back at you. After several minutes, you can see a faint, blue light shining around the book.*
>
> *"As you watch, the formless light begins to take the shape of a small dragon roughly seven feet in length. It gazes back at you, settles into a sitting position and seems to fall asleep. Slowly, the sleeping light-dragon dissipates, first into formless blue light and then into darkness."*

The dragon-shape's sitting position matches that of the hidden dragon sculpture (see below). Any player character who sees the above-described blue light and finds the sculpture may make a Perception (7) Test; if successful, the character notices that the positions are the same. Additional tests, however, shed no further light on the subject.

For more information, see **The Book of Blue Spirits** in **Loose Ends** on p. 189.

Examining the Dragon Sculpture

If the player characters find the dragon sculpture, they may choose to study it, but can learn little more about it than they can guess from its appearance. The sculpture has a Spell Defense of 12, and characters passing an Astral Sensing Test against that Spell Defense discover that the sculpture has a magical aura, but learn nothing more.

If the characters find both the *Book of Blue Spirits* and the dragon sculpture, make it clear that the book's astral presence shows some sort of connection between it, the sculpture, and common dragons.

If a character with an Artisan skill in Stone Carving or Sculpture attempts to examine the statue, he must make the appropriate test against a Difficulty Number of 13. An Average result indicates that the sculpture is made of exquisitely carved obsidian. On an Excellent result , a player character notices that the cunning detail owes its beauty and fineness to magic as well as to skilled fingers. The character also notices that the obsidian has an unnaturally brilliant sheen that may result from enchantment.

The strongbox that holds the sculpture is enchanted to resist the effects of age and decay. The box has a Spell Defense of 12. Its lock is broken, but otherwise the box is in excellent condition.

Troubleshooting

Because the adventurers need not find the book to solve the adventure's central problem, they can skip this encounter. In this event, the book's secrets and its impact on future adventures becomes much less significant (see **Loose Ends**, p. 189).

If the adventurers end up battling Legionnaires on the way to or from the cavern, Moltaa's forces fight to the death. As always, let the adventurers meet disaster if they act rashly, but allow them to succeed if they come up with a clever plan not anticipated in the adventure as written.

Endgames

This section offers suggestions for various ways the characters may successfully conclude this adventure.

Behind the Scenes

Whatever course of action the players take, keep them challenged. Throw all kinds of obstacles in their way, whether they are fighting this last battle with words or swords. The following text describes several ways you can use the information and situations from previous encounters to respond to any additional ideas the players may have.

Convincing Moltaa

The player characters may try to convince Moltaa that Aardelea's powers do not come from a Horror. Unfortunately, Moltaa cannot consider the subject rationally and is not persuaded easily. The characters must produce a very convincing alternative explanation for her odd powers to persuade Moltaa that Aardelea is not Horror-tainted.

The success of such a scheme depends on the nature of the explanation. Although Moltaa treads close to the border of insanity, she is not stupid. Therefore, she and her Legionnaires carefully scrutinize any evidence of other explanations that the player characters offer. If you consider their explanation or trick implausible, allow the adventurers to fail.

If the characters find the true explanation of Aardelea's powers by learning about the cavern and encountering the mysterious book (see **Aardelea's Cavern**, p. 179), they may bring the book to Moltaa and try to convince her that the book is neither a Horror nor the property of a Horror. If they want to keep it and sell it rather than allow Moltaa to destroy it or allow it to disintegrate, their arguments must carry conviction of heroic proportions. Resolve these debates with roleplaying or have the player character with the highest Charisma make a Charisma Test against Moltaa's Social Defense.

If the player characters cannot save the book from destruction, they may seize the opportunity to persuade Aardelea to pretend that her powers disappeared with the book. At least one of the characters may know how it feels to lose talents or spells and so can coach the girl in appropriate histrionics. The characters must make appropriate tests to convince Aardelea to play along. Require some sort of test to determine Moltaa's reaction as well.

If the players manage to pull off either the hoax or persuasion too easily, have Kwamm refuse to accept any of the player character's arguments. Kwamm has a secret agenda; he wants to remain in Hanto, finish building his fortress and make his bid for power. To defeat Kwamm in this situation, the player characters must discredit him in Moltaa's eyes.

Breaking Out

The adventurers may also try to escape with Aardelea and/or Charboyya's relatives to Bartertown. If so, the characters face an uphill battle persuading Orweia and Aardelea to go along with this desperate plan. Orweia fears for her daughter's safety on the dangerous trek back to Bartertown, possibly made even more hazardous by Legion pursuit. As for Aardelea, the thought of leaving Hanto terrifies her; village life is all she knows, and she will not relish the prospect of a whole new life in a large city under the protection of a dwarf merchant who left Hanto before she was born.

The characters might choose to kidnap Aardelea in an effort to rescue her from death at the Legion's hands. In this case, they must devise a way to keep her from crying out when they snatch her, or her screams will alert the Legion to the attempted escape.

To succeed at any escape attempt, the adventurers must get through the fence without ringing the bells and alerting the Legion. As was proved by the previous couriers, the Legion deals harshly with those bold enough to try to leave. Moltaa suffers no qualms about killing escapees, nor about killing the "Horror-tainted" child. If a botched escape attempt provokes a Legion attack, Moltaa concentrates her Bone Shatter spells on Aardelea in an attempt to prevent the Horror supposedly possessing her from reaching other areas. If the Legion kills Aardelea in this way, that act ends the quarantine.

If the adventurers and accompanying villagers manage to make a clean getaway, the Legion tracks them down. Stage a few confrontations between the Legion and the adventurers on the road to Bartertown, keeping in mind that Moltaa is an expert in the art of the lightning raid. Review the character's plans to protect themselves on the road, and take into account the talents and spells available to the opposition. Make the pursuers as tough as possible, but allow the player characters the benefit of the doubt if they come up with particularly clever ways of avoiding trouble. Evasion offers a better solution than taking on the Legion in a frontal assault, because it allows the adventurers to avoid a pitched battle.

Rebellion

If the characters follow Emberica's advice and attempt to stage a revolt against the Legion, make them work hard for victory. The recommended power levels of the Legionnaires and the characters for this adventure make winning an open war against the Legion extraordinarily difficult. Stealth and trickery combined with an airtight plan might pay off on a long shot, but the player characters should fare just as poorly as the first band of couriers in a head-on assault, even with rebellious villagers to assist them.

The gamemaster should play the various talents and spells of the Legion to the hilt. They are not pushovers, and they fight to the death.

Division in the Ranks

Perceptive characters may notice a potential rift between the pragmatic, ambitious Kwamm and the fanatical, mystical Moltaa (see **Hearts of Stone**, p.172, and the descriptions of Moltaa and Kwamm in **Cast of Characters**, p.190 and p.192, respectively). If the player characters choose to solve Hanto's problem through psychological warfare, they can escalate tensions between Kwamm and Moltaa until the Legion splits into two warring factions. The player characters emerge at the end of the fighting to subdue the wounded victors, of course.

The players must determine exactly how their characters intend to go about fostering dissent, playing on the weaknesses of both gamemaster characters. Kwamm wants power and respect; characters who dangle those rewards in front of him might goad him into trying to depose Moltaa prematurely. For her part, Moltaa might believe (or be made to believe) that Kwamm's open rebellion proves that he is Horror-tainted.

As with any solution, make the players work for it. Add small victory to small victory (with the occasional setback for spice), using each success or failure to build to a dramatic, final confrontation between Moltaa and Kwamm.

Effect on the Legion Pattern

If the Grim Legion splits, the threads woven to each member's abilities through the group's True pattern no longer function. Because these threads improve the abilities of many of the higher-Circle Legionnaires, loss of the threads causes these enhanced abilities to revert back to normal ranks. Specific enhancements affected by this change appear in each Grim Legionnaire's description in **Cast of Characters**, beginning on p.190.

For complete rules regarding this form of thread magic, see p.271 of the **Player's Compendium**.

Killing Aardelea

The player characters may choose the grimmest option and break the quarantine by killing Aardelea themselves. Though such a choice may appear tactically successful, it represents a failure in terms of the larger game. Immediate consequences are few; any villager seeing a murder attempt in progress immediately and willingly risks his own life to prevent it, and Kwamm might become sufficiently upset at the loss of his chance to build a fortress that he may either try to stop the player characters or at least punish them severely after the fact. Moltaa may grumble about vigilante justice, but refuses to punish the adventurers for ridding Barsaive of a clear threat.

In addition, attempts to fake Aardelea's death should be very difficult as the Grim Legion's members are very familiar with both death and the undead. Moltaa's training, and specifically her Experience Death spell, further diminishes the chances of such a ploy working. The characters will quickly find themselves suspect if such an attempt fails.

In the long term, however, killing Aardelea turns the heroes into villains. They lose all hope of payment from Charboyya; any message to him from a villager contains

an account of the adventurers' foul deed, which enrages Charboyya. In fact, he may hire a third party of adventurers to track these characters down and exact vengeance for the murder of his close friend's child.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Creative players may come up with other strategies to resolve the adventure's central problem. If a solution is clever and makes sense, go with it. If things turn out so well for them that the story loses its suspense, throw an obstacle in their path just to keep things interesting.

Keep in mind that the characters must resolve the situation in Hanto on their own. How they manage this is less important than the fact that they have done it independently.

LOOSE ENDS

This section provides guidelines for resolving the adventure's loose ends and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Infected** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns.

AFTER THE ADVENTURE

Because the characters can resolve the crisis in Hanto in many ways (or fail in as many ways), this story offers several possible outcomes. Most of these possibilities, however, fall into one of two categories: the characters break the quarantine while doing little harm to Hanto, or they break it in a manner that brings disaster to the village. As the player characters leave Hanto, end the story by reading one of the following paragraphs aloud.

If the adventurers break the Legion quarantine with few negative consequences to the villagers, read the following:

> *The entire village turns out to see you off, waving, cheering, and bestowing modest gifts upon you. As you ride out of Hanto, you see several stalwart young men and women tearing down the Grim Legion's hated fence. They wave as you pass, joyfully shouting your Names and adding extravagant titles. At least in the tiny village of Hanto, you become legends and tales of your good deeds are sung around the evening fires for generations to come.*

If the adventure has ended in disaster for Hanto, read the following:

> *You amble across the grassland, unable to resist the temptation to look back. Hanto recedes in the distance. If only it could vanish from your memories as easily as it does from sight. The past few days have taught you a bitter lesson. Unless you learn from your mistake, you will never truly become heroes.*

Homeward Bound

If the adventurers escaped from Hanto with Aardelea and/or other villagers in tow, the story is only half over. The real action occurs during the flight back to Bartertown. Try setting up a climactic final dash for Charboyya's trading house with the Legion in hot pursuit or some equally suspenseful, final encounter. Except for the exciting ending, get the return journey over with quickly so that it does not seem anticlimactic. If the player characters seem determined to go looking for trouble, however, feel free to invent some.

You might also consider tying up loose ends from earlier road encounters. The Blacklogs and Bojazi Kofeeld might turn up again; perhaps they pass the characters on the road, having struck it rich attacking some unfortunate merchant party. Or the characters may pass a village where they discover the three bandits chained to stakes, working as forced labor.

If the characters return to Cherrypit or Yellowspring, they find the villages as they left them: either locked in pointless feuding or thankful for the new friendship and harmony that the player characters helped foster.

Charboyya's Reward

If the adventurers helped save Charboyya's friends and kin from the ravages of the Grim Legion, the grateful merchant pays them handsomely. If any villagers died in the process, however, Charboyya may withhold all or some of the adventurers' promised pay, depending on how many were killed by their actions. If pleased with them, Charboyya may recommend their services to other Bartertown merchants, providing hooks for future adventures (see **Campaign Ideas**, below).

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

The following section provides guidelines for awarding Legend points to the player characters. As recommended in the **Introduction** on p. 6, the gamemaster should award Legend Points at the end of each game session as well as at the end of the adventure. The following guidelines for Legend Awards suggest the points to be awarded for each task accomplished or goal reached in a game session.

Game Sessions

Infected is intended to be played over the course of at least two game sessions. Use the following suggestions to organize your game sessions.

The two suggested game sessions outlined below each include certain encounters; if the gamemaster has organized the encounters differently in his game sessions, he should award Legend Points as appropriate.

Session One

In the first game session, Charboyya hires the characters to travel to Hanto. After determining their employer's honesty and equipping themselves for the trip, they head out. During their journey through the lowland wilderness, they encounter a number of small villages, eventually meeting Rhamduc, who leads them to his village of Yellowspring.

The characters deal with the feud between Yellowspring and the neighboring village of Cherrypit; they continue on their way, only to fall afoul of an ambush by Charboyya's missing couriers-turned-bandits.

This session includes the encounters **Charboyya's Heroes** (p. 143), **The Road to Hanto** (p. 152), **Friends Indeed** (p. 155), and **Charboyya's Betrayers** (p. 161). Agreeing to work for Charboyya is the session goal. On the way to Hanto, the characters become involved in the other conflicts described above.

Session Two

In this session, the characters arrive at Hanto and find it under a quarantine imposed by the Grim Legion. They meet the villagers, attempt to discover the truth about the child Aardelea and her powers and (one way or another) try to lift the Legion's quarantine.

This session includes the encounters **Hearts of Stone** (p. 167), **Quarantined** (p. 172), **The Magical Child** (p. 177), **Aardelea's Cavern** (p. 179), and **Endgames** (p. 183). The adventure goal for **Infected** is to break the quarantine at Hanto, by persuasion or force.

Legend Awards

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, each game session in **Infected** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. The potential number of Legend Awards each character may earn in each game session should take the following elements into account: completing the game session's goal (1 Legend Award), defeating creatures and opponents (award the number of Legend Points listed with each creature or gamemaster character), individual deeds and roleplaying (1-2 Legend Awards), and acquiring magi-

Adventure Hook

Within Aardelea's cave, the characters find a large and beautiful fur coat. The coat seems to be magical, but whatever the nature of its magic, the coat lies dormant. The characters will need to research the background of the coat to unleash its magical powers.

One night, a few weeks later, while resting on the plains on their way back, the characters wake up, disturbed by the sound of horses. They find themselves surrounded by a tribe of orks, dangerously looking like scorchers! While intimidating, the orks aren't really hostile. On further inspection, the orks actually seem to belong to different tribes, carefully eying the characters and each other. The orks declare whoever is wearing the fur coat as their new leader. They expect their leader to lead them to his hoard. However, if the orks feel that they are being played for dumb, or that the new leader isn't worth his salt, one of them will challenge the leader in an attempt to take his position.

Why does all this happen? The fur coat was the coat of the tribe chief who used the cave as his hoard. He had a spirit bound to the coat, which would lead his descendants to the hoard after the Scourge ended. The spirit has now woken from its centuries-long slumber. Once out in the open, the spirit called out to find the chief's descendants, and led them to the characters.

cal treasure (as listed with the magical treasure).

A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a First Circle character receives from 25 to 75 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of 2–5 Legend Awards per game session.

In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal.

Campaign Ideas

Published **Earthdawn** adventures are designed to fit into an existing campaign with little or no extra work on the part of the gamemaster. Adventures do not exist by themselves if run in a campaign. The world of **Earthdawn** is dynamic and changes over time. For example, when using the events from this adventure to change the overall course of a campaign, the players can watch the changes as they happen and play an active role in it. This adds a sense of reality vital to good roleplaying. No matter how you use this adventure, it is likely to make your **Earthdawn** game more interesting; whether you use it as written or only by drawing on the ideas and information given in this book to enhance your own stories. Many of the situations and gamemaster characters presented in this book provide hooks for further stories, and can be used to supplement a longer campaign. Feel free to use them in your ongoing **Earthdawn** campaign in whatever ways you see fit, and find some additional advice below.

The Grim Legion

The members of the Grim Legion who appear in this adventure provide ideal material for sequels. They are sufficiently powerful that player characters cannot easily destroy them. If interactions between the player characters and Legionnaires become particularly intense, you may want to bring these gamemaster characters back into the adventurers' lives after a suitable interval.

If Kwamm survives the quarantine of Hanto, he continues his empire-building attempts. The next time the player characters travel through the lowlands, they may find Kwamm acting independently of Moltaa, commanding a fort and garrison of Legionnaires. Kwamm can turn up several times over the course of a long-term campaign, each time with greater political and military power.

Moltaa can also appear again, with or without Kwamm. If she came off as completely evil in this adventure, try having her save the adventurers' bacon when they face certain death at the hands of a ravening pack of Horrors. Moltaa and her Legionnaires might also become the adventurers' rivals during a kaer-exploring adventure, competing to clear the kaer of Horrors and take the loot.

In another interesting twist, Moltaa or Kwamm might offer the adventurers membership in the Grim Legion the next time their paths cross, saying something like, "You fought against us, but we admired your skill. Perhaps we can teach you to appreciate the ways of the Horror Slayers." Either of these two Grim Legionnaires can provide an adventure hook by revealing to the adventurers the location of a den of Horrors that the Legion cannot fit into its schedule or cannot exterminate by itself.

If the characters defeated the Legion in a pitched battle sometime during the adventure, surviving Legion members might return to seek vengeance. Fanatics such as Sork Sorjinka and Arrkhard Gahh are particularly likely to hunt down their newly made enemies.

Other Grim Legion Groups

Many Grim Legion groups patrol the lands of Barsaive, and not all of them are as fanatical as Moltaa's band. The characters might encounter a group of Legionnaires in virtually any situation involving a known Horror. The characters may choose to form their own Grim Legion group, formally dedicating themselves to fighting the Horrors and ending the spread of their corruption.

The characters might also decide to form an independent group whose precepts more closely match the ideals of the Grim Legion's forerunner, the Proud Legion. For

more information about the Grim Legion and its history, see **Charboyya's Heroes**, p. 148.

Charboyya

The gamemaster can easily link events in **Infected** to future adventures by having Charboyya recommend the characters to other prospective employers. If the adventurers succeeded in releasing Hanto from the Grim Legion's quarantine, Charboyya pays them well and sings their praises to everyone he knows. He may even embellish the characters' abilities out of sheer enthusiasm.

The characters should rarely (if ever) lack work if they do well in this adventure. Indeed, they may be forced to choose among too many jobs.

Aardelea

As mentioned in the **Introduction** chapter on p. 11, the events outlined in **Infected** take place before the start of the official **Earthdawn** timeline. The story behind Aardelea and the source of her powers led up to the current conflict between Barsive's dragons and the Theran Empire (see **The Dragons Intervene** in the **How it Came to Pass** chapter on p. 32 of the **Player's Compendium**).

While the following summary—**The Dragon's Daughter**, below—provides an outline of what happened, gamemasters interested in running these events can find them in **Prelude to War** (now out-of-print, but available in eBook format from our website at *http://www.earthdawn.com*).

The Dragon's Daughter

The roots of this tale go back all the way to the Age of Dragons, the ancient era during which dragons ruled all other Name-givers. Dragons weren't much more numerous then than they are in present-day Barsaive, however, and so they needed servitors to administer their rule. They chose particular Name-givers for this task. These exalted administrators were to carry out the dragons' decrees and instructions even when the inevitable waning of the magic cycle forced the dragons—as highly magical creatures—into hibernation.

During the prehistoric beginnings of the current Age of Legend, however, the dragons awoke to an infuriating discovery: their trusted administrators had taken advantage of the dragons' long dormancy to usurp the dragons' rightful power. Even worse, the dragons could not destroy the upstarts outright because the rebellious servants had become too powerful—even a dragon thinks twice about fighting an entire army by itself. But great dragons think in the long term. Though defeated for the present, they knew one day they would regain their ancient dominion over the world. To reclaim their rightful place, they needed new servitors. They decided to create a new race of beings that they could trust implicitly.

Using dragon magic, they created drakes: humanoids with dragon blood and characteristics (see p. 404 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information on drakes). The drakes could not repeat the treachery of the dragons' first servants, because their dragon blood would force them into hibernation along with their masters when the magical energies of the world once again waned.

Despite the great dragons' magical knowledge, they were unable to create intelligent beings capable of reproduction. Each new drake had to be magically formed from expensive materials and subjected to elaborate, time-consuming rituals (collectively known as the Dance of Blue Spirits) to imbue it with a Name and True pattern so that it might lead an independent, sentient life.

The drakes made excellent attendants and spies, but the dragons could not create enough of them to restore dragon rule. For their part, the drakes felt incomplete, saddended that they could not have children. (The ability to give a Name to one's child is, after all, the mark of the true Name-giver.)

Early in the process of creating the first drakes, a dragon Named Yuichotol sought to preserve the methods of drake creation for posterity by performing a variation on the Dance of Blue Spirits. Instead of binding a drake spirit into a drake body, she placed it within a book. The book was called, appropriately enough, the *Book of Blue Spirits*. If some disaster befell the dragons of Barsaive, dragons elsewhere could draw on the knowledge of the spirit-book and recover the techniques of drake manufacture. During the abortive war waged by the Therans against the dragons in the years immediately preceding the Scourge (see **Thera and the Dragons** on p. 26 of the **Player's Compendium**), Yuichotol was slain and her lair looted by Theran adepts.

Icewing's drakes—Rathann, Arondry, and Tellanion (see pp. 405–408 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**)—intercepted one of the victorious Theran war parties, however, and recovered the *Book of Blue Spirits*. The drakes took the book to Icewing's lair mere days before Icewing learned that he was next on the list of Theran targets. He quickly relocated his lair, but one of his drakes failed to retrieve the book and a pattern item of Icewing's—a small dragon statue carved from obsidian.

Theran agents recovered the book and statue and placed the items on a caravan for eventual shipment to Thera. The caravan was raided by ork scorchers, however, and one of them hid the two items in a cave outside what is now the village of Hanto. The ork was killed before he could retrieve his booty, and the items languished in the cave until Aardelea found them. By the time Aardelea found the book, it was rapidly deteriorating. Its captive drake spirit, anxious to preserve itself and its knowledge, wove a thread to the young girl's True pattern. Since then, Aardelea's spirit and that of the drake have begun to merge.

Icewing learned of Hanto and Aardelea when his pattern item was returned to him, and he promptly sent agents to Hanto to investigate the situation. From their reports, Icewing realized that Aardelea was turning into a human/drake hybrid. Immediately Icewing realized that the girl might be the key to a new, self-sustaining breed of drakes.

Through messengers, Icewing told the other great dragons of Barsaive—Mountainshadow, Alamaise, Earthroot, Aban, Vasdenjas and Usun (see pp. 424–433 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**)—of his dramatic discovery. However, the dragons could not agree on a course of action. Icewing wanted to study Aardelea from afar,

without telling her what was happening to her. Mountainshadow wished to immediately recruit her and install her in his lair. Over Mountainshadow's objections, the other dragons deferred to Icewing, who had the closest relationship to these events.

Unsatisfied by this decision, Mountainshadow decided to act on his own. He contacted high officials in the Great Library of Throal, notably Merrox, the Master of the Hall of Records. Under commission from Mountainshadow, Merrox sent an undercover research team to Hanto to study Aardelea. Mountainshadow hoped that the team would quickly learn whatever it was that Icewing wanted to know so that the girl could then be taken to safety. As it turned out, Mountainshadow's actions had the opposite effect when a corrupt archivist Named Par Darkwood insinuated himself onto the team, stole the reports and sold them to the Therans. Merrox contacted Mountainshadow as soon as he discovered the theft. Through intermediaries, the two of them cooked up a plan to use a team of adepts, aided by Mountainshadow's drake Rosper, to track down Darkwood and replace the reports with false ones. The plan succeeded, and the false plans found their way to Hefera, a sinister protegé of the Theran First Governor.

Hefera headed a secretive branch of Thera's magical research organization, devoted to studying the weaknesses of the great dragons. (Centuries after their ill-fated war against the dragons, the Therans still consider them a serious threat to the Empire.) The false documents had partially fooled Hefera; he didn't realize why Aardelea is important to the dragons of Barsaive, but the fact that she is important to them was enough to make him want to capture her. Additionally, the Heavenherds—the master magicians of the Theran Empire—were understandably curious about the stories they had heard of a young girl with unexplained magical abilities. Hefera's own interest, along with that of the Heavenherds, ensured that Hefera was given the resources to mount a mission to Barsaive and capture Aardelea. When Hefera discovered through his political connections that the Theran navy was planning to land a behemoth in southern Barsaive, he argued for the Lake Ban location, believing he could use the behemoth as a base for his kidnapping operation.

For several months after the landing of the behemoth, Hefera led teams to raze local villages, hoping to find the girl. He enriched himself by selling innocent villagers into slavery, charging them with sedition for allegedly refusing to answer his questions. His quest remained fruitless, however, and gained him the attention of Icewing's informers. Finally, Theran spies in Bartertown told him that he'd been looking for Hanto leagues away from its actual location. The spies had been keeping an eye on Bartertown politics, in which the merchant Charboyya has become increasingly active, and they learned about Hanto from a seemingly innocent conversation with the trusting Charboyya himself. Hefera immediately gathered together a crack team of adepts and headed to Hanto to capture the girl.

Barsaive's dragons learned of the Therans' success in kidnapping Aardelea and were determined to rescue her before her captors could transport her back to Thera for study. At the same time, the dragons also decided to use the opportunity to remind the Therans of what happens when they defy the dragons of Barsaive. Although the dragon's agents failed to recover Aardelea, they captured Hefera and delivered him to Icewing, who ate him. Icewing then charged his agents with another task, and had them deliver Hefera's gnawed and broken bones to the Theran forces at *Triumph*, as a none-too-subtle signal of his wrath. To this day, Aardelea remains in Theran custody.

The Book of Blue Spirits

The *Book of Blue Spirits* is an ancient tome of powerful magical lore. Unfortunately, once the characters remove the book from Aardelea's cavern, it deteriorates rapidly, turning to dust within seven days. This gives the characters little time to study the book or transport it to a place where they might be able to sell it.

If you wish, allow the characters to devise a method to preserve the book. If they knew it existed, scholars from all across Barsaive and the Theran Empire would covet the tome's magical secrets. Its rarity and obvious power make the book extraordinarily valuable—and potentially dangerous. Many different factions might attempt to obtain it by purchasing it or by more sinister means. The Kingdom of Throal, the Blood Warders of Blood Wood, the Denairastas Clan from Iopos, the Theran Empire, a great dragon living in Barsaive, and any number of others might want to get their hands on the *Book of Blue Spirits*. If the characters take the book to Throal, they may be able to sell it for a high price—but not one so high that it skews the overall campaign awards.

Even if the book does not survive, people who hear of the magic it bestowed on the child may seek out the characters to discover what they know of its contents. One way or another, word of the book gets out in Barsaive, sparking particular interest in Bartertown and Throal. Impress on the players that their characters came into contact with a source of tremendous power and mystery, and many others might wish to share their knowledge.

The Dragon Sculpture

The dragon sculpture hidden in Aardelea's cavern can play a part in further adventures. If the player characters believe it is a magical treasure, they may study it to learn its powers. Adepts cannot use the sculpture, despite its magical aura. Its powers, if any, are of a kind far beyond the scope of any Discipline currently known in Barsaive. Once word of the sculpture's existence gets out, its uniqueness will make it as sought-after an item as the *Book of Blue Spirits*. If the characters decide to sell the sculpture, they find that any number of merchants in Bartertown and Throal will pay a handsome sum for such a fine work of art. The gamemaster can set this price according to his campaign, but the sculpture should net the characters at least 1,200 silver pieces.

The many groups and individuals who might seek the sculpture include the great dragon Icewing, who lairs in Barsaive near the Kingdom of Throal. If the characters decide to keep the sculpture, a mysterious man approaches them and offers to buy it for up to 1,500 silver pieces. The mystery man works for some individual or group—you

decide. This potential buyer does not disclose the Name of his employer to the characters. If the characters refuse to part with the sculpture or demand a higher price, either raise the offer or arrange to have the sculpture stolen. Sometime after the players lose sight of the sculpture, they learn (through a method of the gamemaster's devising) that a third, unknown party has since acquired it. At the gamemaster's discretion, the sculpture may have been bought or stolen by this third party.

The mysterious third party is the great dragon Icewing, though the characters may never learn this. You may keep the identity of the third party a secret or even feed the players false hints to throw them off the track. Implying that the dragon has the sculpture, however, should demonstrate its significance to the players.

Cast of Characters

This section provides information and game statistics for the major gamemaster characters of **Infected**. If appropriate, modify these statistics to suit the abilities of the player characters in your game.

Because these characters are likely to appear more than once in the course of the adventure, their statistics and descriptions are grouped here for convenience. The gamemaster characters are presented in order of their general importance to the story. Descriptions and statistics for other, minor characters are given in the encounters where those characters first appear.

Note that Moltaa's Grim Legion band has created a group True pattern that enables the group's members to enhance their abilities through the use of thread magic (see the **Thread Magic** chapter on p. 271 of the **Player's Compendium**). Each group member who has achieved at least Fourth Circle in his Discipline has helped create this True pattern and has woven threads from his own pattern to it. If the Grim Legion splits into warring factions, the group True pattern enhancements no longer apply (see **Endgames**, p. 184).

Charboyya

A prosperous dwarf nearing his fiftieth year, Charboyya lives in Bartertown, where he runs a thriving business as a silk merchant. He grew up a poor farm boy in the village of Hanto, an isolated hamlet in the wild Barsaivian savanna. As he matured, Charboyya tired of sleepy village life and set out to make his fortune in the world. Though he succeeded beyond his wildest dreams, Charboyya came to miss his family and friends.

To ease his loneliness, Charboyya began hiring couriers to deliver messages to and from Hanto every few months. Though this indulgence costs him dearly, Charboyya considers it more than worth the price.

Attributes

Dexterity (12): 5/D8
Strength (12): 5/D8
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 35
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 27

Combat Movement: 20
Full Movement: 40

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Tailor (7): 12/2D10

Knowledge:
Dwarf Trade Routes (6): 12/2D10
Economics (5): 11/D10+D8

General:
Conversation (4): 10/D10+D6
Etiquette (6): 12/2D10
Evaluate (4): 10/D10+D6
Haggle (4): 10/D10+D6
Read and Write Language (4): 10/D10+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*
Speak Language (4): 10/D10+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*
Trading (7): 13/D12+D10

Equipment

Quarterstaff (Damage 7/D12)
Courtier Quality Hat
Craftsman Tools
Quiet Pouch
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Loot

Gold Earring (worth 25 silver pieces), Gold Ring (worth 25 silver pieces), 15 gold pieces

Legend Award

145 Legend Points

Notes

Charboyya possesses the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight.

Moltaa

Moltaa was born into the obsidiman enclave of Hardpoint in the last generation before the end of the Scourge, a time she remembers all too well. The first residents of Hardpoint erected an opaque, granite-colored, magical dome around their Liferock rather than hibernate underground. When the Horrors came to Hardpoint, they scratched at the dome night and day with iron claws and whispered foul obscenities describing the wounds they would inflict on the obsidimen when they finally cracked the dome.

By the time of Moltaa's birth, the call of the Horrors had become part of everyday life. Many went slowly mad from listening to it, while others attached themselves to the Liferock before their time in a desperate quest for solace and

relief. The more the abominations scratched, the stronger became the settlement's physical defenses. Eventually the Horrors' scratching transformed the dome into a substance as hard and clear as diamond. Knowing that their victims could see them, the Horrors began acting out a continuous pageant of bizarre violence and unmentionable atrocities. The dreadful sight drove many more Hardpointers mad.

Young Moltaa steeled herself against fear of the Horrors and soon began to threaten them, describing in detail how she would avenge Hardpoint when the Scourge ended. Though Moltaa knew of the Grim Legion only from stories, she told the Horrors that she would join those determined heroes and see all the Horrors dead, suffering and dying as they had made her people suffer and die.

After the dark times finally ended, Moltaa left Hardpoint, learned the Nethermancer Discipline and went in search of the Grim Legion. During the past eighty years or so, Moltaa has gained a command position in the Legion. But over the years her quest to rid Barsaive of Horrors has become an obsession, consuming her very soul. She feels nothing personal toward any of her soldiers, seeing them merely as weapons to wield against the enemy. Incapable of small talk and lacking all knowledge of how to deal effectively with people, Moltaa has no idea that some of her soldiers fear her. Kwamm's worldly ambitions would be beyond her understanding if she knew they existed.

In combat, Moltaa prefers to stand away from the swinging swords and fling Bone Shatter spells at her enemies. On occasion, however, she relishes wading into a nest of Horrors and cutting a swath through them with her two-handed sword. When struck, she uses her magical helmet's Swat power (see p. 438 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**), even if using it enables her attacker to occasionally knock her down. Also, see the description of this magical helmet as it only adds to Moltaa's frightening appearance. In her spell matrices, she usually holds her Astral Horror, Bone Shatter, Pain, and Recovery spells. Moltaa is a Sixth Circle Nethermancer.

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Strength (21): 8/2D6
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Perception (16): 7/D12
Willpower (17): 7/D12
Charisma (12): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 7
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 12 [G]

Death Rating: 38 (60)*
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 13
Knockdown: 8/2D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 30 (46)*

[G] Enhanced by +5 through group True pattern.
* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 16
Full Movement: 32

Karma Points: 20
Karma Step: 3/D4

Talents

Astral Sight [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
Durability (4/3) (6): 6
Frighten (3): 10/D10+D6
Karma Ritual (5): 5
Read and Write Magic [D] (6): 13/D12+D10
Read and Write Language (6): 13/D12+D10
—Human, Obsidiman, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Troll
Spellcasting [D] (6): 18/D20+D12 [G]
Spell Matrix (6): 6
Spell Matrix (6): 6
Spell Matrix (6): 6
Spell Matrix (6): 6
Spirit Hold [D] (6): 13/D12+D10
Spirit Talk [D] (6): 13/D12+D10
Summon (Ally Spirits) [D] (6): 13/D12+D10
Thread Weaving (Nethermancy) [D] (6): 18/D20+D12 [G]
Willforce (6): 18/D20+D12 [G]

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.
[G] Enhanced by +5 through group True pattern.

Skills

Artisan:
Robe Embroidery (3): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Grim Legion History (3): 10/D10+D6
Horror Lore (4): 11/D10+D8
Legends and Heroes (1): 8/2D6

General:
Melee Weapons (3): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (1): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 9/D8+D6
— Dwarf (Throalic), Obsidiman
Taunt (3): 8/2D6
Unarmed Combat (3): 8/2D6

Equipment

Crystal Ringlet (Phys 4; Myst 4; Init 2)

Two-Handed Sword (Damage 15/D20+D6; w/ scabbard)
Troll Dagger (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 9–15–18)
Troll Sling (Damage 12/2D10; Ranges 30–60–120)
Belt Pouch (w/15 sling stones)

Skull of Maarberg (Thread Rank 2; see p. 438 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**; Powers: Animate Dead (2): 9/D8+D6, Swat (2): 10/D10+D6)

Black Silk Scarf (Grim Legion pattern item)
Adventurer's Kit (w/tent)
Embroidery Tool
Grimoire
Healing Potion
Last Chance Salve
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Spells

Animate Skeleton, Astral Horror [M], Astral Spear, Bone Dance, Bone Shatter [M], Death's Head, Detect Undead, Experience Death, Fog Ghost, Life Circle of One, Pain [M], Recovery [M], Spirit Dart, Spirit Grip, Undead Struggle

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix.

Loot

150 silver pieces

Legend Award

1,645 Legend Points

Notes

Moltaa possesses the obsidiman racial abilities of Increased Wound Threshold and Natural Armor. She has formed a group True pattern within her own sect of the Grim Legion, and has four Rank 5 threads attached to her Mystic Armor as well as her Spellcasting, Thread Weaving (Nethermancy), and Willforce talents.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests
Sixth Circle: +1 Spell Defense

KWAMM

Kwamm is an ambitious ork dedicated to eradicating all traces of the Scourge from Barsaive. Of course, he also sees his quest as a means to personal power. Over-confident in his own judgment and leadership qualities, he believes that whatever is good for Kwamm is good for Barsaive.

Kwamm grew up in the village of Burnpatch, a childhood friend of Charboyya's employee Gamuudge (see **Charboyya's Heroes**, p. 146). From an early age, he dreamed of power. Whenever the children played "Heroes and Horrors," Kwamm insisted on commanding the Heroes team. Years later, when a troop of Grim Legionnaires descended on Burnpatch, they impressed the adolescent Kwamm as tough, determined, and more world-wise than a dirt farmer could expect to become in a dozen lifetimes. Kwamm began to dream of joining the Legion and gaining a reputation as a mighty hero.

After some years of training as an adept, Kwamm heard of another Legion group roaming the land near Burnpatch. Under the leadership of an obsidiman Named Moltaa, this group had taken up residence in Daneru, a nearby village. Burnpatch hosted a convocation of local village leaders to discuss ways of ridding the area of these overbearing fanatics; Kwamm spent that same evening in Daneru, offering his services as a recruit.

On his return to Burnpatch in full Grim Legion regalia, the jubilant Kwamm found scorn instead of jealous admiration. His childhood friend Gamuudge picked a fight with him, and though Kwamm gave Gamuudge a thorough thrashing, the other ork delivered a lucky, nose-shattering blow on his way down for the count. Instead of cheering Kwamm's victory, the other young villagers flocked around Gamuudge. The beaten ork taunted Kwamm through a split lip, calling him a "pretend hero playing black leather dress-up." Hurt and confused by this reaction, Kwamm stalked off shouting vague threats about bringing friends to give them all a whipping. Despite the emptiness of the threat, Gamuudge took it seriously enough to leave the village.

As a member of Moltaa's group, Kwamm swiftly proved his determination and bravery. He made himself indispensable to Moltaa and soon became her second-in-command.

Though Kwamm refuses to admit it even to himself, the fight with Gamuudge remains his greatest failure. Despite having proven himself time and again as a courageous slayer of Horrors, the jeers of his former friends ring loudly in his memory. Those long-ago taunts have helped drive Kwamm to his present success—whenever he needs extra courage to kick down a kaer door or lead an assault, he thinks of that fight and vows to prove just how wrong those fools were to laugh at him. The Gamuudge incident is one of the things that triggers Kwamm's *gahad*, the response all orks have to certain passionate impulses. For specific information on Kwamm's *gahad*, see **Hearts of Stone**, p. 168.

Increasingly confident of his power as a Swordmaster, Kwamm imagines himself leading the Legion band. Though he respects Moltaa's single-minded devotion to the cause, he believes the group should create a master plan to deal with Horrors, rather than simply riding around the countryside looking for individual Horrors to slay. Kwamm wants to set up a permanent base in the region and

vastly increase the number of troops, so that the Legion can sweep the entire area clean of Horrors. Such a plan requires an overall commander, a powerful role Kwamm covets for himself.

Kwamm sees the occupation of Hanto as a first step in realizing his grandiose plans and entertains notions of expanding his observation tower into a huge, brick fort. He has yet to figure out how to move from his current role as right-hand man in an adventuring band to commander of a military base. As Moltaa's chief lieutenant, Kwamm controls recruiting and has personally brought many of the younger members of this Grim Legion group into the fold. Even some of the veterans prefer Kwamm to their current leader; in contrast to Moltaa, who often seems half-crazed, Kwamm is charismatic, personable, and stable. In any internal power struggle, many of the Legionnaires would support Kwamm over Moltaa.

Characters playing up to Kwamm's grand aspirations and sense of self-importance get along well with him. Those who threaten his plans or self-image, especially by mentioning the fight with Gamuudge, make a grimly determined enemy. Kwamm is a Fifth Circle Swordmaster.

Attributes

Dexterity (20): 8/2D6
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Perception (12): 5/D8
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 9
Social Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 5 G

Death Rating: 36 (69)*
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 10
Knockdown: 6/D10**
Unconsciousness Rating: 28 (56)*

G Enhanced by +5 through group True pattern.
* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.
** Kwamm knows the Wound Balance talent.

Combat Movement: 43
Full Movement: 86

Karma Points: 24
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Avoid Blow D (5): 13/D12+D10
Durability (7/6) (5): 5
Karma Ritual (5): 5
Heartening Laugh (5): 12/2D10
Maneuver D (5): 13/D12+D10
Melee Weapons D (5): 18/D20+D12 G
Riposte D (5): 13/D12+D10
Second Weapon D (3): 11/D10+D8
Speak Language (4): 9/D8+D6
—Human, Obsidiman, *Sperethiel*, Troll
Taunt (5): 12/2D10
Thread Weaving (Blade Weaving) D (5): 10/D10+D6
Throwing Weapons (4): 12/2D10
Wound Balance (3): 9/D8+D6

D Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.
G Enhanced by +5 through group True pattern.

Skills

Artisan:
Runic Carving (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Grim Legion History (3): 8/2D6
Horror Lore (3): 8/2D6
Military Procedures (1): 6/D10

General:
Hunting (5): 13/D12+D10
Missile Weapons (5): 13/D12+D10
Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Equipment

Skull-Carved Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Ring Mail (Phys 6; Init 2; w/spiked helmet)

Derita's Silk-Tailed Wailer (Rank 2; Damage 12/2D10; w/3 yards of silk rope; **New Magical Treasures**, p. 347)
Short Sword (Damage 10/D10+D6 w/scabbard)
Stone Troll Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18; Grim Legion pattern item)
2 × Hawk Hatchets (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 24–40–48)
Light Crossbow (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 50–100–200)
Quiver (w/15 light crossbow bolts)

Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tool
Trail Rations (1 week)
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Loot

85 silver pieces

Legend Award

725 Legend Points

Notes

Kwamm possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*. He formed a group True pattern within his own sect of the Grim Legion and has two Rank 5 threads attached to his Mystic Armor as well as his Melee Weapons talent.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

Lo-Arr Brand

The human Lo-Arr Brand is a shy country boy who joined the Grim Legion in a futile attempt to spite his childhood sweetheart for marrying another. Because Kwamm took Lo-Arr under his wing and arranged for his training in the Warrior Discipline, Lo-Arr's devotion to the Grim Legion stems more from his personal gratitude to Kwamm than from any sense of mission to fight the Horrors. In any rift between Moltaa and Kwamm, Lo-Arr would support Kwamm without hesitation. He works hard and takes risks in order to impress his lieutenant. His open, friendly nature makes Lo-Arr easy to approach. Prone to near-crippling shyness in the company of women his own age, he might prove susceptible to seduction attempts. In combat, Lo-Arr prefers to wade right in and hack away with his sword. If he takes 15 or more points of damage in a fight, he uses the Fireblood talent to heal himself. Lo-Arr Brand is a Second Circle Warrior.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Strength (12): 5/D8
Perception (11): 5/D8
Charisma (8): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 5
Initiative: 3/D4
Physical Armor: 9
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 35 (53)
Wound Threshold: 9
Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 27 (41)

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60

Karma Points: 12
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Acrobatic Strike (2): 8/2D6
Air Dance (2): 5/D8*

Durability (9/7) (2): 2
Karma Ritual (2): 2
Melee Weapons [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Unarmed Combat [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Wood Skin [D] (2): 8/2D6

Versatility (2): 2
Fireblood [V] (2): 8/2D6
Riposte [V] (2): 8/2D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
[V] Indicates talent learned with Versatility.
* Air Dance adjusted for –3 armor Initiative Penalty.

Skills

Artisan:
Music (Bugle) (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Grim Legion History (1): 6/D10
Horror Lore (1): 6/D10
Military Procedures (1): 6/D10

General:
Hunting (1): 7/D12
Missile Weapons (1): 7/D12

Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Ring Mail (Phys 6; Init 2)

Broadsword (Damage 10/D10+D6; w/scabbard)
Mace (Damage 9/D8+D6)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
Light Crossbow (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 50–100–200)
Quiver (w/15 light crossbow bolts)

Adventurer's Kit
Bugle
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

25 silver pieces

Legend Award

190 Legend Points

Notes

Lo-Arr possesses the human racial ability of Versatility.

GZOOG CHAINBREAKER

Gzoog Chainbreaker is a short, bow-legged ork with ratlike features and a perpetual squint. An escaped slave, he threw in with the Legion because he heard it was a great scam. Unfortunately for Gzoog, he joined an honest crew more concerned with defeating Horrors than feathering their nests. Requiring constant supervision to perform his assigned duties, Gzoog spends most of his time looking for ways to make a profit on the side, sometimes smuggling contraband or gambling with naive villagers. He fears Moltaa and will side with Kwamm if the two leaders split.

If an individual adventurer or two approaches him in a friendly manner, Gzoog is happy to chat, and after a bit of small talk asks them to play a few rounds of dice (with a small wager to make things interesting, of course). If the characters are losing money, Gzoog answers their questions to keep them in the game, dragging out his answers as long as possible. If the adventurers start winning, Gzoog abruptly remembers his assignment to a work detail and packs up his dice. If both Gzoog and an opponent are on the verge of becoming incapacitated, he uses the Air Dance talent to compensate for the Initiative penalties conferred by his heavy armor. Gzoog hates to start fights and withdraws from losing battles if his superiors are not watching. Gzoog Chainbreaker is a Second Circle Warrior.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (16): 7/D12
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (11): 5/D8
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 1/D4–2
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 12
Social Defense: 6
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 36 (54)
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 10
Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 28 (42)

Combat Movement: 32
Full Movement: 64

Karma Points: 12
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Acrobatic Strike (2): 8/2D6
Air Dance (2): 3/D4*
Durability (9/7) (2): 2
Karma Ritual (2): 2
Melee Weapons [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Unarmed Combat [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Wood Skin [D] (2): 8/2D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
* Air Dance adjusted for –5 armor Initiative Penalty.

Skills

Artisan:
Music (Fife) (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Gambling (4): 10/D10+D6
Grim Legion History (1): 7/D12

Horror Lore (1): 7/D12
Military Procedures (1): 7/D12

General:
Missile Weapons (1): 7/D12
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Streetwise (1): 7/D12

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Plate Mail (Phys 9; Init 4)

Broadsword (Damage 12/2D10; w/scabbard)
Quarterstaff (Damage 9/D8+D6)
Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)
Light Crossbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 50–100–200)
Quiver (w/15 light crossbow bolts)

Adventurer's Kit
Bone Dice Set
Fife
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

100 silver pieces

Legend Award

195 Legend Points

Notes

Gzoog possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*. As a former slave, any denigration of orks as a slave race quickly sends Gzoog over the edge, while those directed at him personally never set off his *gahad*.

Sork Sorjinka

Sork Sorjinka joined the Grim Legion after Horrors wiped out her scorcher band. On signing up, she swore never to take a mate or drink alcohol until all the Horrors were driven from Barsaive. Sork's relentless hatred of Horrors puts her firmly in Moltaa's camp; she sees Kwamm as an opportunist insufficiently devoted to the cause.

Sork makes no claim to act for the good of others; vengeance is her motive and she tramples on other people's rights without a qualm if they interfere with her goals. Distant and unapproachable, Sork's only topic of conversation is the Horrors and how to fight them. If the adventurers regale her with tales of their Horror encounters, she listens with great interest, but sees no reason to give strangers any information about herself.

As a Cavalryman, Sork prefers charging into combat on her mount, but will fight on foot if necessary. When hit, she automatically uses her Avoid Blow or Trick Riding talent. She retreats from losing fights only if the opponents are not Horrors; in losing battles with Horrors, her companions must often overpower her and drag her away to prevent her from dying unnecessarily. Sork Sorjinka is a Fourth Circle Cavalryman.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Perception (7): 4/D6
Willpower (8): 4/D6
Charisma (12): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 9 [G]
Social Defense: 7
Initiative: 2/D4–1
Physical Armor: 12
Mystic Armor: 4 [G]

Death Rating: 34 (60)*
Wound Threshold: 9
Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 26 (48)*

[G] Enhanced by +4 through group True pattern.
* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 34
Full Movement: 68

Karma Points: 24
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Animal Bond (4): 9/D8+D6
Avoid Blow (5): 12/2D10
Charge [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Durability (7/6) (4): 4
Empathic Command [D] (4): 8/2D6
Karma Ritual (4): 4
Melee Weapons (4): 11/D10+D8
Spirit Mount [D] (4): 8/2D6
Thread Weaving (Rider Weaving) [D] (4): 8/2D6
Trick Riding [D] (5): 12/2D10
Wheeling Attack (4): 11/D10+D8

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Leatherworker (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Grim Legion History (3): 7/D12
Horror Lore (4): 8/2D6
Military Procedures (1): 5/D8

General:
Hunting (1): 8/2D6
Missile Weapons (1): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (1): 5/D8
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Equipment

Rider's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Plate Mail (Phys 9; Init 4)

Broadsword (Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
Long-Spear (Damage 11/D10+D8)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Light Crossbow (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 50–100–200)
Quiver (w/14 light crossbow bolts)

Black Crossbow Bolt (Grim Legion pattern item)

Adventurer's Kit
Bandanna
Craftsman Tool
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

War Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
Large Saddlebag
Saddle, Stirrups, and Blanket

Loot

55 silver pieces

Legend Award

370 Legend Points

Notes

Sork possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*. She has formed a group True pattern within her own sect of the Grim Legion, and has two Rank 4 threads attached to her Mystic Armor and Spell Defense.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Strength-only Tests

DALYA RED ROSES

A very old elf, Dalya Red Roses found adventure late in life. The sheltered daughter of rich elves from a large kaer, she married into a prominent merchant family and spent most of her life raising children and taking part in social affairs. Having established her children and grandchildren in the world, Dalya decided to devote her final

years to serving Barsaive by training as an adept, joining the Grim Legion and helping rid the province of Horrors. Needless to say, her choice scandalized her family. Convinced she had taken leave of her senses, Dalya's relatives hired a band of adventurers to retrieve her from the Grim Legion. The adventurers received a sound drubbing, and Dalya has since continued her career unmolested.

Cheerful and outgoing, Dalya considers herself in charge of group morale. Her sunny disposition means little to the group's more violent members, but Lo-Arr Brand quickly adopted her as his unofficial mother. She responds eagerly to any adventurers who approach her as friends, particularly if they are sophisticated conversationalists. In fact, Dalya will talk the player characters' ears off if given half a chance. Her greatest passions are talking and cooking, and most of her current companions offer little in the way of the first and fail to appreciate the second.

Though willing to tell the player characters her life story, Dalya skillfully changes the subject if they seem to be fishing for information they might use against the Legionnaires. Strongly loyal to both Moltaa and Kwamm, the conservative Dalya will support the higher-ranking officer in any dispute.

Dalya tends to burn Karma in combat, relying heavily on her Claw Shape talent to harm her opponents. Believing that she has already lived a long and fulfilling life, she is willing to sacrifice herself if necessary to defeat or destroy a Horror. Dalya Red Roses is a Fourth Circle Beastmaster.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Willpower (9): 4/D6
Strength (11): 5/D8
Perception (14): 6/D10
Charisma (15): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 12 [G]
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Initiative: 3/D4
Physical Armor: 9
Mystic Armor: 4 [G]

Death Rating: 36 (62)* **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 10 **Knockdown**: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 28 (50)*

[G] Enhanced by +4 through group True pattern.
* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 32 **Full Movement**: 64

Karma Points: 20 **Karma Step**: 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

Animal Bond [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Cat's Paw [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Claw Shape [D] (5): 10/D10+D6 (Claw Tool)
Creature Analysis [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Dominate Beast [D] (4): 8/2D6
Durability (7/6) (4): 4
Karma Ritual (4): 4
Tracking (4): 10/D10+D6
Thread Weaving (Beast Weaving) [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Unarmed Combat (5): 11/D10+D8

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Cooking (7): 13/D12+D10
Storytelling (4): 10/D10+D6

Knowledge:
Baking (1): 7/D12
Elf History (1): 7/D12

General:
Conversation (4): 10/D10+D6
Etiquette (8): 14/D20+D4
Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Sperethiel*
Speak Language (3): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Sperethiel*

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Ring Mail (Phys 6; Init 2)

Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)

Crojen's Claw (Grim Legion pattern item)

Adventurer's Kit
Hooded Mask
Hot Pot
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

55 silver pieces

Legend Award

320 Legend Points

Notes

Dayla possesses the elf racial ability of Low-Light Vision. She has formed a group True pattern within her own sect of the Grim Legion, and has two Rank 4 threads attached to her Mystic Armor and Physical Defense.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

MALONIEL

The newest recruit to the Grim Legion, Maloniel dreams of inspiring fear in others. Like Kwamm, Maloniel comes from a tiny savanna village, and she regards the neighbors she left behind as so many meek cattle. The Legionnaires represent excitement, power, and real life. She does not understand why her new companions all seem to avoid her gaze, refusing to answer her eager questions about the thrilling life of the adventurer. Even Dalya Red Roses, who goes out of her way to treat everyone kindly, seems to keep Maloniel at arm's length. What Maloniel does not know is that this particular band of Legionnaires has lost seventeen Thieves under Moltaa's leadership—some caught in the throat by blade traps, others picked off by invisible monsters or meeting other unpleasant ends.

Starved for friendship and a bit naive, Maloniel responds to any interest the adventurers show in her. As a new recruit, she knows no worthwhile secrets; instead, she speaks mostly of the tediousness of village life, and how much more exciting life is with the Grim Legion. If the adventurers pay enough attention to her, Maloniel may decide to leave Hanto with them at the end of the adventure. In the event of a showdown between Moltaa and Kwamm, Maloniel would most likely quit in disgust rather than take sides.

In combat, Maloniel prefers to sneak up behind an opponent using her Silent Walk talent and position herself for a Surprise Strike. The Legionnaires' cool treatment has made her unwilling to die for them, and so she withdraws from combat if she falls to within 3 Damage Points of unconsciousness. Maloniel is a Third Circle Thief.

Attributes

Dexterity (17): 7/D12
Strength (12): 5/D8
Toughness (10): 5/D8
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 7
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 31 (46)
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 22 (34)

Combat Movement: 36
Full Movement: 72

Karma Points: 15
Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

Avoid Blow[D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Climbing (3): 10/D10+D6
Durability (5/4) (3): 3
Karma Ritual (3): 3
Lock Picking[D] (3): 10/D10+D6
Melee Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6
Picking Pockets[D] (3): 10/D10+D6
Silent Walk[D] (4): 11/D10+D8 (Shadow Hide)
Surprise Strike[D] (4): 9/D8+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Singing (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Elf Ballads (1): 7/D12
Legends and Heroes (1): 7/D12

General:
Missile Weapons (1): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Sperethiel*
Throwing Weapons (1): 8/2D6

Equipment

Espagra-Scale Cloak (Phys 3; Myst 1; Init 0/1)
Padded Leather (Phys 4)

Broadsword (Damage 10/D10+D6)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
3 × Throwing Daggers (Damage 7/D12; Range 15–25–30)
Troll Sling (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 30–60–120)
Belt Pouch (w/15 sling stones)
Adventurer's Kit
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

50 silver pieces

Legend Award

145 Legend Points

Notes

Maloniel possesses the elf racial ability of Low-Light Vision.

ARRKHARD GAHH

Several months ago, Arrkhard Gahh had just begun his tour of duty on the *Tearful Barracuda*. As he gazed up into the rigging one night, the moon-shadows playing across the airship's sails seemed to coalesce into a face. The face spoke to Arrkhard, revealing itself as the Passion Thystonius, and told the troll to journey to Barsaive's wild lowlands. There he must join the Grim Legion, so that he could prove his worth to Thystonius by testing himself against Horrors. Arrkhard's crewmates, hearing nothing, mocked him and said he had hit the grog too hard. Nonetheless, Arrkhard traveled overland to the back country, where he met Moltaa and her Grim Legion group. Though he has fought the Horrors for a mere six months, Arrkhard has already proved his bravery in many dangerous battles.

Though Arrkhard speaks softly and sounds reasonable, he can be as fanatical as Moltaa in his own way. His belief that he serves a higher purpose justifies any wrong he might commit. Though Arrkhard likes and respects Kwamm, in a showdown Arrkhard would cut Kwamm in half without a twinge of regret.

Arrkhard starts every fight with his battle shout, "Thystonius commands thy death!" He does not use his Fireblood talent until he has suffered at least 20 Damage Points in combat. Arrkhard Gahh is a Second Circle Sky Raider.

Attributes

Dexterity (17): 7/D12
Strength (21): 8/2D6
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (11): 5/D8
Charisma (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Initiative: 2/D4–1
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 12
Social Defense: 6
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 39 (55)
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11
Knockdown: 8/2D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 31 (43)

Combat Movement: 34
Full Movement: 68

Karma Points: 7
Karma Step: 3/D4

Talents

Air Sailing [D] (1): 6/D10
Avoid Blow (2): 9/D8+D6
Battle Shout [D] (3): 8/2D6
Durability (8/6) (2): 2
Fireblood [D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Karma Ritual (2): 2
Melee Weapons [D] (3): 10/D10+D6
Shield Charge [D] (2): 10/D10+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Sculpting (1): 6/D10
Wood Carving (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Horror Lore (1): 7/D12
Passion Lore (2): 8/2D6

General:
Missile Weapons (1): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Troll
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Troll

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Plate Mail (Phys 9; Init 4; w/spiked helmet)

Troll Sword (Damage 14/D20+D4; w/scabbard)
Troll Dagger (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 9–15–18)
Troll Sling (Damage 12/2D10; Range 30–60–120)
Belt Pouch (w/15 sling stones)

Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tool
Sculpting Tool
Small Statue of Thystonius
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

15 silver pieces

Legend Award

195 Legend Points

Notes

The adept possesses the troll racial ability of Heat Sight.

AARDELEA

An intelligent and brave human child, Aardelea is in way over her head. If questioned too insistently about anything, she may break into tears, at which point her mother Orweia ends the interview.

Though gifted with unusual magical abilities (see below), Aardelea uses them only in dire emergencies for fear the Legionnaires might see her. For example, she might use her Mystic Healing power on a character who did her a great service, but only if he seems on the verge of death.

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Strength (7): 4/D6
Toughness (8): 4/D6
Perception (12): 5/D8
Willpower (12): 5/D8
Charisma (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7*
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 28
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 7
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 19

* See **Astral Chameleon** in **Rules**, p. 201.

Combat Movement: 20
Full Movement: 40

Powers

Elsewhere Sense (1): 6/D10
Mind Over Matter (1): 6/D10
Mystic Healing (1): 6/D10

Skills

Artisan:
Singing (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Botany (1): 6/D10
Creature Lore (1): 6/D10

General:
Climbing (1): 6/D10
Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human
Wilderness Survival (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Peasant's Garb

Loot

None

Legend Award

35 Legend Points

Rules

Aardelea has learned a number of unique powers, which work just like dragon powers (see the **Dragons** chapter on p. 397 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

Astral Chameleon: This ability protect her against magical detection spells and powers, manifesting whenever she becomes frightened or attempts to conceal the truth about her strange abilities. If active, Astral Sensing Tests must achieve an Excellent or better result against Aardelea's Spell Defense to be successful.

Elsewhere Sense: This power allows Aardelea to closely observe events occurring some distance away or behind a barrier, using either hearing, sight, smell, or touch. To use an enhanced sense of her choice, she must specify the area around which the ability centers, up to 20 yards away per rank. Then Aardelea makes an Elsewhere Sense Test against a Difficulty Number determined by the distance between her and the spot she is observing. The base Difficulty Number is 5, +1 for each 10 yards of distance. While using this ability, Aardelea cannot use the chosen sense to observe her true surroundings. For example, if she chooses to see an eagle in a nest several yards up a sheer cliff, she can no longer see the desert floor on which she is standing. This weakness can render Aardelea susceptible to Blindsided and Surprise attacks (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**). Beings with a Spell Defense can avoid being observed by Aardelea using the Elsewhere Sense power. In this case, Aardelea uses the highest Spell Defense of all beings observable from the selected area as the Difficulty Number for the Elsewhere Sense Test. Each use of Elsewhere Sense lasts for a number of rounds equal to Aardelea's rank in this power.

Mind Over Matter: The Mind Over Matter power allows Aardelea to move small amounts of solid matter at will. She may move the matter or object in any direction or through the air at a maximum Movement rate in yards per round equal to her rank in the power. To use this ability, Aardelea makes a Mind Over Matter Test against a Difficulty Number based on the weight of the object moved. The base Difficulty Number is 2, +1 for every 5 pounds of weight. If she attempts to move an object or being with a Spell Defense, use the higher of the weight or Spell Defense as the Difficulty Number. Each use of Mind Over Matter lasts for a number of rounds equal to Aardelea's rank in the power or until she stops concentrating.

Mystic Healing: The Mystic Healing power allows Aardelea to heal damage to another character by using one of her Recovery Tests. Aardelea's Mystic Healing step replaces the target's Recovery Step for the test. The Difficulty Number is the Spell Defense of the recipient, who may choose to lower his defenses temporarily (see the **Workings of Magic** chapter on p. 287 of the **Player's Compendium** for more information on voluntarily lowering Spell Defense). Aardelea must touch the subject, and the subject must concentrate fully on receiving the healing power. The subject must also believe in Aardelea's healing ability. Aardelea cannot use Mystic Healing to heal herself.

Shattered Pattern

It is difficult to comprehend the true complexity of our life patterns, but easy to appreciate that, as with our physical bodies, a little tampering with them can result in very serious problems indeed.

• Mestoph, Elven Nethermancer •

Escorted by two members of the Royal Guard, Tharr Strongfist strode down the wide corridors of the Inner Kingdom of Throal toward King Varulus's audience chamber. Tharr knew the guard on his left from several years back, when they had served together as green enlistees in the Army of Throal. Tharr was glad to see Reham doing well for himself, though a guard's posting was the last thing Tharr would have chosen for himself. But Reham had a wife and two babes to think of, and royal guard duty allowed him to remain in the army and serve his king without risking his neck.

The guard on the right was a young one, barely dry behind the ears. He kept sneaking awed looks at Tharr, as if amazed to be walking alongside a real hero. Tharr smiled to himself. He could almost hear the youngling regaling his mates off-duty with an exaggerated description of "the great Tharr Strongfist, who singlehandedly routed a battalion of Therans during the Theran War." The truth was somewhat less glamorous, but Tharr had done his bit. That's all this hero business was, really—doing your bit and then getting on with the next thing.

Tharr wondered what bit the king had in mind for him this time.

With a friendly goodbye nod to Reham and the youngling, Tharr entered the audience chamber and bowed to the king. "You sent for me, Your Highness?"

"Strongfist. Welcome," said King Varulus III, walking toward the Warrior with a smile. The smile both warmed and worried Tharr. It reminded him how much his sovereign valued him, but the apprehension behind it made him nervous. If the king was worried, Tharr wasn't sure he wanted to hear what might be coming next.

Varulus' next words did nothing to soothe him. "Throal and I need your strong arm and quick mind again, my friend. I have heard of troubling events occurring near the Servos Jungle and the Badlands. I want you to take a few of your best soldiers and look into it."

Tharr Strongfist swallowed hard. Few places in Barsaive held as many dangers as the Badlands. Monsters and even Horrors lurked in its caves and gullies, waiting to devour the few travelers that the blasted landscape itself didn't kill. The wild Servos Jungle was little better, full of dangerous creatures and the Passions only knew what else. Any "troubling events" in such places must be truly dreadful.

Before Tharr could reply, the king handed him a piece of folded parchment. "I received this letter just a day ago from the Library of Throal."

Tharr unfolded the parchment and began to read.He slowly refolded the letter, then looked at his king. "When do we leave, my lord?" he asked, handing the letter to Varulus.

"As soon as you can put together the necessary force. I have arranged for you to meet with Ardinn Tero; he can tell you precisely what he saw and learned on his journey so that you can choose the best course of action."

Tharr nodded, bowed once more and turned to leave, his mind racing. He had faced danger before, but nothing as insidious as a Horror cult. How might he find this enemy? How should he fight a Horror's worshippers?

"Strongfist!" called the king.

Tharr turned. "My lord?"

"May the Passions follow you, old friend."

Tharr gave the king a small, mirthless smile. "If your scholar is right, sire, may the Passions help us all."

As the doors to the audience room closed behind him, Tharr began drawing up a mental list of soldiers to take with him. He would take Joran for certain. A Scout by Discipline, Joran was among the finest in the entire army, and

To his Royal Highness Varulus the Third,
King of Throal, greetings.

I regret that this letter must bring Your Highness grave news, but I have recently made discoveries of which I must inform you before it grows too late to take action. As you know, the land of Barsaive is home to many different secret societies, some of which serve the people of Barsaive and some of which most emphatically do not. I fear I have stumbled upon one of the latter, a group whose activities place our entire province in great danger. I refer to a certain Horror cult: the Cult of the Great Hunter, whose adherents serve the fearsome Horror, Verjigorm, Hunter of Great Dragons.

In my recent travels through Barsaive, I have heard scores of tales of incidents attributed to the Cult of the Great Hunter. Many of these tales clearly come from the overactive imaginations of Barsaive's Scourge-worn people, but the stories I have heard of the cult's activity between the Badlands and the Servos Jungle have the ring of awful truth. Careful study of these tales strongly suggests that the incidents in question are the work of a single group, because many of the reported incidents have similar methods of execution. I am convinced that the Cult of the Great Hunter exists and may be responsible for these happenings, but the truth of the matter remains a mystery.

We must find out the truth. If I am correct in my conclusions, then the Kingdom of Throal cannot stand idly by while this cult does as it pleases. The cost to us all will be far too great. I urge you to take action toward ridding our land of this plague. The fate of Barsaive may depend on it.

Your most humble servant,

Ardinn Tero
Scholar of the Great Library of Throal

his loyalty was unshakable. He was also a good friend; and if this mission might well end in death, Tharr wanted a friend by his side.

⅄ ⅄ ⅄

Rathann the elf hesitated outside the immense cavern, fiddling with the straps on his shoulder pouch to make it hang more comfortably. He pulled his leather tunic straight, adjusted the belt and ran slender fingers through his graying hair to untangle it.

His master hated personal disarray in his servants, and Rathann was determined not to give him any more cause for anger than he could help. The news he brought would provoke fury enough.

Rathann patted down his hair a final time, then took a deep breath. He couldn't delay any longer. Squaring his narrow shoulders, he stepped inside the cave.

"What is it?" his master rumbled, his voice echoing like thunder off the rocky walls.

Rathann looked up at Icewing the great dragon. "Your suspicions were correct, sir. Someone must have used the sculpture—"

The dragon's roar cut Rathann off in mid-sentence. "Don't tell me the eggs are gone!"

Rathann swallowed. "Not all, sir."

"How many?"

"Seven." Rathann braced himself for another outburst of dragon fury, but Icewing remained silent. Emboldened, Rathann continued. "I'm afraid I could discover nothing about the fates of Arondry and Tellanion." After another brief silence, Rathann said awkwardly, "I'm sorry, sir. I wish I had better tidings."

"He has them," Icewing rumbled softly. "The one who has my eggs. Who but my own servants could enter my lair and take seven of my eggs unnoticed?"

Though afraid of the answer, Rathann felt compelled to ask. "What shall I do, sir?"

"Find the eggs. Find Arondry and Tellanion and kill the one who has done this to me!!"

Rathann blinked, startled. "You do not wish to slay the criminal yourself?"

Icewing snarled. "If I could, I would tear out the culprit's heart and liver and feed them to the vultures. But my remaining eggs are near to hatching, and I must attend them."

The enormous dragon disappeared, and in his place stood a young elven male similar in looks to Rathann. Pulling a piece of parchment and a stylus from a nearby cabinet, the young elf scratched out a map and marked three "X's" between the Servos Jungle and the Badlands. "Our adversary has taken Arondry and Tellanion to all of these places—I can feel that they have passed there. The criminal and the two others are sure to be at one of these sites. Go and do not fail me."

Rathann put the map in his shoulder pouch. As he walked out of the cavern, he looked back over his shoulder and saw that the dragon had resumed his former shape.

Rathann stepped outside the long tunnel that led from Icewing's lair to the surface of Mount Vapor. His elven body disappeared as he assumed his true form. The small dragon spread his leathery wings and took to the air.

Adventure Background

The seeds of **Shattered Pattern** were sown long ago in the years just before the Scourge, when the people of Varenna were building their kaer. An elderly elf Nethermancer, Tyrlaan by Name, approached the town's leaders and asked to live in their shelter. Tyrlaan told the town leaders a terrible tale; he had come from the nearby town of Carell, whose people had succumbed to an attack by Horrors and their constructs while rushing to finish their kaer. Tyrlaan claimed to be the sole survivor of the massacre. In truth, he instigated the slaughter—a fact he kept well hidden from the good folk of Varenna.

Though suspicious of the strange elf and reluctant to admit outsiders to the town's kaer, Varenna's leaders accepted Tyrlaan because of his magical ability. Varenna had no adepts among its own people and had relied heavily upon aid from the city of Travar and the Kingdom of Throal in the kaer's construction. With the kaer nearly finished, the borrowed magicians returned to their own homes, leaving Varenna without anyone who had such valuable magical knowledge. The leaders hoped Tyrlaan would use his magic to protect them. Ultimately, he used it to destroy them.

At first Tyrlaan had used his magical talents to study the Horrors in the hope of learning enough about them to help fight them off. However, early on in his research Tyrlaan fell victim to a Horror mark. Through the mark, Tyrlaan witnessed firsthand the fearsome power of the Horrors and soon sought to possess it for himself. Tyrlaan offered the lives and souls of his friends and neighbors in Carell to the Horror that had marked him in exchange for its power and knowledge. The dreadful bargain struck, Tyrlaan summoned the Horror to his home and sacrificed the townsfolk of Carell to the Horror's voracious appetite. Tyrlaan anticipated that the Horror would turn on him once it had finished with the rest of the town, so he used the power the thing had granted him to kill it and destroy the Horror mark. Soon afterward, Tyrlaan traveled to Varenna and entered that town's kaer just as the Scourge began in earnest. For one hundred years, Tyrlaan lived in Kaer Varenna and continued his studies of the Horrors and their powers, hiding his nefarious activities from the rest of the kaer's residents. Then he learned of a particularly powerful Horror and determined to take its power for himself. He summoned the Horror, accepted its mark and offered the lives and souls of the kaer's residents in exchange for some of the Horror's power and knowledge.

Slowly, the Horror's dark influence took root in the minds of Varenna's residents. For several years, the people of Varenna fought among themselves and sometimes killed one another, until the kaer's leaders realized that the kaer had fallen under the influence of a Horror. The leaders suspected Tyrlaan and tried to kill him, but before they could seize Tyrlaan, he summoned the physical form of the Horror to slay them all. As before, Tyrlaan survived the massacre and then killed the Horror by turning its own power against it.

Tyrlaan lived out the remainder of the Scourge alone; using the kaer's dead as cadaverous servants and as subjects in experiments involving life and death. This research led Tyrlaan to discover the secrets of both creating and altering life forms, knowledge which he used to create new servants and companions to aid him in his research. When the Scourge ended, Tyrlaan emerged into the world and began to seek new Horrors from which he might gain even more powerful abilities. During his search, Tyrlaan learned of the existence of Verjigorm, also called Hunter of Great Dragons. Tyrlaan sought Verjigorm out, made contact with it and accepted its mark. By marking the Nethermancer, Verjigorm learned Tyrlaan's history and decided to use him to search for dragons. Verjigorm proposed an evil bargain: if Tyrlaan agreed to act as the Horror's agent among Name-givers and track down the great dragons of Barsaive, Verjigorm would teach Tyrlaan abilities and powers beyond the imagination of any Name-giver.

To help fulfill Verjigorm's desires, Tyrlaan formed a cult devoted to his Horror master, settling in an abandoned temple of the Passion Raggok situated along the border between the Badlands and the Servos Jungle. Though the cult remained mysterious, its influence grew in that region of Barsaive. The temple and the ruins of Kaer Varenna served Tyrlaan well as a place for his bizarre, often horrific experiments, until the Horror taint inside the kaer grew strong enough to interfere with Tyrlaan's connection to Verjigorm. Tyrlaan then returned to the ruined village of Carell, living and working in the few finished parts of Carell's kaer. At present, the cult of Verjigorm uses three sites between the Badlands and the Servos as its headquarters.

Tyrlaan and his fellow cultists searched the length and breadth of Barsaive for information regarding great dragons and where to find them. At length, Tyrlaan discovered the existence of a unique obsidian sculpture in the form of a dragon, retrieved from the hinterlands of Barsaive by adventurers in the employ of a silk merchant from Bartertown (see **Charboyya's Heroes** in the **Infected** chapter, p.143). Upon learning that agents of the great dragon Icewing had obtained the sculpture, Tyrlaan decided to intercept it as a gift for Verjigorm. Taking along several of the most powerful cultists, Tyrlaan tracked down Icewing's agents responsible for acquiring the sculpture, a pair of drakes, and captured them along with their prize.

Tyrlaan determined that the sculpture was one of Icewing's pattern items and that he could use it to locate a clutch of Icewing's eggs. The Nethermancer then devised a truly evil plot: he would obtain these eggs and use his life-altering magic to transform the hatchlings into servants for Verjigorm. With aid from his Horror master, Tyrlaan found the clutch and gained control over Icewing's drake agents using pattern-weakening magic. The Nethermancer then forced the drakes to steal seven of the eggs. As soon as he had the eggs safely tucked away, Tyrlaan began terrible blood magic experiments in an attempt to twist the hatchlings to his own dark purposes and use the drakes' blood to make a broth with which he could create new life forms.

Icewing's remaining drake servant, Rathann, discovered and informed his master of the capture of his servants and the theft of the sculpture and eggs. Enraged and anguished by his loss, Icewing sent Rathann in search of the missing drakes and the eggs. Icewing magically tracked the drakes and sketched out a map for Rathann that marked the places where they had been most recently.

Rathann set out toward the places frequented by Tyrlaan and his cult, but the cultists captured him long before the drake reached the Nethermancer's stronghold. They turned him over to Tyrlaan, but before the Nethermancer's pattern-weakening magic could fully take hold, Rathann broke free of his captors, killing several of them and attacking Tyrlaan before escaping. Rathann managed to retrieve five items in his headlong flight from Tyrlaan's stronghold: his map, a trio of orichalcum coins that Icewing had given him, and an amulet that Tyrlaan wore around his neck. Fighting off exhaustion, Rathann finally succumbed to the effects of Tyrlaan's magic and collapsed in his Namegiver form near the city of Kratas. A young boy wandering around the city's outskirts found Rathann and brought him home, where the child and his father nursed him back to health. Unfortunately, Tyrlaan's magic took Rathann's memory, and the map, coins, and Tyrlaan's amulet are Rathann's only clues to his identity.

Once he physically recovered from his ordeal, Rathann, now in the form of an elf, asked his benefactors to find a group of adventurers who might help him discover his identity.

Plot Synopsis

The following overview presents the most likely ordering of the events and their outcomes. More information is provided later on about dealing with a different order of exploration, as well as a number of options the gamemaster can choose from at various points. The players have a fair bit of freedom in this adventure, so the details can unfold in many different ways. As always, the gamemaster should feel free to modify or replace parts of the adventure to best tell the story and fit his style and world.

The player characters enter the adventure while in Kratas. They receive a note asking them to meet a potential employer at a tavern on the far side of the city. At the tavern, they meet an elderly looking elf—Rathann—who wants to hire them to help discover his identity. He offers the characters substantial payment for their services, as well as the few clues in his possession. When the characters leave the tavern, a pair of human Horror cultists follow them. As soon as the characters leave the city, the cultists grab Rathann and take him back to Tyrlaan, while the characters begin their investigation of Rathann's identity.

If the characters examine the clues Rathann gave them, they can learn several interesting things. The orichalcum coins bear the mark of Icewing the dragon. The sigils on the amulet include the symbol of a kaer, a symbol of Horrors, and the sign of the Cult of Verjigorm the Great Hunter. After examining these clues, the characters need to travel to one of the places marked on the map to learn anything more. During their journeying, the characters meet soldiers from the army of Throal sent by King Varulus III to investigate activities attributed to the Cult of the Great Hunter. Depending on how the characters treat them, the soldiers may aid the characters in their task.

When the characters arrive at the first marked site, they find the abandoned temple of Raggok that Tyrlaan and his cultists have turned into their headquarters. After dealing with the cultists, the characters search the temple and find the obsidian dragon sculpture, along with a map marking the place in the Throal Mountains where Icewing's clutch of eggs lies. The characters may also discover that the leader of the Horror cult is an elderly elf Named Tyrlaan, who bears a resemblance to their employer. At the second site on Rathann's map, the characters find the ruins of Kaer Varenna. One of the sigils on Rathann's amulet matches that of the kaer, implying a connection between the kaer and the amulet's owner. The characters may also learn that the kaer fell to the Horrors through Tyrlaan's evil magic.

During their exploration of Kaer Varenna, the characters find a dwarf imprisoned in one of the kaer's living areas. The dwarf introduces himself as Joran Lightfoot, a scout in the Throal Army. He informs the characters that King Varulus III sent members of the army to this area to investigate the activities of the Cult of the Great Hunter. However, he does not reveal that Tyrlaan has since turned him into a shadow creature to serve the Horror cult. As the characters continue to move through the kaer, Joran takes on his shadow form and attacks the characters, fleeing only if they come close to defeating him.

The last place marked on the map is Tyrlaan's current lair in Kaer Carell. When the characters explore this ruined kaer, they at last learn the truth about their elven employer and Tyrlaan. If they search the upper floors of the kaer first, they find a room full of crystal coffins, two of which hold Icewing's captured drake servants in Name-giver form. If the characters search the lower part of the kaer first, they find a room containing several dragon eggs, as well as their employer Rathann undergoing arcane blood magic experiments at Tyrlaan's hands.

At some point during their search of Tyrlaan's lair, the characters confront the Nethermancer and his remaining servants and cultists, and they engage these enemies in a climactic battle for their lives. If the characters defeat Tyrlaan and his allies, they can then restore the memories of Rathann and the other two drakes and recover the stolen dragon eggs. Depending on how well the characters have handled the adventure, they may be able to collect a whopping favor from a grateful Icewing at some later date.

Running Shattered Pattern

Shattered Pattern is a complex adventure. Its background is an intricate web of events and motivations, and its open structure allows characters to move through the encounters as they see fit, rather than in any particular order. To give this freewheeling adventure a strong story structure, the gamemaster needs a thorough understanding of the events leading up to **Shattered Pattern** and of Tyrlaan's motives, as well as how each event in the adventure relates to other events.

Keep in mind that the characters have been hired to solve a mystery—the mystery of Rathann's true identity. As they examine the clues and explore the places marked on their map, the characters learn bits and pieces of information regarding Rathann's identity and how he lost his memory, but much of the information makes no sense when they first discover it. The puzzle only comes together when the characters reach Tyrlaan's lair, find Rathann and the dragon eggs and confront Tyrlaan. At this point, the characters can begin to discover the real truth.

As the characters progress through the adventure, they may deduce (falsely) that they are working for Tyrlaan. If so, the characters may wish to take their advance payment and go their way. To keep the players from taking such action (and ending the adventure prematurely), point out that they do not have enough information to make a fair judgment about their employer, or appeal to their

sense of heroism to find the truth behind what is going on and to act accordingly. Hopefully, the characters will feel compelled to continue, if only to discover more about the Horror cult. Ending the threat of the Cult of the Great Hunter may be vital to Barsaive's well-being; if the characters are truly heroes, they will choose to fight the cult regardless of whether or not its activities seem connected to the job they were hired to perform. In reality, the activities of the cult tie in directly to Rathann's identity, which the characters quickly realize if they continue to pursue all the clues in the adventure.

Connections

Shattered Pattern contains two items designed to provide continuity with other **Earthdawn** adventures. The first is the obsidian dragon sculpture. Players may note similarities between this sculpture and the dragon sculpture described on p. 220. In fact, these two objects are one and the same. If the players did not sell or trade the sculpture at the end of **Infected**, simply have someone steal it from them. The piece then passes through Icewing's hands and into Tyrlaan's, where it resides at the start of **Shattered Pattern**. If, however, the characters have not played **Infected**, it might be possible they have heard of the sculpture or met someone seeking it. Alternatively, another exquisite item with which the characters have interacted and parted ways can be used instead. The second item is a set of daggers known as the Blades of Cara Fahd (see the **New Magical Treasures** chapter, on p. 348, for a full description). These items are intended to provide continuity between these different **Earthdawn** adventures and so help support the players' vision of the **Earthdawn** universe as a changing, dynamic place. The nature of these daggers will be examined in **Blades** (see p. 254).

While in Kratas

The gamemaster may use a method of his choice to send the player characters to Kratas, but the team of heroes needs to be in the City of Thieves to begin this adventure. One suggestion is to have the party hired to convey a seemingly innocuous message to either Garlthik One-Eye or Vistrosh, the two most prominent gang leaders in Kratas, through a minor contact in their employ.

Some time after they arrive in Kratas, the characters receive a mysterious letter informing them of potential employment. When the characters meet with the letter's author, an aged male elf, they learn that he has forgotten his Name and identity and wants them to help him rediscover those important facts. The elf provides the characters with a few clues: a map with three places marked on it, two orichalcum coins with symbols carved on either side, and an amulet covered with runic carvings.

After leaving the meeting with the elf, the characters may notice two men following them. The men are members of the Cult of the Great Hunter, keeping tabs on the elf and everyone he sees. As soon as the characters leave town, these cultists kidnap the elf.

Themes and Images

This encounter takes place in the city of Kratas, where deception and betrayal are as natural as breathing. Play up the sense that the characters are always being watched by many different people, any one of whom might have designs on their money or other valuables. Take care, however, not to intimidate the characters so much that they turn down the elf's job offer out of sheer paranoia.

Setting the Stage

Kratas, also called the City of Thieves, lies almost at the geographic center of Barsaive. Though thieves and mercenaries abound, Kratas' population also includes honest merchants, tradesmen, and others. For more information on Kratas, see p. 31 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**. For the purposes of this adventure, the characters visit only a few places in the city. **Shattered Pattern** assumes that the characters are staying at an inn and later visit Rathann in a tavern located on the city's west side (see **Meeting the Elf**, below).

The unique atmosphere of the City of Thieves is the most important thing for the gamemaster to convey. Thieves, mercenaries, and other unsavory types run Kratas as well as live in it, and two large thief guilds are currently battling for dominance. The Force of the Eye, led by the famed ork Thief, Garlthik One-Eye, is currently in power. Brocher's Brood, led by a blood elf Named Vistrosh, seeks to overthrow the aging ork and his gang. The power jockeying means that the characters begin this adventure in a city full of distrusting, manipulative backstabbers. The characters are in unpleasant territory; someone is watching their every move and they cannot go anywhere without being noticed.

Behind the Scenes

The following text describes the events likely to occur and~~/or~~ actions the characters are likely to take while in Kratas. Feel free to alter the timing and any details of these descriptions to better fit your game.

A Mysterious Letter

The proprietor of the inn where the characters are staying wakes them one morning not long after their arrival and gives them a letter he has been asked to deliver to them. The letter offers no more information than that provided in its text (see p. 208). If the characters ask the innkeeper where the letter came from, he tells them that a human boy gave it to him last evening. The boy asked that he deliver it the next morning and paid him 5 silver pieces for his trouble. The innkeeper does not remember what the boy looked like, nor does he know if the boy is the "Jael" referred to in the letter. If asked, the innkeeper gives the characters clear directions to the Lamp Oil Tavern.

Meeting the Elf

The Lamp Oil Tavern is a respectable, if plain, establishment, specializing in strong ale and simple, hearty food. Like most taverns in Kratas, it has its share of seedy-look-

ing regulars, as well as a few shadowed corners beloved by such people; but the bulk of the clientele are traders and merchants who eat a noon meal there or have a pint after a long day.

When the characters arrive and ask for Jael's friend, the ork tavernkeeper shouts out, "Hey, Jael, these folks are asking about the elf." Seconds later, a young boy runs into the tavern room from the kitchen and beckons to the characters, saying, "Come this way."

The boy leads the characters through the kitchen and down a rickety flight of wooden steps to a small basement room. The sparsely decorated chamber holds a shabby bed and a short table. On the edge of the bed sits an elderly male elf dressed in tattered but once-fine clothing.

When the characters enter the room, read the following:

"These are the ones, sir," says the boy eagerly, gesturing toward you.

The old elf smiles. "My thanks, Jael." As he turns to you, the tavernkeeper shouts Jael's Name from above. With an aggrieved look, the boy departs, leaving you alone with the elf.

"Thank you for meeting with me," the elf says. "I would introduce myself, but I fear that is impossible; I no longer know who I am. I have lost my Name, my very self. I know nothing of my past, nor how I came near Kratas, nor how this misfortune befell me. I would like you to help me find out who I am; and who or what has done this to me, if you can.

"I will tell you what little I do remember. My memory begins three weeks ago, when Jael—the boy who escorted you here—found me lying senseless just beyond the border of the city. I wore rags somewhat worse than the borrowed clothing I now wear and carried a small bag. I was wounded and quite weak. Jael took me home to his father, the proprietor of this establishment, who offered me shelter and a place to heal.

"The things I carried give me reason to believe that the truth of my background and misfortune lies far beyond Kratas. I, however, am still too weak to venture beyond this city. Certainly I cannot withstand a journey to any of the places where I might find any clues to my identity.

"What do you say, friends? Will you help me?"

The elf is Rathann, a drake who serves the great dragon Icewing. After narrowly escaping the clutches of Tyrlaan the Nethermancer, he made his way west and north before succumbing to his injuries. Three weeks ago, Jael found him outside the city of Kratas and brought him to the Lamp Oil Tavern, where Jael and his father cared for him. For more information about Rathann's background, see the **Plot Synopsis**, p. 205.

As the characters talk with the elf, have each player make a Perception (15) Test. Any character whose test succeeds notices that the elf's arms and torso are covered with scars, each one roughly three to four inches long. If asked about these scars, the elf tells the characters that he does not remember how he got them. Any character with magical lore skill who notices the scars should make a Knowledge Skill (12) Test. If a character's test succeeds, he recognizes the scars as similar to those used in blood magic.

Dears Sirs and Madams,

Please forgive the unusual method by which I am contacting you. I beg your indulgence in this matter.

I require the services of a capable, trustworthy band of adepts, such as I am assured you are. If you are interested in aiding me, please come to the Lamp Oil Tavern on the far west side of the city at midday. Tell the tavernkeeper that you wish to meet with Jael's friend, and he will direct you to me. When we meet face to face, I will tell you what I need of you.

Should you choose not to meet with me, I ask only that you keep this matter to yourselves. However, I very much hope that you will aid me, as my trouble is most dire.

Sincerely,

A friend

If the characters ask the elf for more information, he can tell them very little. He does not know how he lost his memory of himself; if asked, however, he says that Jael's father has asked the same question of a magician friend. The magician believes that the only magic capable of taking someone's identity is a re-Naming ritual of some sort, but that only dragons ever use such powerful forms of magic.

The elf offers the characters 800 silver pieces each to take the job. If they want to negotiate, the elf offers up to 1,000 silver pieces each, but only if one of the characters makes a successful Persuasion Test against the elf's Social Defense. The elf pays half the fee as soon as the characters accept the job, and the remainder upon successful completion. He asks that the characters begin their investigations at once beginning with the few clues he can provide, and specifically urges them to visit the three places marked on the map he found in his meager possessions.

Optionally, Rathann can propose that the characters may keep one of the orichalcum coins in the event he finds himself poor or unable to discover his past. He also hints that it is likely there is more wealth to be had in his past and would insist on buying the coin back with a nice bonus if that turns out to be the case.

Examining the Elf

Any character with astral sensing spells or abilities may examine the elf astrally. The Difficulty Number for Astral Sensing Tests is the elf's current Spell Defense of 13. His normal Spell Defense is much higher, but Tyrlaan's Shatter Pattern spell has greatly weakened the elf's pattern.

If any character succeeds at an Astral Sensing Test, read the following:

> *You see the familiar sight of a Name-giver's pattern beginning to form, but as you look closer, you see that this pattern is like nothing you have seen before. Though much more complex than the patterns of most Name-givers, it seems much weaker. Certainly, the elf is, or was, an adept, very likely one of ability at least equal to your own. What might have weakened his pattern—if, indeed, anything did—is beyond your ability to guess.*

The characters are sensing the complexity of the elf's drake pattern as well as his adept abilities. The effects of Tyrlaan's Shatter Pattern spell on such an intricate pattern has left it a scrambled mess, causing amnesia and disorientation.

The players may ask if any type of magic exists that can cause a Name-giver to lose his identity. Tell them that such magic exists, but only dragons use it. If a player asks whether re-Naming might account for the damage to Rathann's pattern, the answer is no; adopting a new Name would give the person in question a new pattern, not a damaged one.

Examining the Clues

Once the characters accept the job, Rathann shows them a small cloth sack and its contents: two ancient coins, a parchment map, and an object that looks like an amulet. He tells the characters that he once had three coins, but gave one to Jael's father as payment for his hospitality, and to acquire the funds to pay the characters part of their fee up-front. These three clues can help the characters discover the elf's identity.

The amulet, stolen by Rathann during his escape from the Nethermancer's lair, is one of Tyrlaan's pattern items. If the characters study the amulet, they may be able to weave a thread to it and use it against Tyrlaan. The coins and the map are those that Icewing gave Rathann to aid him in his mission.

The Amulet

When the players examine the amulet, read the following:

> *The amulet is a small bronze medallion, roughly three inches in diameter and a quarter of an inch thick. Both sides of the amulet are marked with strange runes. One side bears two marks; one of these appears to be older, and a newer rune seems to have been carved across it. The other side bears a single mark: crossed talons over the figure of a dragon-like creature.*

The rune-marked amulet actually belongs to Tyrlaan (see **Cast of Characters**, p. 244). Rathann stole it during his escape from Tyrlaan's lair. The amulet is one of Tyrlaan's pattern items and also serves as a pattern item for the Cult of the Great Hunter's group pattern. The front side of the amulet bears the sigil of Kaer Varenna, with the symbol for Horrors slashed across it. The back side bears the rune signifying the Cult of the Great Hunter.

Any character with the Artisan or Knowledge skill of Runic Carving may make a Skill (13) Test when examining the amulet. If the test succeeds, the character recognizes the newer rune on the front of the amulet as similar to those that indicate Horrors. A Good result means that the character recognizes the older rune as the symbol of a kaer. On an Excellent result or better, the character recognizes the older runes as the symbol of Kaer Varenna, which fell to the Horrors during the Scourge. The character also knows that Kaer Varenna lies somewhere between the Servos Jungle and the Badlands.

A second successful Runic Carving (13) Test allows a character to recognize the rune on the back of the amulet as a symbol of a Horror. On a Good result or better, the character recognizes the rune as the symbol for the Cult of the Great Hunter, a Horror cult devoted to Verjigorm.

Using the Amulet

The characters can use the amulet as a pattern item by weaving threads to it (see the **Thread Magic** chapter on p. 268 of the **Player's Compendium**). To weave threads

to the amulet, the characters must first know Tyrlaan's Name and that the amulet belonged to him. Then one of the characters must make an Item History (11) Test. If the test succeeds, the character learns the amulet's Key Knowledge: Tyrlaan betrayed Kaer Varenna and formed the Cult of the Great Hunter.

Once a character has obtained this Key Knowledge, he can weave a thread to the amulet of any rank up to Rank Five. Because the amulet is a minor pattern item, only one thread can be woven to it. The character who chooses to weave the thread must pay the full cost for the thread in Legend Points before attempting to weave it. If the character makes a successful Thread Weaving Test, he has connected his own pattern with Tyrlaan's. This connection will enhance one of the character's abilities or talents by the thread's rank when interacting with the Nethermancer. The character must choose the ability to be increased when he weaves the thread. The character's thread displaces one of the threads Tyrlaan attached to the amulet; the gamemaster determines the specific thread.

Orichalcum Coins

When the players examine the coins, read the following:

The two bronze-colored coins are smaller than Throalic silver and gold pieces, and the runes nicked into them reflect the light in an unusual way. The coins look very much like the magical metal, orichalcum, but are too badly worn for you to be certain of their content.

The two orichalcum coins are old, worn, and smaller than normal coins. Because they are made of orichalcum, they are worth 5,000 silver pieces each. Astral examination reveals that the coins are not magical or pattern items of any kind. The coins are etched with the sigil of Icewing, the great dragon. Any character with the Knowledge or Artisan skill of Runic Carving may make a Skill (12) Test; if the test succeeds, the character recognizes the runes as similar to those that indicate dragons. On a Good result or better, the character knows that these runes are Icewing's symbol.

Rathann's Map

When the players examine the map, read the following:

Drawn on an old, worn piece of parchment, the map depicts a region of Barsaive where the Servos Jungle meets the area known as the Badlands. Along the border between the two are three marks drawn in a deep red color. The map also shows the cities of Kratas and Travar, the Mist Swamps, and the western edge of the Thunder Mountains.

This hastily drawn parchment map indicates three sites used by Tyrlaan and his Horror cult, all located between the Servos Jungle and the Badlands. A copy of this map appears in the **Player Handouts** chapter, p. 360. If the characters know anything about Kaer Varenna, they realize that the three marked sites are all near the area where the kaer supposedly lies. Astral examination of the map reveals nothing.

Being Followed

After the characters leave Rathann, have each of them make a Perception (12) Test. If any character's test succeeds, he notices a pair of humans shadowing them from the Lamp Oil Tavern back to the inn where the characters are staying. The presence of the humans may or may not alarm the characters; they may assume that being followed is the common state of affairs in Kratas. Unknown to the characters, the humans are members of the Cult of the Great Hunter, sent by Tyrlaan to recapture Rathann. They are following the characters only to ensure that the characters leave the area near the tavern. The cultists wait until the characters leave Kratas before they kidnap the elf and return him to Tyrlaan's lair.

If the characters try to confront the cultists, the men flee. If the characters chase them down, the cultists stand and fight. If captured and interrogated, the cultists tell the characters nothing. Each of them, however, carries a potential clue to their identity: a dagger emblazoned with the runes of the Cult of the Great Hunter. This rune looks almost identical to the dragon rune on the back side of Tyrlaan's amulet.

Preparing for the Journey

Once the characters accept Rathann's offer, they will likely wish to buy provisions and supplies for their upcoming journey. The merchants and tradesmen of Kratas sell most of the items listed in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 432 of the **Player's Compendium**, though many of the items are harder to find (the gamemaster may increase the Availability level for an item at his discretion). The characters can buy no animals in Kratas except riding and draft horses, and certain expensive and rare magical items such as blood charms are very expensive here.

Prices for virtually all goods and services in Kratas range from one and a half to three times the costs listed in the **Player's Compendium**.

Troubleshooting

Little can go wrong in this encounter, unless the characters refuse the job. In this case, the cult members following them can be made quite obvious so they start to get involved. They may even see this group of cultists, or a second one, taking Rathann away captive. Whether or not they witness this, Jael can then find them again with the few things Rathann left behind hid under his bedding, and plead with them to find out what happened to him.

If the characters pressure the elf into paying them the entire 800 silver pieces in advance, he will do so. To achieve this, a negotiating character must achieve a Good result or better on a Persuasion Test against the elf's Social Defense.

Traveling the Land

This section describes the characters' possible experiences during their journey to the places marked on Rathann's map. This section contains all the information needed for encounters that the characters may face during their travels, descriptions of the terrain they must cover, the activities of the Throal Army troops and how those activities relate to the characters' mission, and the ways in which the Throal Army and the characters may interact. Refer back to this section whenever the player characters travel from place to place.

Themes and Images

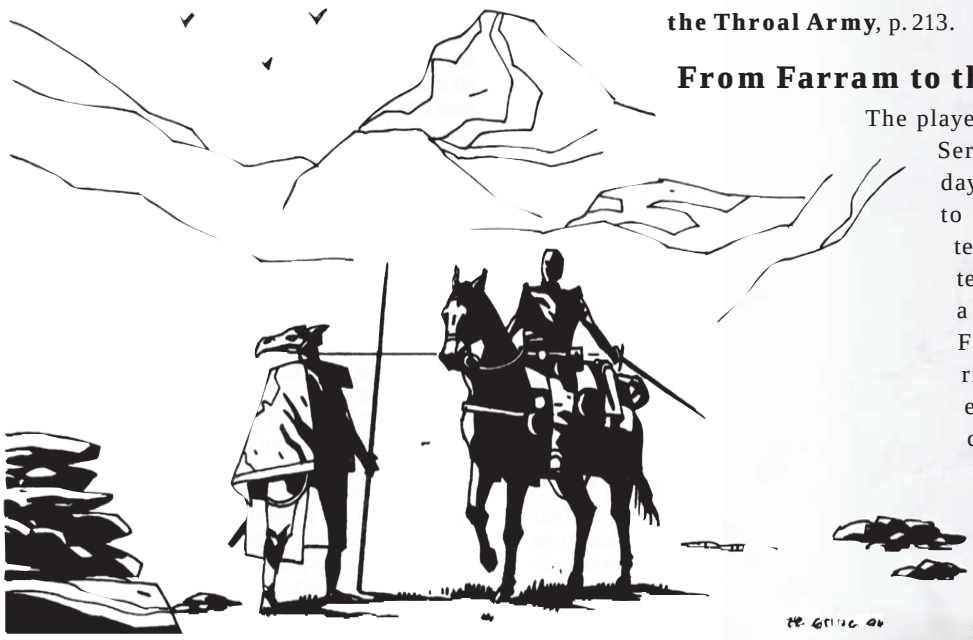
Play up an overall feeling of discomfort. The characters are journeying through some of the most dangerous stretches of wilderness in Barsaive. The Badlands and the Servos Jungle are both fraught with danger, so make sure the characters feel as if they are traveling through a hazardous no man's land.

Setting the Stage

The characters must travel quite a distance to investigate each of the places marked on the map. A journey to any of them will take seven to twelve days, depending on whether the characters walk or ride. The following information assumes that the characters travel from Kratas to the closest marked site first, then to those farther away. If the characters choose to investigate the three places in a different order, see **Troubleshooting** on p. 217 of this section, and the **Troubleshooting** sections in the following three sections. Refer to the **Travel Map** on p. 216 when using this section.

From Kratas to the Temple

The characters can make the long trip from Kratas to the Temple of the Great Hunter in several ways. The easiest way is to arrange for passage down the Serpent River, but they may instead choose to walk or ride the distance. Each travel option is described below.



River Travel

If the characters travel by river, they must arrange for passage on a riverboat. Riverboat passage costs each character six silver pieces per day. Bringing their mounts aboard the boat costs an additional four silver pieces per day for each animal. Luckily for the characters, the small port town of Daiche lies only a few hours' walk from Kratas. Daiche serves as Kratas' port on the Tylon River, a tributary of the Serpent, and so almost every merchant in Kratas owns a building in the port. The characters should find it easy to buy passage in the town.

The Serpent River port nearest to the Temple of the Great Hunter is the small town of Farram (see **Travel Map**, p. 216). This town is 2 days from Kratas by river, and so getting there costs each character 12 silver pieces without a mount and 20 silver pieces with one. The riverboat arrives at Farram near the end of the second day.

Farram

Farram is a small trading town located where the Tylon and Serpent rivers meet. Farram offers inns of varying quality, ranging from Cheap to Merchant. Prices for lodging match those listed in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 453 of the **Player's Compendium**. Despite Farram's small size, its shops offer a surprising variety of goods and services. Almost all the equipment listed in the **Player's Compendium** is available in Farram. Prices for some of these items—especially common magic items—are inflated, but prices for most common goods are no more than 10 percent higher than those listed in the **Player's Compendium**.

In Farram, the player characters notice a small contingent of soldiers from the Throal Army. King Varulus sent these soldiers to investigate the activities of the Cult of the Great Hunter (see the introductory fiction, p. 202). For more information about these soldiers, see **Encountering the Throal Army**, p. 213.

From Farram to the Temple

The player characters must cross the Serpent River and spend three days walking or two days riding to travel from Farram to the temple. Fortunately, the characters can arrange a ferry ride at a small trading village between Farram and the temple. This ride costs two silver pieces for each person or animal. The characters arrive at this village midway through the second day of travel from Farram, and once again they may notice a few soldiers from the Throal Army. The terrain between Farram and the

temple is dry and rocky, much like the Badlands. Sparse grass and small bushes dot the landscape, but little else grows here. The characters may encounter creatures that prefer such habitats, such as griffins or lightning lizards. For more information, see **Creature Encounters**, below.

Land Travel

If the characters travel overland from Kratas to the temple, they must pass through a large portion of the Servos Jungle. Journeying through the Servos, even if staying within sight of the Serpent River, is extremely hazardous, and the characters should take great care on such a trip.

The characters may choose to go directly from Kratas to the temple, or they may wish to stop at Farram. The trip from Kratas to Farram takes fourteen days walking or nine days riding. A direct route from Kratas to the temple takes eighteen days walking or twelve days riding, and characters who take the direct route will likely encounter many more creatures than characters who make the first leg of the journey by river.

Innumerable plants, both poisonous and harmless, choke the jungle between Kratas and the temple, making the way very difficult to traverse. This explains the fact that the travel times given above are slightly higher than the actual distance between the two places implies. The Servos Jungle also abounds in many different animals and creatures, most of which are very dangerous. In the Servos, the characters are likely to encounter jungle-dwelling creatures such as espagra, crojen, jungle griffins, or even blood monkeys (see **Creature Encounters**, below).

When the characters arrive at the temple, go to **The Horror's Temple**, p. 218.

From the Temple to the Kaer

The next place on the map is Kaer Varenna, Tyrlaan's home during the Scourge. The trip from the temple to the kaer takes three days walking or two days riding along the edge of the Servos Jungle. The terrain for this part of the characters' journey is a mixture of light jungle and dry, rocky wasteland. If the characters travel in a straight line from the temple to the kaer, they pass through areas of jungle and wasteland and may run into creatures native to the jungle or the Badlands, at the gamemaster's discretion. When the characters arrive at Kaer Varenna, go to **The Lost Kaer**, p. 225.

From Kaer Varenna to Tyrlaan's Stronghold

The final place on the map is Tyrlaan's stronghold in the ruins of Kaer Carell. The trip from Kaer Varenna to the Nethermancer's lair takes four days walking or two and a half days riding, first through the land bordering the Servos Jungle and the Badlands and eventually into the foothills of the Thunder Mountains.

As the characters travel toward the mountains, the terrain grows rockier and more barren, and the characters are more likely to meet mountain creatures such as griffins and ice flyers. The characters may also hear the rumblings for which the Thunder Mountains are Named (see the **Places of Legend and Peril** chapter on p. 54 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

For the best effect, the rumblings should occur after sunset, as darkness falls over the forbidding landscape. When the characters hear the thunder from the mountains, those with knowledge skills relating to Geography, Legends, or Horrors may make a Knowledge Skill (7) Test. If a character's test succeeds, he remembers some of the legends about the thunder. Some legends say the thunder comes from a great dragon that lies trapped beneath the mountains. Others claim that the trapped entity is Verjigorm, the Hunter of Great Dragons. This legend should seem especially relevant if the characters realize that their employer has some connection to the Cult of the Great Hunter.

If you wish, combine the sound of the thunder with an unexpected attack by some nasty creatures. In this case, the thunder causes each character to suffer a –2 penalty to his Perception Tests when trying to detect the sounds of approaching creatures. When the characters arrive at Tyrlaan's stronghold, go to **Tyrlaan's Lair**, p. 231.

Behind the Scenes

The following text describes events that are likely to occur during the characters' travels. Feel free to alter the timing of these events.

Creature Encounters

During their trek through the Servos Jungle and the Badlands, the characters are likely to encounter dangers that have little or nothing to do with the adventure's objective. The most significant of these dangers is creatures.

Arrange for the characters to encounter many different types of creatures in different situations. For example, the characters may stumble on the nest or lair of a creature

On the Cult of the Great Hunter

The characters may learn of the Cult of the Great Hunter in several ways: recognizing the runes on the back of the amulet, learning about the cult from the Throalic soldiers sent to investigate the cult's activities, or arriving at the Temple and confronting the cultists. Whatever the circumstances, the characters can learn the following information about the cult.

Making Knowledge and Persuasion Tests

Characters with Knowledge skills that might apply directly to the Cult of the Great Hunter, such as Barsaive History, Cults and Organizations, or History of the Scourge, may make Knowledge (7) Tests to learn about the cult. Indirectly related Knowledge skills, such as Horrors or Legends and Lore, require characters to make Skill (9) Tests. All available information that can be gleaned by a successful Knowledge Test appears below, arranged by result level. The character learns all information up to and including the information listed for the result level achieved; for example, a character who achieves a Good result learns the information listed for that result level and also for an Average result. All the characters know the general information, and the gamemaster may read that section aloud or paraphrase it as soon as the characters announce their intent to begin researching the cult. The characters may make Knowledge Tests to obtain additional information about the cult at any point after they hear of its existence. They may get any and all of their information about the cult from members of the Throal Army or citizens in the towns and villages they visit during their travels (see **Traveling the Land**, p. 211) by making successful Persuasion Tests. The result level achieved by a given player character determines how much information that character learns. Depending upon whom the characters speak with, the gamemaster may need to paraphrase some of the statements provided to reflect the speaker's actual knowledge of the cult.

General Knowledge

Many different secret societies operate throughout Barsaive, with many different goals. Some, such as the Lightbearers, serve Barsaive by using the magic of the Great Pattern of the Universe to combat the remaining effects of the Scourge. Living legend cults also often aid Barsaive; the Seekers of the Heart, who hope to restore the former beauty of the Blood Wood, and the Wielders of Purifier, who seek the legendary sword Purifier that was forged before the Scourge as a weapon against the Horrors, are two prominent examples of such groups. Other cults work for less benevolent purposes, and some represent potentially great dangers to the world. These are the Horror cults, whose members devotedly serve one or more of the astral

that attacks them in defense of its young. Or a creature may stalk the characters with the intention of eating them. Or the characters may hear something following them for hours or even days at a time. Should the characters investigate the sounds, they might find anything from a small bobcat or leopard to a pack of crojen or blood monkeys. Whether the characters succeed in finding their stalker before it pounces depends on how much the gamemaster wants to play on the players' and the characters' paranoia.

Do not allow creature encounters to overshadow the adventure's major focus. They should serve simply as graphic reminder of Barsaive's dangers.

Encountering the Throal Army

As noted earlier, the characters may encounter members of the Throal Army while in Daiche and Farram. The characters may also encounter soldiers from Throal while traveling from Farram to the temple, from the temple to the kaer, and from the kaer to Tyrlaan's stronghold. Use the guidelines below and in the following three sections to determine specifically when and how the characters encounter Throalic troops.

About the Soldiers

The group of Throalic soldiers in this area of Barsaive numbers about thirty-five men and women. Only five of them are adepts, including the group's leader, a dwarf Warrior Named Tharr Strongfist. The remaining four adepts are all Second Circle and include a Weaponsmith, an Elementalist, a Swordmaster, and a Scout. Use the sample characters on pp. 236–265 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for these adepts' statistics or create new characters. Statistics for Tharr and the non-adept soldiers appear in **Cast of Characters**, p. 251.

At the recommendation of Ardinn Tero, a scholar in the Great Library of Throal, King Varulus III sent these troops to investigate activities attributed to the Cult of the Great Hunter (see the introductory fiction, p. 202). Note

abominations that ravaged Barsaive during the Scourge. Though many Horror cults exist mainly in the overactive imaginations of Barsaive's Scourge-weary people, one cult poses a very real threat to the land: the Cult of the Great Hunter, whose members serve the Hor-ror known as Verjigorm, the Hunter of great dragons.

Barsaivians know of this Horror's existence only from tales told by two great dragons, Icewing and Mountainshadow. The stories say that Verjigorm hunted great dragons during the previous Scourge, though none have yet seen the Horror during the most recent Scourge.

Despite the lack of objective proof that Verjigorm still exists, few Barsaivians publicly doubt the words of the great dragons.

Average or Good Result

One incident relating to the cult of Verjigorm comes from the scholar Tiabdjin the Knower, who recently delivered to the Library of Throal a manuscript describing many of Barsaive's most dangerous magical creatures. According to one of the descriptions in this text, Verjigorm or those who worship the Horror may have indirectly caused the death of the great dragon Thermail. The description of the hydra states that a magician, probably a Nethermancer, created the foul hydra from a clutch of Thermail's eggs. When Thermail discovered the dreadful fate of her young, she impaled herself on one of the spires of the Delaris Mountains, which has since been Named Mount Wyrmspire. The Nethermancer who created the hydra and prompted Thermail to commit suicide may have belonged to the Cult of the Great Hunter. Though the tale does not mention the Hunter of Great Dragons or the cult directly, the deliberate corruption of a clutch of dragon eggs by a Name-giver is a hallmark of the few existing tales about the Cult of the Great Hunter. Certainly, such incidents are rare indeed—aside from Verjigorm's cult, only the Therans seem bold enough to act against a great dragon, and even they would do so reluctantly. (The well-known tale of Jaron and the Sphinx describes the last confirmed conflict between dragons and Therans, a conflict the dragons won decisively.)

Excellent Result

Fortunately for Barsaive, the Cult of the Great Hunter lacks organization. All existing evidence suggests that the cult is made up of many small groups, each working in its own way to serve its terrible master's ends. A Nethermancer leads almost every group of cultists, using the magic of life and death that he commands to serve Verjigorm. The Cult of the Great Hunter also counts adepts of other Disciplines among its members, including Warriors, Beastmasters, Elementalists, and others. According to rumor, some members are even questors of the Mad Passion Raggok, but these claims seem dubious. Any Mad Passion would balk at paying tribute to a Horror and would not likely allow his questors to offer devotion to another master.

that Joran Lightfoot was among their number, but went to scout ahead of them and hasn't been heard from since (to learn of his fate, see p. 217). Two small groups, each consisting of five soldiers and two Second Circle adepts, have split off from the main unit and are scouting two of the places marked on the characters' map. All three groups are at the gamemaster's disposal and the player characters may interact with all or none of them as suits the course of the story.

Tharr Strongfist has a map similar to the one that Rathann gave the characters. Strongfist's map shows the same three places marked, but unlike the characters' map, each of the places on Strongfist's map is given the Name it had before the Scourge. The temple is called the "Temple of Rashomon," Kaer Varenna has its Name—"Varenna"—written under it, and Tyrlaan's lair is labeled "Kaer Carell." If the characters discuss their mission with the Throalic soldiers, they may get a look at Strongfist's map. If so, they see the proper Names of all three sites. Also, they recognize that Kaer Varenna is marked with runes that match those on the amulet. Note that each group of soldiers has a copy of the army's map.

The soldiers are all devoutly loyal to the Kingdom of Throal and to King Varulus. When the characters encounter them, the soldiers are polite but not actually friendly unless the characters make successful Interaction Tests (see the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 92 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**) to warm them up. The soldiers are here on a distasteful mission and their demeanor reflects this fact. All the tales told of the Cult of the Great Hunter speak of atrocious acts, and the soldiers would much prefer the comforts of the Kingdom of Throal to the Badlands and the Servos Jungle.

If the characters make successful Persuasion Tests against the leader of whatever group they encounter, they can find out why the soldiers are in this area. If the characters then tell the soldiers of their own mission, the group's leader is likely to share what he knows about the

Extraordinary Result

Many of the activities attributed to the Cult of the Great Hunter appear to have little connection to Verjigorm because they involve indirect action against dragons, such as the theft of dragon eggs and assaults on the dragons' known allies and servants. Verjigorm can confront great dragons face to face, but his servants are Name-givers, and few Name-givers feel bold enough to challenge a great dragon directly.

Though tales of incidents attributed to the Cult of the Great Hunter are told all over Barsaive, recently reports of such activity have increased sharply along the border between the Badlands and the Servos Jungle.

Adventure Hook

The Cult of the Great Hunter operates in a number of different ways throughout Barsaive and while their activities are rather secretive, characters who played **Shattered Pattern** will know how to recognize members of this cult.

While traveling through the wilderness near one of Barsaive's many mountain ranges or jungles, they unknowingly pass a wyvern's territory. The aggressive beast attacks the group, giving them a hard time. During the fight, the characters receive aid from a troll Beastmaster Named Kardakhan, who manages to knock the wyvern out with a paralytic poison.

Kardakhan suggests leaving the place immediately and actively discourages the characters from finishing off the creature. He offers to accompany the characters to the next settlement for recovery and resupply. The next village is only a day's walk from their current location, so it's likely that the group shares a camp with the troll for the night.

The characters will soon notice that Kardakhan seems shifty, paranoid, and somewhat distant. This is because Kardakhan is actually a member of the Cult of the Great Hunter, and the troll has no intention of letting the characters get away. Kardakhan's followers are hiding nearby, waiting for his call. Even if the characters don't agree to camp together with the troll, he and the rest of his followers will ambush them in the following night.

A perceptive character may notice that their attackers (including the troll) all carry daggers with matching amber stones in the pommel, and also carry matching medallions (on closer inspection both the medallions and the amber stones carry the rune of the cult). Unfortunately, the daggers are also coated with the same paralytic poison that knocked out the wyvern.

Kardakhan's cult cell studies wyverns and their relationship to the dragons, hoping to find weaknesses they can use against their enemy. They desire to capture wyverns and their prey alive to experiment with. If the characters end up unconscious, they will be taken to the cell's hideout: a natural cave hidden a few miles away. The wyvern can also be found there, resting alongside the characters in a deep pit when they wake up ...

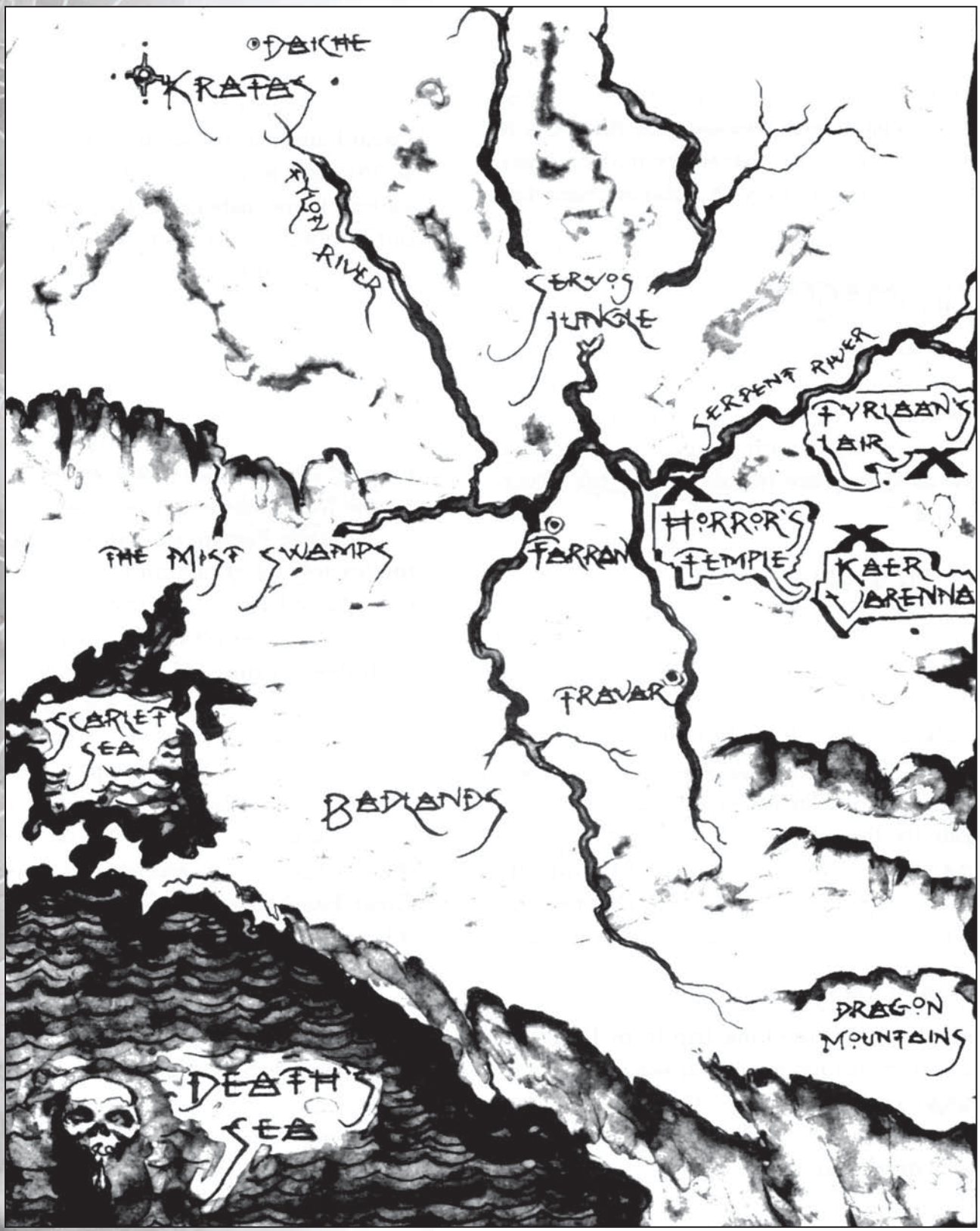
cult and to show the characters the army map. Whether or not the characters and soldiers decide to work together is up to the players and the gamemaster. The characters may want to join forces with the soldiers, convince the soldiers to help them or go their separate ways. In any case, the gamemaster decides how large a role the Throalic soldiers play in **Shattered Pattern**. If the characters ask the soldiers to work with them, they must convince the soldiers that working with the group of heroes will aid the soldiers' own mission for the King of Throal.

The Throalic soldiers may be used to either help or hinder the player characters. The soldiers may aid the characters by offering them information or helping them explore the places on the map. For example, if the characters seem to be losing a battle in the temple, Kaer Varenna, or Tyrlaan's stronghold, the gamemaster can arrange for Throalic soldiers to show up and help them out. Or the characters may encounter the soldiers battling the cultists or Tyrlaan's servants and arrive in time to help them. The characters may also meet the soldiers during their travels, particularly in the small trading towns and villages along the Tylon River. In addition, they might meet in the jungle or near the cave entrance to Kaer Varenna.

Conversely, the Throalic soldiers could be used as a hindrance to the party, though caution should be taken so as not to overwhelm the party or deprive them of allies they might need later. Here are some suggestions as to how to accomplish such a balance. The soldiers could suspect the characters of being involved with the cult, and be adversarial or even sabotage their equipment during a night in the wilderness. Later as they learn the truth by fighting alongside the party they could become allies. Also, working with the soldiers could create extra sources of noise, attracting attention at inopportune times or drawing larger herds of predators, or even constructs, at night to harass the resultant larger group.

Meeting the Army in Farram

In Farram, the characters find the Throalic soldiers sitting together in the common room of the inn where the characters are staying the night. The soldiers are most likely the main group led by Tharr Strongfist, though the characters may meet one of the smaller groups. The soldiers are sitting together at a large table at the far end of the common room. If the characters approach, they notice that the soldiers at the end of the table closest to them are reading a map. As soon as the characters get close, the group's leader tries to hide or fold up the map. If the characters wish to read the map in this brief glimpse, have any character close enough to see the table make a Perception (7) Test. A successful result allows the character to notice that the map depicts a region of Barsaive similar to the one on the characters' own map. A Good result



allows the character to notice that the soldiers' map has marks in almost the same places as the characters' map. An Excellent or better result allows the character to recognize that the map is a near-duplicate of the characters' own, and that the temple, kaer, and the Nethermancer's stronghold are clearly labeled (though the character cannot read those labels). How the meeting progresses from this point depends on how the characters deal with the soldiers.

Meeting an Army Encampment

The characters can also come upon a small encampment of one of the groups of Throalic soldiers roughly two to three hours' walk from any of the three sites. Again the soldiers' attitudes and actions depend on how the characters interact with them.

About Joran Lightfoot

Joran Lightfoot, an advance scout for this unit of the Throal Army, was captured by Tyrlaan and transformed into the Shadow Killer, a creature that serves the Nethermancer. The characters first encounter Joran during their exploration of Kaer Varenna. If the characters meet the Throalic soldiers after encountering Joran and ask them about him, the soldiers tell the characters that Joran disappeared while scouting out the temple and Kaer Varenna. The characters then likely inform the soldiers of Joran's attack on them and possibly of his bizarre abilities. The soldiers will be reluctant to believe the characters, though any kind of proof will go a long way toward convincing them.

If the characters meet the Throalic soldiers before encountering Joran, the soldiers mention a Scout who disappeared after being sent ahead to check out the temple and the kaer. They describe Joran, and so the characters should recognize him when they meet him in Kaer Varenna. (A full description of Joran Lightfoot/The Shadow Killer and game statistics for the creature the Scout has become appears in **Cast of Characters**, p. 247.)

Examining the Clues

While traveling from place to place, the characters may examine some of the clues Rathann gave them. Guidelines for examining the clues appear in **While in Kratas**, p. 209.

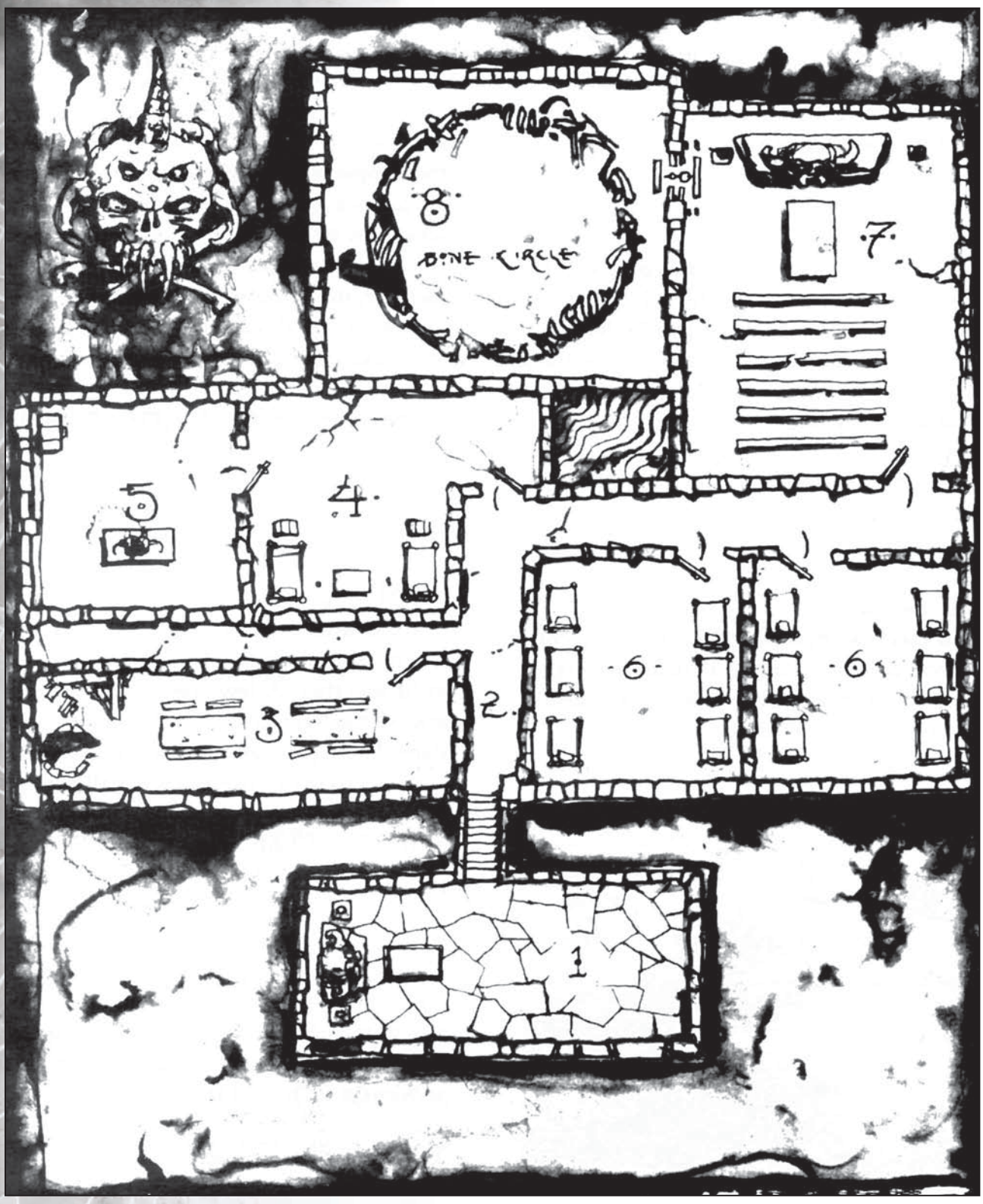
TROUBLESHOOTING

Because these events come into play between the main encounters of this adventure, they offer little opportunity for the characters to go off the track. Give careful attention, however, to staging encounters with creatures and with the Throalic soldiers. Avoid throwing creatures against the player characters that are too dangerous for the group to handle; no character should die during one of these encounters. Use the Throalic soldiers as you see fit, but it will help to decide how important the soldiers are to the story before the player characters encounter them. That knowledge will help you conduct any meetings between the two groups in a consistent fashion. Each of the following three sections includes hints for staging encounters with the soldiers.

The order in which information is presented in this section assumes that the characters travel from Kratas to the temple, from the temple to Kaer Varenna, and from the kaer to Tyrlaan's stronghold. If the characters choose to visit these three places in a different order, be prepared to adjust the information about each of the places to reflect what the characters know at that point. Each of the following sections devoted to the three sites includes notes to help the gamemaster deal with this contingency. The gamemaster must also be prepared to adjust the information regarding travel to the three sites to accommodate the characters' actions.

If the characters go to Tyrlaan's lair first, they may defeat him (and complete the adventure) before they discover the truth of what is going on. Also, because the encounters at each of the places pose an increasing threat to the characters, the adventurers may face a very unpleasant situation if their first battle pits them against Tyrlaan and all his servants at the Nethermancer's stronghold! To avoid both of these undesirable events, the gamemaster may choose to manipulate the available information so that as the characters choose each destination, they arrive at the three sites in the order the gamemaster wishes.

Because the soldiers also possess maps of the same sites, and their maps are clearly labeled, this approach requires more work on the gamemaster's part. He must juggle information and events to ensure that the two sets of maps match regardless of the characters' actions. Though the map provided in this adventure places the three sites in ascending order of danger as the characters travel east to west, if the characters decide against traveling in such a linear fashion, the gamemaster may simply run the first site they visit as the temple, the second site as Kaer Varenna, and the last site as Tyrlaan's lair, regardless of the placement of these sites on the published map. Despite



the manipulation of the order the party encounters each location, much is still open for the characters to respond in very different ways.

If the characters' decisions make this tactic necessary, note which place is which, especially when describing the soldiers' map. For example, if the characters have visited the second site (Kaer Varenna) before seeing the soldiers' map and believe it to be the temple, the soldiers' map should be labeled accordingly.

The Horror's Temple

This section describes a former temple of the Passion Raggok, now used by the Cult of the Great Hunter as a headquarters. The temple is the closest place to Kratas of the three sites marked on the Rathann's map.

When the characters arrive here, they discover that the temple has been dedicated to the Hunter of Great Dragons. Some of the cultists are present, though the cult's leader is

not. The characters may, however, learn that the leader is an elf and may mistakenly conclude that the leader is their employer, Rathann. When the characters investigate the temple, they find an obsidian sculpture in the form of a dragon, as well as a map similar to theirs, but with an additional place marked in the Throal Mountains. This fourth mark shows the location of a clutch of dragon eggs under Icewing's care. The dragon sculpture is a pattern item of Icewing, and Tyrlaan has used it to locate the clutch.

The characters may also find a small secret room containing a bone circle and bone spirit. Tyrlaan maintains the bone circle at the temple so that he may use his Gateway spell to travel quickly to and from the temple.

Themes and Images

The temple is the heart of a Horror cult serving the most terrible of Horrors, Verjigorm. The cultists have used the temple for acts of unspeakable evil, and so corruption permeates the area. The characters should feel uneasy whenever they are in the temple or near it. If the characters think Rathann is the cult's leader or a cult member, that conviction should add to their sense of dread. The characters should feel horrified at the thought that they are working for the leader of a cult dedicated to Verjigorm.

Adventure Hook

If the characters look carefully at Garollan's bed, they notice an odd piece of padding sticking out of the edge of his bedroll. If a character pulls at it, he removes a strip of parchment a few inches in length. There is text on the parchment, albeit in poor condition. The language of the text is *Sperethiel*. If the group knows how to read the elven language, they can decipher a date and the Name Traj Quickwrist, along with a journal entry describing a fight he had with an espagra. If the characters continue searching the bed, they find more tattered pages stuffed through Garollan's bedroll with similar journal entries. The pages are part of a journal detailing Traj's and Garollan's former adventuring group's quest into the Badlands.

It appears they wanted to explore a lost kaer Named Jembarden—a town once known as a supplier of orichalcum and True earth to surrounding settlements and cities before the Scourge. Galloran's and Traj's group sought to mine a natural vein running next to Kaer Jembarden's underground water source, along with the riches and magical treasures they expected such a place to hold. Since there is a lot of information missing from the tattered journal, it would probably take some research at the Great Library of Throal to determine a route to this kaer. Unknown to the characters, however, there is a Horror lurking in the depths of the kaer, responsible for the death of Traj's and Galloran's former companions.

Setting the Stage

The following information describes the Temple of the Great Hunter and the surrounding area. The rooms and areas described appear on the Temple Map.

(1) Courtyard

The area in front of the temple entrance measures 5 yards by 10 yards, floored in large stone slabs roughly shaped to fit together. A few weeds and grasses poke their way toward the light from the bits of exposed earth between the slabs. These patches of earth also contain many small holes in which rodents, insects and small snakes have nested.

Statue of Verjigorm

At the west end of the courtyard stands a large statue of Verjigorm; in describing it to the players, feel free to embellish on the details given in the **Gamemaster's Compendium** on p. 503. Just in front of the statue is a small stone table measuring about 1 by 2 yards.

Dark stains dot its surface and trail down its sides and legs. The dark spots are bloodstains from the blood magic rituals and spells the cultists have performed in front of the statue.

(2) Stairway and Corridors

The stairway measures 1 yard across, and the ceiling is about 2 yards high. Most characters except for dwarfs and windlings will have to crouch when using the stairs. The stairs end in a doorway that leads to a corridor roughly 2 yards wide wide and just over 2 yards high, dimly lit by light quartz crystals set into the stone walls. Trolls and obsidimen may have difficulty standing in this corridor. The walls are made of 1-yard-square stone blocks. Similar blocks form the walls of the temple.

The corridor stretches for roughly 8 yards before stopping at a door, where it turns to the right and runs for 15 yards. Down this expanse are two doors on the right and one on the left. Another corridor branches off to the left about 5 yards from the stairway. This branch corridor runs for roughly 10 yards and has a single door set into its left wall.

(3) Mess Hall/Kitchen

This room serves as the mess hall and kitchen and looks particularly filthy. Clearly, the members of the Cult of the Great Hunter care little for fine meals. The dining portion of the room contains two long wooden tables with benches on either side. The west side of the room is the kitchen area, which features a large fire pit, several stone and iron pots, and shelves full of dried provisions.

(4) Garollan and Quickwrist's Barracks

This room houses two of Tyrlaan's lieutenants: Garollan, a Fourth Circle Beastmaster; and Traj Quickwrist, a Fifth Circle Swordmaster. The room holds only two beds, two chests, and a small table. The chests hold the lieutenants' personal possessions.

The chest belonging to Garollan contains a dwarf sword, a pouch with 150 silver pieces in it, and a suit of hardened leather armor emblazoned with the symbol of the Army of Throal. This armor was most recently worn by Joran Lightfoot, the Throalic Scout sent to investigate the area. For more information on Joran's fate, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 247.

Quickwrist's chest contains three short swords, two daggers, and a pouch with 75 silver pieces. A doorway leading to Tyrlaan's workshop (5) is located in the west wall of the room.

(5) Tyrlaan's Workshop

This room is nearly empty, save for a large stone table in the center and a large wooden chest in the northwest corner. The stone table is covered with a soft cloth, on top of which sits a dragon-shaped sculpture of polished obsidian that reflects light in unusual ways. For more information about the dragon sculpture, see **Examining the Dragon Sculpture**, p. 239.

The wooden chest is locked, but it can be opened by making a successful Lock Picking (12) Test. The chest holds several unusual items, including a thick book with a worn cover of dark leather. This book is a grimoire of First through Seventh Circle Nethermancer spells. The grimoire contains the Seventh Circle spell Reverse Withering plus any other Nethermancer spells (up to Seventh Circle) the gamemaster wants to include. The chest also contains a bone tube that holds a rolled-up parchment map (see **Player Handouts,** p. 360), very similar to the map Rathann gave the characters. However, the parchment map also contains a mark in the Throal Mountains. This mark indicates Mount Vapor, the home of the great dragon Icewing, though it is not labeled as such on the map.

Characters with Dragon Lore, Geography, or other appropriate skills may make Knowledge Skill (8) Tests to see if they recognize the specific mountain marked. On an Average result, the character knows that the marked place is Mount Vapor. On a Good result or better, the character also knows that Mount Vapor is Icewing's domain.

(6) Barracks

These two rooms serve as living quarters for the other cultists. Each room contains six beds. Under some of the beds are a few of the cultists' personal possessions, though these persons own very little. If the characters thoroughly search both rooms, they find 60 silver pieces, three daggers, and two short swords.

Each of these rooms houses six cultists—five non-adept members and one adept Scout. For more information and statistics for the cultists, see **Encountering the Cultists**, p. 223.

(7) Worship Room

In this room, Tyrlaan and the cultists perform ceremonies and rituals intended to let them communicate with their Horror master, Verjigorm. By the north wall of the room stands a statue of Verjigorm, similar to the one in the courtyard. A large stone table, stained with dried blood, stands in front of the statue. Huge hanging tapestries depicting various scenes of Verjigorm ravaging the land and killing and feasting on the corpses of great dragons cover the rest of the walls.

Six rows of wooden benches, each roughly 5 yards long, take up the center of the room. These benches are very old and creak loudly when sat on. In the northwest corner of the worship room is a secret door (Detection Difficulty 15),

Adventure Hook

In the **Worship Room**, p. 220, characters looking for secret doors can find one behind the altar. The characters find a section on the back wall covered with barely visible words carved into the stone. Upon closer inspection, there seems to be an outline shaped like a rounded door. Though filled with grim and dust the words read, in an ancient dialect of the human language:

"SUSTAIN"

Opening the door requires the characters to press their hands against the wall for at least a minute. Once this has been done, the door slowly opens inward to reveal a small chamber that even the cult hasn't found before. It contains the temple's library and records, and a smaller altar in the back. It appears this room has been untouched since before the Scourge.

The altar contains a finely chiseled map of the whole temple, revealing the presence of the other secret room (see the **Bone Circle Room** on p. 220). Over it stands a small statue of the Passion Rashomon, looking down on the temple map with arms extended. While the room contains no obvious treasures, it contains a number of texts describing the questors of Rashomon who once used this temple and its history. Rashomon turned mad during the Scourge, and is now known as Raggok. The tomes and scrolls might contain clues for understanding what happened to the Mad Passions and are of great interest for the scholars at the Great Library of Throal—who will purchase them for a good price.

partially concealed by one of the large tapestries. Once a character finds this door, any character can automatically open it. The door leads to the Bone Circle Room.

(8) Bone Circle Room

This room covers 144 square yards and contains a bone circle (see the **Nethermancy Spells** chapter on p. 347 of the **Player's Compendium**). The bone circle is occupied by a bone spirit that attacks anyone who attempts to enter the circle. Tyrlaan cast this bone circle so that he could use his Gateway spell to travel quickly between the temple, Kaer Varenna, and his stronghold. Unless the characters try to enter the circle, the bone spirit leaves them alone.

The characters can attempt to speak with the bone spirit, though doing so requires a successful Interaction Test against the spirit's Social Defense. The spirit knows that it has been charged with guarding the bone circle and that it must destroy any who enter that space. It also knows Tyrlaan's Name and tells it to the characters if asked.

If the characters attack the bone spirit and destroy it, Tyrlaan knows it has been destroyed, but the characters will not be aware of his knowledge.

Bone Spirit

DEX: 12 **STR**: 12 **TOU**: 8
PER: 7 **WIL**: 7 **CHA**: 7

Initiative: 12
Number of Actions: 2
Attack: 12
Damage: 12

Physical Defense: 15
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 14
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 3

Death Rating: 43 **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 12 **Knockdown**: 12
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 74+ **Full Movement**: 148+

\+ This value is the spirit's flying Movement rate.

Legend Points: 70

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

See the **Nethermancy Spells** chapter on p. 348 of the **Player's Compendium** for more information and special rules on bone spirits.

Behind the Scenes

The following text describes events that are likely to occur or actions the characters are likely to take in the temple. Feel free to alter the timing and any other specifics as you see fit. Note, however, that some of these events occur in specific places within the temple.

The Statue Trap

The statue and table in the courtyard have a magical trap that the characters trigger if they walk within 1 yard of the statue. When triggered, the trap summons several venomous snakes to attack the trespassers. The snakes come from several directions at once: some from holes between the stone slabs and some from the jungle growth surrounding the courtyard. If the trap is triggered, the characters cannot avoid the trap's effect.

Statue Trap

Detection Difficulty: 12
Disarm Difficulty: 13 (magical)
Spell Defense: 12
Trap Initiative: NA

Trigger Condition: When a character walks within 1 yard of the statue, make a Step 13/D12+D10 Spellcasting Test against the character's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the trap is triggered and summons a number of venomous snakes.

Trap Effect: Summons witherfangs (3 per character)

The snakes, known as witherfangs, are small venomous serpents whose poison has the same effect as the Wither Limb spell (see the **Nethermancy Spells** chapter on p. 359 of the **Player's Compendium**). Statistics for witherfangs appear below. The triggering of the trap also alerts the cultists inside the temple. If Garollan is present (see **Encountering the Cultists**, p. 223) when the cultists move to attack the characters, he uses his Dominate Beast talent to send all the witherfangs away.

Garollan uses blood magic to strengthen his talent's effectiveness. By taking 3 Strain Points of damage, Garollan may make a Dominate Beast (15) Test against all the witherfangs. If the test succeeds, the snakes retreat into the jungle and between the stones.

Witherfangs (3 per character)

DEX: 7 **STR**: 5 **TOU**: 6
PER: 4 **WIL**: 4 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 4
Number of Actions: 2
Attack (3): 10
Damage:
Bite (2): 7 (see text)
Tail (3): 8

Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 5
Social Defense: 5
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0

On Kaer Varenna

The characters may have heard of Kaer Varenna and so may recognize it when they find the kaer. Characters with Barsaive History or other appropriate Knowledge skills may make Skill (8) Tests. On an Average or Good result, the character knows that the kaer lies near the Badlands and has not been heard from since the Scourge ended. On an Excellent result or better, the character knows that Throal sent messengers to many kaers near the Badlands when the Scourge ended, Kaer Varenna among them.

According to the messengers, Kaer Varenna was breached by the Horrors. In addition, rumor has it that the people of Kaer Varenna offered sanctuary to citizens from a nearby town that had been virtually destroyed by Horrors before its people could finish their own kaer.

Adventure Hook

In the rotting library of Kaer Varenna, the adventurers come across a tome describing the kaer's history and the town from which it was founded. While the old tome contains many geneologies and other boring information, careful study reveals the town of Varenna was devoid of adepts and its citizens seemed to lack any and all magical talent. Apparently, rumors attributed this to the town elders making a bad decision. A group of questors had maintained a shrine of Chorrolis in Varenna, and started to hire out the services of the town's adepts to other villages. This business went quite well and the demand for adepts in the surrounding lands was high enough to supply a steady income that made both the questors and the town of Varenna prosperous.

One day, the Wizard from the neighboring village of Hirya discovered that the questors of Varenna followed their adepts incognito, using their powers to encourage cooperation and better deals for their charges. This lead to a major crises between Varenna and the surrounding villages. To avoid hostilities, the elders of Varenna decided to ban the greedy questors and publically tear town the shrine of Chorrolis. The questors, in turn, cursed Varenna—a curse powerful enough to stop the people of Varenna from giving birth to children with magical ability. Ultimately, this curse developed into a major weakness that even lead to Kaer Varenna's doom later in history (see **Tyrlaan** in **Cast of Characters**, p. 244).

While Kaer Varenna has fallen, the curse laid upon this place is still active—athough there is no population around. Further research in the old library reveals a magician's journal on the matter, concluding that the curse can only be lifted when the shrine is restored and blessed by Chorrolis. A questor in the group of characters might receive a vision of his patron Passion to solve the ancient conflict and embark on a quest to bring a questor of Chorrolis here to consecrate the shrine. Lifting the curse will not only bring back the Passions' blessing, but also make the ruins of Varenna attractive for settling once again.

Death Rating: 36 **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 10 **Knockdown**: Immune
Unconsciousness Rating: 28

Combat Movement: 22 **Full Movement**: 44

Powers: Camouflage (3): 7, Climbing [S] (3): 10, Poison (SD 12; Wither Limb), Silent Walk [S] (3): 10

Legend Points: 155

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Witherfangs can be identified by their thick bodies and flared, cobra-like hoods. These snakes are named for the powerful poison transmitted through the stingers at the ends of their tails—a poison that can wither a victim's limb until it is virtually useless. See the **Creatures** chapter on p. 356 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on witherfangs.

Exploring the Temple

Though the characters may wander anywhere they want in the temple, only Tyrlaan's Workroom and the Bone Circle Room contain any clues regarding the identity of their employer. If the characters go to Tyrlaan's Workroom, they find the dragon sculpture and possibly the map, as well as a tome of Nethermancer spells.

The tome contains any Nethermancer spells the gamemaster wants to include. For more information regarding the dragon sculpture, see **Loose Ends**, p. 242, and **Examining the Dragon Sculpture**, p. 239. If the characters find the **Bone Circle Room** (p. 220), they may learn Tyrlaan's Name. The characters may believe that Tyrlaan is their employer, but this is not the case.

Encountering the Cultists

Once the characters arrive at the temple, they are likely to encounter any or all of the thirteen cultists who live in the building: ten non-adepts, two Second Circle Scouts, and Garollan. The cult's total membership comprises these thirteen, Traj Quickwrist, and Tyrlaan. All but Tyrlaan live in the temple. When the characters arrive, Traj Quickwrist is away at Tyrlaan's stronghold.

Statistics for the non-adept cultists and scouts appear below; statistics for, and descriptions of, Garollan and Traj Quickwrist appear in **Cast of Characters**, p. 249.

The gamemaster has several options in staging exactly how and when the characters encounter the cultists. A few of the most likely options are described below, but gamemasters are also encouraged to come up with other ways for the characters and cultists to meet.

Option One: In the Temple

When the characters arrive at the temple, the cultists are all inside. The characters encounter them if they trigger the statue trap or enter the temple. In the latter case, most of the cultists are in the worship room.

Option Two: Outside the Temple

When the characters arrive at the temple, several of the cultists are in the courtyard. Unless the characters move very quietly, the cultists spot and attack them.

Option Three: The Deserted Temple

When the characters arrive at the temple, most of the cultists are away gathering food or perpetrating some foul act. Two of the non-adepts remained behind to guard the temple, and the characters may meet them in the courtyard. The guards fight the characters if attacked.

Second Circle Dwarf Scouts (2)

Attributes

Dexterity (17): 7/D12 **Strength** (12): 5/D8
Toughness (16): 7/D12 **Perception** (17): 7/D12
Willpower (15): 6/D10 **Charisma** (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9 **Initiative**: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 9 **Physical Armor**: 8
Social Defense: 7 **Mystic Armor**: 3

Death Rating: 39 (51)* **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 11 **Knockdown**: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 31 (40)*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 34 **Full Movement**: 68

Karma Points: 12 **Karma Step**: 5/D8

Talents

Avoid Blow [D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Climbing [D] (2): 9/D8+D6
Durability (6/5) (3): 3
Karma Ritual (2): 2
Maneuver (2): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6
Read and Write Language (1): 8/2D6
—Human
Silent Walk [D] (3): 10/D10+D6
Tracking [D] (3): 10/D10+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Wood Carving (1): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Cult of the Great Hunter Lore (1): 8/2D6
Horror Lore (1): 8/2D6
Scourge History (1): 8/2D6

General:
Missile Weapons (1): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (1): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human
Swimming (1): 6/D10
Throwing Weapons (1): 8/2D6

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17)
Espagra-Scale Cloak (Phys 3; Myst 1; Init 0/1)
Padded Leather (Phys 4)

Broadsword (Damage 10/D10+D6 w/ scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
Net (Size 6; Range 6–10–12)
Bola (Damage 8/2D6; Range 12–20–24)
Shortbow (Damage 8/2D6; Range 30–60–120)
Quiver (w/20 shortbow arrows)

Absorb Blow Charm (2 Damage Points)
Desperate Blow Charm (4 Damage Points)

Wood Carving Tools
Climbing Kit
Navigation Charts (in map/scroll case)
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Writing Kit

Loot

25 silver pieces, 4 copper pieces

Legend Award

155 Legend Points

Cultists (10)

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Strength (10): 5/D8
Toughness (10): 5/D8
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 8
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 31
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 22

Combat Movement: 22
Full Movement: 44

Skills

Artisan:
Wood Carving (1): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Cult of the Great Hunter Lore (3): 8/2D6
Horror Lore (2): 7/D12
Scourge History (2): 7/D12

General:
Avoid Blow (3): 8/2D6
Climbing (2): 7/D12
Maneuver (2): 7/D12
Melee Weapons (5): 10/D10+D6
Swimming (2): 7/D12
Wilderness Survival (2): 7/D12

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

Broadsword (Damage 10/D10+D6 w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)

Wood Carving Tools
Climbing Kit
Trail Rations (1 week)
Peasant's Garb

Loot

D8 silver pieces

Legend Award

90 Legend Points

Encountering the Throalic Soldiers

The characters might encounter the Throalic soldiers in various ways while at or near the temple. Besides encountering a small contingent camped near the temple (see **Meeting an Army Encampment**, p. 217), another likely option is described below, but gamemasters are encouraged to come up with other ways for the characters to encounter the soldiers as well.

Optional Encounter: Dead Bodies

About two hundred yards from the temple, the characters find a pair of dwarf corpses wearing the armor of the Throalic Army. One or two limbs on each corpse are withered to almost nothing, and parts of the bodies look as if some animal has gnawed at them. The dead dwarfs were scouts sent to check out the temple; they triggered the statue trap, and the witherfangs killed them both. The cultists dragged the dwarfs' bodies into the jungle, where several of the jungle's smaller creatures began feeding on them. Any character who achieves a Good result or better on a Magical or Creature Lore (9) Test recognizes that the withered limbs must be the result of the Wither Limb spell or an attack by witherfangs. The character also knows that witherfangs rarely show up anywhere in Barsaive except the Blood Wood.

The Next Journey

When the characters have finished exploring the temple, go back to **Traveling the Land**, p. 211.

Troubleshooting

If the characters arrive at the temple first, not much can go wrong other than one or two of the characters getting killed. If they visit other places first, however, things can get complicated. For example, if the characters visit the temple after going to Kaer Varenna and finding the kaer's journals, they may know Tyrlaan's Name and everything about his betrayal of the kaer.

This knowledge may reinforce their suspicions that they are in the employ of Tyrlaan, and they may choose to quit rather than continue to work for such a despicable person.

If this happens, there are two options.

First, remind the players that the evidence their characters have found so far does not unmistakably link their employer and Tyrlaan, and that their employer and the cult leader may well be different people. Second, appeal to their sense of adventure and of fighting for the good of Barsaive and its people, by mentioning that unmasking, or possibly even confronting, such an evil could save many lives.

If the characters go to the temple after visiting Tyrlaan's lair, they must have either faced Tyrlaan and defeated him (a tough prospect), or somehow managed to escape his clutches. Either way, they know Tyrlaan is not their employer, but they still may not know the truth.

The Lost Kaer

This section describes Kaer Varenna. The ruined kaer is marked on the characters' map between the temple and Tyrlaan's stronghold.

When the characters arrive at this place, they should notice that the sigils marking the kaer's entrance match those on one side of the amulet Rathann gave them. By passing through the kaer's entrance, the characters trigger a trap that automatically animates several cadaver men, who seek out the trespassers and attack them. These cadavers are former residents of the kaer. If the characters survive this initial attack and go exploring, they may learn that Tyrlaan lived in this kaer and betrayed it to a Horror. If they do not already know the kaer's Name (from the Throalic soldiers, for example), they learn it in this place. The characters also discover several rooms full of hundreds of cadavers that Tyrlaan uses to create undead servants. The characters may also encounter Joran Lightfoot, transformed by Tyrlaan into a dreadful being known as the Shadow Killer. Lightfoot is locked in a makeshift prison and looks very much like an ordinary dwarf. If the characters talk with him, Lightfoot tells them a part of his story: he was scouting for the Army of Throal when cultists captured him near the temple. If the characters free him, Lightfoot—in the form of the Shadow Killer—attacks them at the first available opportunity.

On Kaer Carell

The characters may have heard of Kaer Carell and may recognize the name when they find the kaer. Characters with Barsaive History or other appropriate Knowledge skills may make Skill (8) Tests. On an Average or Good result, the character knows of a small town named Carell that once lay near the Badlands, and that the town did not finish building its kaer. On an Excellent result or better, the character knows that the town of Carell was attacked and nearly destroyed by Horrors before the people could finish their kaer, and that a nearby town supposedly offered sanctuary to Carell's few surviving citizens.

Themes and Images

The characters should find their explorations of the abandoned kaer disturbing, as the evidence mounts to indicate that the hundreds of dead residents were betrayed by one of their own. The characters also learn things that further convince them that the elf who hired them is the leader of the Horror cult as well as the murderer of this kaer. Meeting Joran should really unsettle them, as the pleasure they feel in saving a fellow Name-giver turns to terror when the Shadow Killer attacks.

Setting the Stage

Kaer Varenna sheltered the town of the same Name during the Scourge. After Tyrlaan summoned a Horror to slay the kaer's residents, he remained within its walls until the height of the Scourge had passed. During his stay he studied Nethermancy magic, concentrating his efforts on powerful spells such as Create Life and Alter Life. After the end of the Scourge, Tyrlaan used the kaer as a home base and traveled across Barsaive in search of more knowledge of the Horrors. After forming the Cult of the Great Hunter, Tyrlaan made a new home for himself in the ruins of Kaer Carell (see the **Plot Synopsis**, p. 205). Kaer Varenna is now little more than a storehouse for the cadavers Tyrlaan uses as servants. As in the temple, Tyrlaan has placed a bone circle in a secret room; in this case it is located behind the living area that he uses as a makeshift prison.

Kaer Varenna

The following information describes Kaer Varenna. All the rooms and areas described appear on the Kaer Varenna map on p. 226.

(1) Entrance

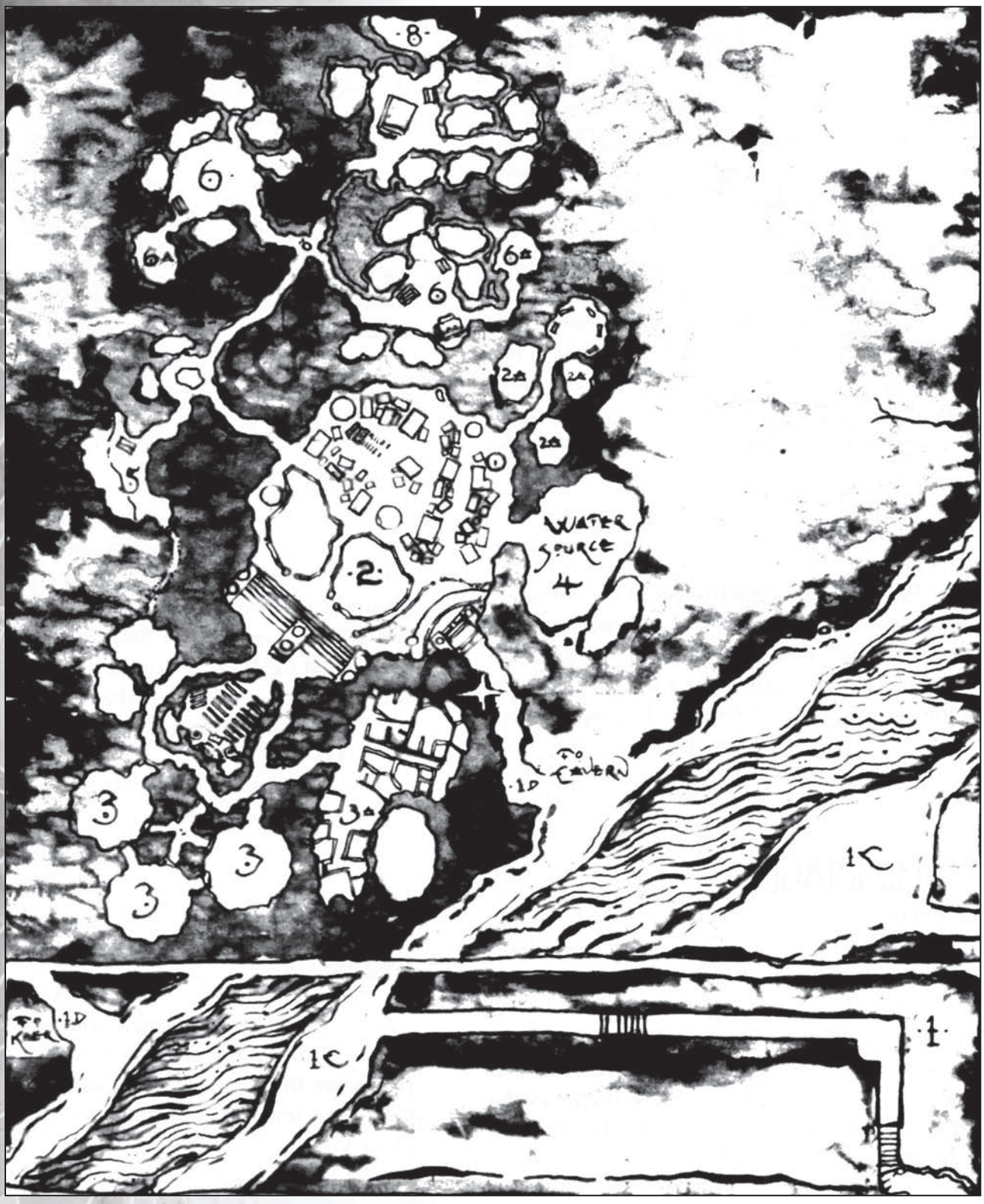
The entrance to Kaer Varenna lies in a cave near the edge of the Badlands. Within the cave is a stone stairway leading down to a smaller cavern through which an underground river runs. This river, an offshoot of the River of Bones that crosses the Badlands (see the **Places of Legend and Peril** chapter on p. 56 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**), provided the kaer with a source of fresh water during the Scourge. Beyond the river lies a tunnel that leads into the kaer's central chamber.

Kaer Door Trap

Detection Difficulty: 19
Disarm Difficulty: 20
Spell Defense: 12

Trap Initiative: 29/D20+D12+D10+D8

Trigger Condition: When a character walks within 1 yard of the kaer entrance, make a Step 19/D20+2D6 Spellcasting



Test against the character's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the trap is triggered and animates a number of cadaver men.

Trap Effect: Animates cadaver men (3 per character).

Cadaver Men (3 per character)

DEX: 4 **STR**: 6 **TOU**: 7
PER: 4 **WIL**: 6 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 4 **Physical Defense**: 6
Number of Actions: 1 (4; see text) **Spell Defense**: 6
Attack (3): 7 **Social Defense**: 11
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 0
Claws (3): 10 **Mystic Armor**: 1

Death Rating: 39 **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 11 **Knockdown**: 7
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 18 **Full Movement**: 36

Legend Points: 150

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Cadaver men become easily enraged, flying into a manic fury if they experience any significant pain, such as being subjected to a Pain spell or receiving a Wound.

See the **Horrors** chapter on p. 448 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on cadaver men.

(1A) Cave

The outermost cave that leads to the kaer is carved from rough stone, with a floor of sandy dirt. The cave is roughly 3 yards high by 3 yards wide, and about 25 yards deep. At the back of the cave is the top of a stone stairway.

(1B) Stairway

Each step in the stone stairway is 3 yards across, 1 yard deep, and 1 foot high. The top step is littered with rubble, some of which bears runes and sigils. These stone pieces are the remains of the kaer's original outer door. If the characters examine the runes and sigils, have them make a Perception (5) Test. Any character whose test succeeds notices that the runes are the same as the runes on Rathann's amulet under the Horror rune (see **Examining the Clues**, p. 209).

The ceiling over the stairs is only 2 yards high, so taller characters may have difficulty walking down the stairway. The steps descend for approximately 40 yards before stopping at a 7-yard-square landing. The stairway then turns to the left and continues down for another 60 yards before coming to an end in a corridor that is 3 yards wide by 2 yards high. This corridor continues straight for 40 yards and leads to a large cavern.

Every fifth step in the lower portion of the staircase contains a trigger for a trap that causes the stone slabs to flatten, creating a steep and smooth downward slope. Statistics for this trap appear on p. 229.

When the characters begin to descend the steps, have each player make a Perception (5) Test. Any character whose Perception Test succeeds hears a faint roaring coming from the bottom of the stairway. The sound grows louder and louder as the characters descend. Once they reach the cavern, they see a rushing river cutting across it that makes so much noise that the characters must shout to communicate with one another.

(1C) Cavern

The cavern at the foot of the stairs is 60 yards wide, roughly 30 yards long, and 10 yards high. The river that runs across it, some 35 yards from the cavern's entrance, is wide. On the other side of the river, the cavern narrows to a tunnel roughly the same size as the corridor leading from the stairs to the cavern.

In order to enter the kaer, the characters must cross the river, the current of which runs from right to left (assuming the characters are facing the far side). The water is only three feet deep at its highest, but the current is strong enough to make a character lose his footing and be swept away. Characters attempting to wade across the river must make a Strength (6) Test. If the test succeeds, the character crosses the river safely. If the test fails, the current sweeps the character off his feet and begins to carry him down-stream. The character may then immediately make a Dexterity (7) Test to try to regain his footing, and a Strength (9) Test to resist the river's current. If both tests are successful, the character makes it across the river. If either test fails, the character is swept away.

The river carries each fallen character 10 yards per round. If the character cannot regain his footing after 5 rounds, the character is swept into a smaller tunnel downstream. The river runs through this tunnel for 100 yards then becomes a waterfall. If the character cannot regain his footing before reaching the waterfall, he plummets 50 yards and suffers appropriate Falling Damage (see the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 107 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). No armor protects against this damage.

If the characters stretch a rope or some similar guide across the river, they can all cross safely. Note that obsidimen and trolls weigh too much for the current to knock them down, and so such characters need not make any Strength Tests to cross.

(1D) Kaer Doorway

The tunnel on the far side of the river leads to the kaer's doorway. The area in front of it is littered with bits of stone that were once part of the kaer's outer door, some covered with runes and sigils. If the characters examine the runes, have them make Perception (5) Tests. Any character whose test succeeds notices that the runes are the same as the runes on Rathann's amulet under the Horror rune (see **Examining the Clues** on p. 209).

Large stone slabs form the floor and walls of the tunnel, which leads to the kaer's Central Chamber (see the Kaer Varenna map on p. 226). At the end of the tunnel is another doorway, littered with rubble bearing the same runes and sigils. Tyrlaan placed a magical trap at this inner doorway to do away with anyone who dares to trespass in his former home; for details, see **Entering the Kaer**, p. 230.

(2) Central Chamber

This large room, roughly 200 yards wide by 300 yards long, is the kaer's central gathering place. Eight large light quartz crystals mounted on the chamber's outermost walls provide dim light. When the kaer was occupied, the residents gathered here for important ceremonies and meetings. Merchants set up shops around the chamber's perimeter, and so it also served as a marketplace of sorts. When Tyrlaan brought the Horror into the kaer, many of the kaer's residents fought each other and the Horror that corrupted them in the central chamber. The battles left the room in a state of disrepair; many of the buildings in it are dilapidated to the point of near-collapse.

If the characters search this area thoroughly, they can find up to 200 silver pieces' worth of coins in various denominations, including coppers and silver and gold pieces.

(2A) Offices

A side tunnel leading from the central chamber opens into three smaller rooms where the kaer's leaders attended to the task of ensuring that the affairs of Kaer Varenna ran smoothly. Each of these rooms is 10 yards long by 20 yards wide and contains the rotting remnants of desks, chairs, and tables.

One of the rooms served as the kaer's library; if the characters search this room, they can find journals kept by the kaer's leaders that describe Tyrlaan's betrayal of Kaer Varenna (see **Exploring the Kaer**, p. 230). The library also holds two grimoires, one containing First through Fourth Circle Elementalism spells and one containing First through Fourth Circle Illusionism spells. The gamemaster determines the number and which specific spells each grimoire contains.

(3) Food Growth Rooms

The kaer's residents grew food in these rooms when their stored supplies ran out. Like many other large kaers, Kaer Varenna had a separate room for livestock (Room 3A), but mostly grew fruit and vegetables. The glow moss that lines the walls in these rooms dimmed long ago, leaving these areas pitch dark.

When the characters enter these rooms, they notice that the air temperature is much cooler than in the rest of the kaer. Light from their torches will show them the reason: Tyrlaan cast spells on these rooms to keep their temperature low, to slow the decay of his cadaver supply. The growth rooms are filled with hundreds and hundreds of corpses of those who once lived in the kaer. Tyrlaan uses these bodies to make cadaver men.

The presence of hundreds of corpses makes the rooms reek of death and decay, something the characters cannot help noticing when they approach. To determine if any of the characters are affected by the sickening stench, have each make a Toughness (3) Test. Any character whose test fails incurs a –1 penalty to all Action Tests until he leaves the area. This effect continues for one minute after the characters leave these rooms.

(4) Water Room

All kaers needed a source of fresh water, and Kaer Varenna was no exception. This room was built around a small offshoot from the underground river that runs past the kaer's entrance. The water is pure and clean and poses no threat to the characters.

(5) Dining Area

Across the kaer from the water room is the kaer's dining area, where the residents ate together. This room is full of rotted tables, benches, and chairs. Strewn around the room are the shattered bits of countless dishes, plates, and cups.

(6) Living Chambers

Most of the kaer's residents lived in these rooms. Each living area consists of a 30-square-yard room connected to several smaller rooms. Each smaller room housed a single family, and all the families shared the larger chamber and a communal bathing room (6A).

After destroying the Horror he had summoned to the kaer, Tyrlaan spread out his operations to take up a larger part of the living areas. He turned one of the family rooms into an experimentation chamber, and evidence of his nefarious activities still remains there. Large shelves along the walls hold broken jars that once contained various herbs and potions, and in the center of the room is a stone bowl four feet in diameter, covered in dried blood. In this room, Tyrlaan began his dreadful experiments with Create Life and Alter Life spells. Tyrlaan abandoned this experimentation chamber when he moved to his lair in the remains of Kaer Carell.

(7) Prison Cells

Tyrlaan turned another of the living areas into a makeshift prison. The characters may find Joran Lightfoot, now the Shadow Killer, in one of these rooms. Shortly after the characters free him, Joran attacks them (see **Encountering the Shadow Killer**, p. 230).

(8) Bone Circle Room

A secret door (Detection Difficulty 15) is located behind Joran's prison cell. Once the door is found, the characters can automatically open it. The door opens to a 12-yard by 12-yard room that contains a bone circle (see p. 347 of the **Player's Compendium**). The bone circle is occupied by a bone spirit that attacks anyone who attempts to enter the circle. As with the bone circle at the temple, Tyrlaan cast this one so that he could use his Gateway spell to travel quickly between his three bases of operations. The bone spirit does not harm the characters unless they try to enter the circle. See **The Horror's Temple**, p. 221, for a further description and game statistics for the bone spirit.

On the Great Dragons

Once the characters realize that their job in **Shattered Pattern** is somehow connected to the Cult of the Great Hunter, they may also reason that it has something to do with great dragons. Characters with the Creature Lore or Dragon Lore skills can make Knowledge Skill (9) Tests. On an Average result, the character knows the types of powers that dragons possess. The character does not necessarily know game specifics, but he knows that dragons breathe fire, have armored scales, and so on. A Good result means that the character knows the differences between the three main types of dragons—common, Cathay, and great—and that dragons lay eggs to reproduce. These eggs hatch several years after they are laid, and Nethermancers and wizards prize them highly because of their magical nature. On an Excellent result, the character knows about drakes, the small dragonlike creatures that can shapeshift into Name-giver form. Drakes often act as servants and agents for some of Barsaive's more powerful great dragons. On an Extraordinary result, the character knows most of the information on dragons and drakes from the **Dragons** chapter on p. 378 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Behind the Scenes

The following text describes events that are likely to occur and actions the characters are likely to take in Kaer Varenna. Feel free to alter the timing and any specifics of these events.

Traps Along the Stairway

The second half of the stairway that leads down to the kaer's entrance contains a trap that, when triggered, causes the stairway to flatten into a steep incline. The characters will immediately slide down, suffering appropriate damage.

Folding Stair Trap

Detection Difficulty: 9
Disarm Difficulty: 9

Trap Initiative: 13

Trigger Condition: Pressure plates located in every fifth step.

Trap Effect: The slabs that form the steps shift to create a rough, stone slide. Characters standing on the stairs when the slide forms must make a successful Dexterity (9) Test to stop themselves from beginning to slide. Once a character starts to slide, he does not stop until he hits the bottom. Those who slide down the stairs take Step 5/D8 damage every 20 yards of travel. Physical armor protects against this damage.

Crossing the River

A krillra, the female form of a krilworm, has made her nest in the cavern that leads to the kaer's entrance. Like their male counterparts, krillra have an affinity for Nethermancers and Nethermancy magic; this krillra was drawn to the cavern by Tyrlaan's magic.

The krillra attacks anyone who attempts to enter the kaer and defends itself if attacked. The krillra hides on a ledge in the cavern wall opposite the kaer entrance. When the characters enter the cavern, have each character make a Perception (12) Test. Any characters whose tests are successful notice both the ledge and the fact that a creature is on it. Characters who make a successful Perception Test and also possess the Creature Lore skill recognize the creature as a krillra.

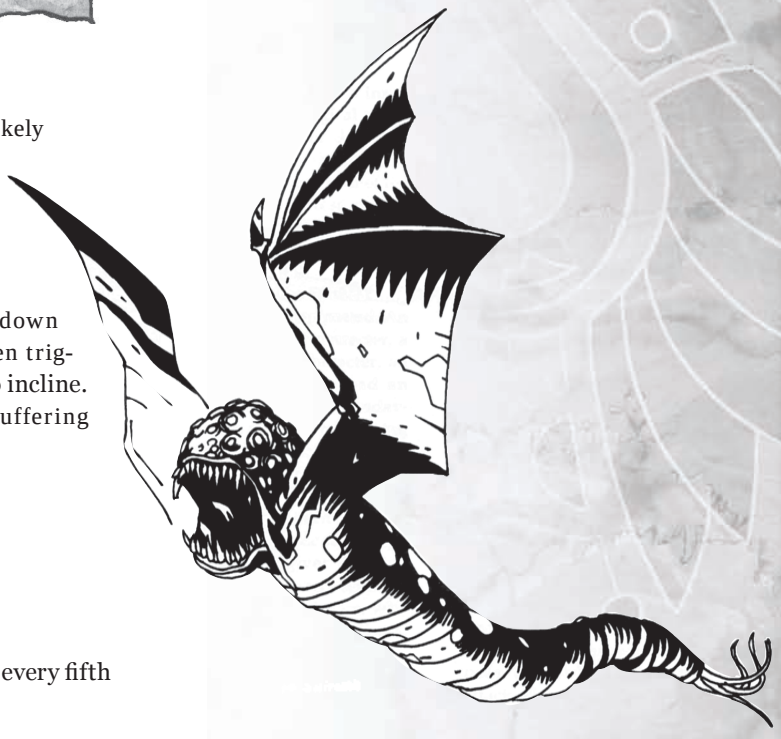
Game statistics for the krillra appear below.

Krillra

DEX: 11 **STR**: 14 **TOU**: 12
PER: 8 **WIL**: 8 **CHA**: 7

Initiative: 12
Number of Actions: 4
Attack (4): 15
Damage:
Bite: (3): 17
Tentacles (1): 15

Physical Defense: 12
Spell Defense: 10
Social Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 8
(tentacles 6)
Mystic Armor: 3



Death Rating: 59 (77) **Recovery Tests**: 5
Wound Threshold: 17 **Knockdown**: Immune
Unconsciousness Rating: 52 (67)

Combat Movement: 82+ **Full Movement**: 164+

\+ This value is the creature's flying Movement rate.

Powers: Durability (3), Low-Light Vision

Legend Points (2): 940

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

The female krilworm, or krillra, shares certain features with the male, but in many ways looks quite different. The krilworm, at its largest, measures no longer than a human's hand and foot placed end to end. The krillra, however, often stretches 15 feet or more in length. The krillra also has a single, triple-faceted eye.

See the **Creatures** chapter on p. 317 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on krillra.

Entering the Kaer

When the characters pass through the kaer's inner doorway, they trigger another of Tyrlaan's magical traps. As soon as the first character walks through the doorway, make a Step 15/D20+D6 Spellcasting Test and compare the result to each character's Spell Defense. (Note the result level of the test against each character.) On a successful test, one or more characters trigger the trap, which animates several cadavers from the food growth rooms (see the Kaer Varenna map, p. 226).

The cadavers seek out and attack the trespassers. Use the highest result level of the Spellcasting Test to determine the number of cadaver men animated. An Average result animates one cadaver man per character, a Good result animates two cadaver men per character, an Excellent result animates three per character, and an Extraordinary result animates four per character. The cadavers take a few minutes to fully awaken and begin searching for the trespassers. At the gamemaster's discretion, the search can take as long as an hour or as little as ten minutes.

After the cadavers have awakened, the characters may hear them walking around in the kaer. Have each character make a Perception (7) Test. Any character whose test succeeds hears what sounds like a Name-giver walking around, dragging his feet. If the characters seek the source of the sounds, they quickly find the cadavers, who immediately attack the characters. For the cadavers' statistics, use those provided on p. 225 or in the **Horrors** chapter on p. 448 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

To detect this trap, a character must make a successful Detect Trap (12) Test. Disarming this trap requires a successful Disarm Trap (12) or Dispel Magic (12) Test.

Exploring the Kaer

Though the characters may explore any area of the kaer they wish, only two rooms provide the player characters with clues regarding the identity of their employer: the Bone Circle Room and the kaer's library. They may also notice several more runes identical to the drawn-over ones on Rathann's amulet. Hopefully, the characters recognize that the amulet belonged to a resident of Kaer Varenna; specifically, that it belonged to Tyrlaan.

If the characters search the offices adjacent to the kaer's central chamber, specifically the one used as a library, they may find a set of journals kept by the kaer's leaders. These journals include passages describing Tyrlaan's arrival in the town of Varenna before the Scourge, how Varenna's leaders learned of Tyrlaan's corruption, and Tyrlaan's subsequent betrayal of the kaer to the Horror that devoured the residents. If the characters find the Bone Circle Room, they may be able to learn Tyrlaan's Name from the circle's guardian bone spirit.

Encountering the Shadow Killer

As the characters explore, they may encounter the Shadow Killer in one of two ways: they may find him in the makeshift prison cell in the kaer's living areas, or Joran Lightfoot may follow the characters through the kaer in his shadow form. Each of these options is described below.

A full description and game statistics for Joran Lightfoot/The Shadow Killer and his different forms appears in **Cast of Characters**, p. 247.

Option One: Imprisoned

If the characters explore the living areas, they hear Joran shouting for help. If the characters investigate, they find the dwarf locked in one of the rooms, dressed in tattered clothing and looking incredibly relieved to see potential rescuers. Picking the lock requires a successful Lock Picking (7) Test. Alternatively, the characters can break down the door down; it has Physical Armor 7 and a Death Rating of 20 (see **Barriers and Structures** on p. 106 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

If the characters ask Joran about himself, he tells the characters that he is a Scout working for the Army of Throal. He was sent to check out an apparent headquarters of the Cult of the Great Hunter, but the cultists captured him and imprisoned him in the kaer. Joran begs to be released, and if necessary offers to show the characters evidence he found about the cult and its activities. Once released, Joran waits for the most inopportune moment (from the characters' point of view) to shift to his deadly, Horror construct-like, humanoid form and attack. If possible, have Joran wait until the cadaver men attack the characters before launching his assault.

If the characters refuse to release Joran, he screams furiously at them as they leave the area. As soon as the characters are out of sight, Joran shifts into his shadow form and follows them (see **Option Two**: **Following the Characters**, p. 231).

If any character tries to astrally examine Joran, he must make an Astral Sensing Test against Joran's Spell Defense. Any character whose test succeeds detects traces of tainted magic in Joran's pattern. If asked about this, Joran tells the characters that he fears he may have been Horror marked during his explorations near the temple.

Option Two: Following the Characters

If Joran follows the characters in his shadow form, allow the characters to make Perception (9) Tests to notice that something is tracking them. Any character whose test succeeds notices shadows along the kaer's walls that seem to move in an unusual fashion. If a character achieves an Excellent or Extraordinary result, he notices that the shadow seems to move completely independently of the characters.

Once the characters detect Joran's presence, he immediately assumes his humanoid form and attacks them. If the characters fail to notice him, Joran waits for the most inopportune moment (for the characters, that is) to attack. If possible, he waits until the cadaver men attack before launching his own assault. He attacks one character at a time, starting with the largest or strongest. Joran does not fight to the death. If he nears unconsciousness, he assumes his shadow form and attempts to flee.

Encountering the Throalic Soldiers

As at the temple, the characters may encounter Throalic soldiers at or near the kaer. Besides encountering a small contingent camped outside the kaer (See **Meeting an Army Encampment**, p. 217), two other likely options are described below, but gamemasters are encouraged to come up with other ways for the characters to encounter the soldiers.

Option One: Meeting in the Kaer

Soon after the characters enter the kaer, they meet three dwarfs wearing armor of the Throalic Army. All three are army scouts investigating the activities of the Cult of the Great Hunter. If the gamemaster chooses this option, six cadaver men animated by the dwarfs' entry attack them at some point. These cadaver men are in addition to any animated by the player characters' entry (see **Entering the Kaer**, p. 230).

Decide if the dwarfs arrived in the kaer before or after the characters, and how much the dwarfs have learned about the Horror cult or the kaer's fate. If the dwarfs arrived before the characters, the characters might encounter the dwarfs when they come to the dwarfs' aid in battle against the cadaver men or Joran. If the dwarfs find Joran, they free him and arm him with a short sword. Alternatively, if the dwarfs arrive in the kaer after the characters, the dwarfs might bail the characters out as they fight the cadaver men or Joran.

When the characters have finished exploring the kaer, go to **Traveling the Land**, p. 211.

Option Two: Coming to Joran's Aid

Once Joran has attacked the characters, have the dwarfs arrive in the heat of battle. Joran hears the dwarfs coming and changes back into his dwarf form just in time to dramatize taking a hard hit from the characters. The dwarf soldiers rush to their lost Scout's aid, ignorant of his transformation. Depending on the characters' reaction to this turn of events, Joran may turn into his shadow form and flee or stay and fight as a dwarf.

Upon Joran's retreat, have at least one or two of the soldiers see him transform and able to be convinced of the characters' story, even going so far as to call for a truce to talk it out if need be. If the dwarf soldiers seem to be winning or causing too much trouble, Joran can always turn on the dwarfs leading to a momentary bit of confusion before a, hopefully peaceful, resolution as the soldiers realize part of their friend's fate.

Troubleshooting

Unless one or two of the characters get killed, not much can go wrong in this encounter as long as the characters visit the kaer after exploring the temple. If the kaer is not the second place the characters visit, the situation will be slightly different. If the characters visit the kaer first, they may learn Tyrlaan's Name and the fact that he betrayed the kaer to a Horror, but they may not know of his involvement with the Cult of the Great Hunter.

The similarity between the kaer runes and the sigil on Rathann's amulet may lead the characters to the logical but incorrect conclusion that Tyrlaan, betrayer of helpless people to a dreadful death, is the man who hired them. If so, the characters may well choose to quit now, take the silver they've been paid and forget they ever took this job. If this happens, remind the players that the evidence their characters have found is far from conclusive; it is still quite possible that their employer and Tyrlaan are different people. Other, more subtle, reminders of their call to be heroes or the value of understanding more about their employer to deal with him appropriately can also be used if the players seem likely to be motivated by such concerns.

If the characters visit the kaer after visiting Tyrlaan's lair, they have most likely faced Tyrlaan and either defeated him or escaped him. If so, they know Tyrlaan is not their employer, but they still may not know the entire story.

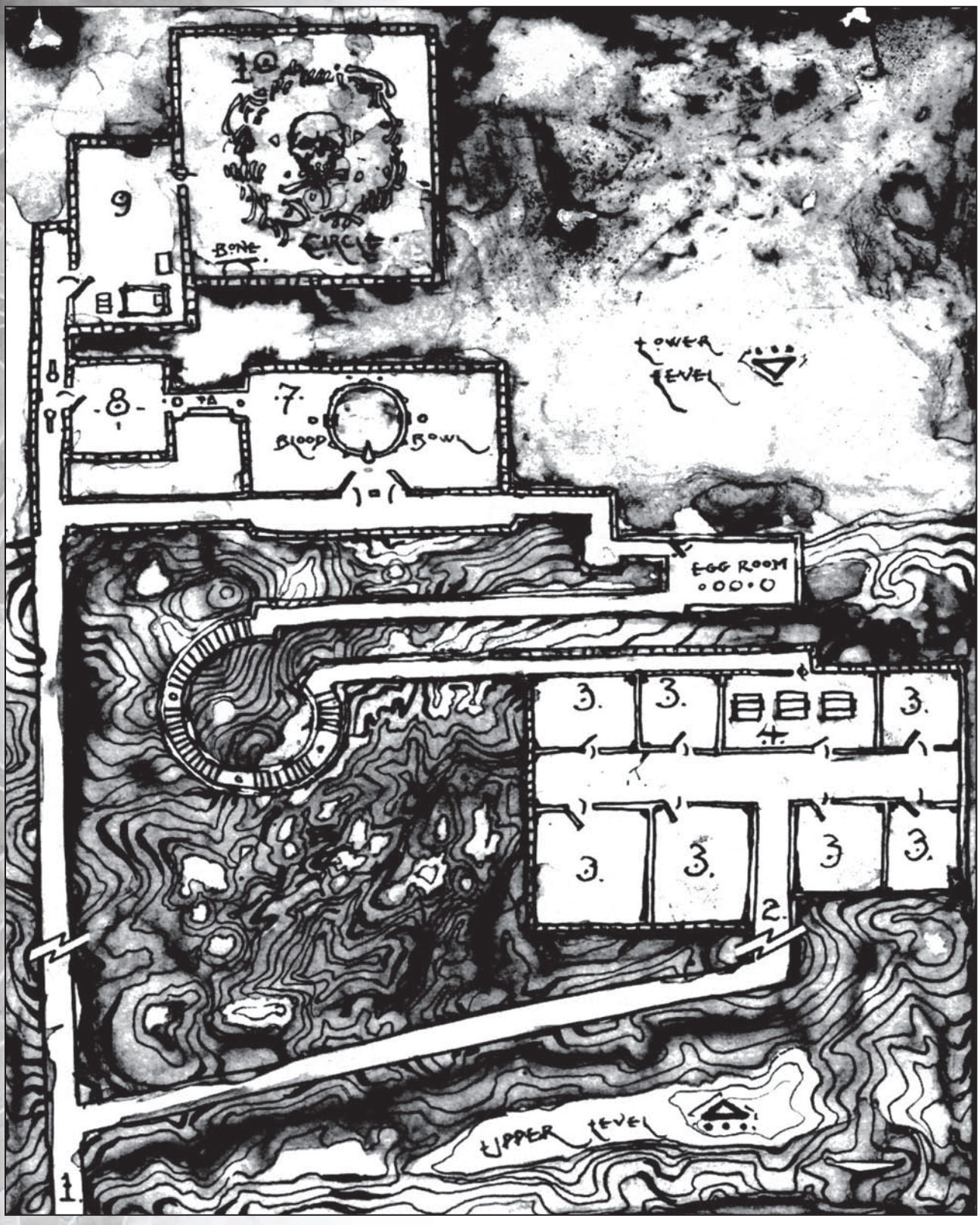
If any of the characters die in the kaer and their bodies are left behind, Tyrlaan retrieves the bodies and reanimates them using his Alter Life spell. If this happens, the remaining characters more than likely face their fallen companions as enemies once they arrive at Tyrlaan's lair. If Joran is killed, Tyrlaan reanimates him and transports him to the lair, where the characters may confront the transformed dwarf again.

Tyrlaan's Lair

This section describes the stronghold where Tyrlaan currently lives and performs his magical experiments to serve his Horror master. The Nethermancer's lair is indicated by the marked point farthest to the right on the characters' map.

When the characters arrive and explore this place, they discover that their employer and the elven Nethermancer of which they have been learning are not the same person. The characters can also learn Rathann's identity, his relation to Tyrlaan, and Tyrlaan's evil plans for Rathann.

When the characters search the upper level of the lair, they find a room containing three crystal coffins. A male elf and a male human occupy two of the coffins; each of these



Name-givers bear terrible scars along their arms, legs, and torsos that resemble the scars borne by Rathann. On the lower level, the characters find several rooms containing bits and pieces of Tyrlaan's horrible experiments. In one large room they find several dragon eggs, all in some sort of magical hibernation. Another large room contains a huge stone bowl set into the floor, filled with a boiling, dark substance that resembles blood. This substance is Tyrlaan's blood broth, which he uses to cast Create Life and Alter Life spells. Floating above the blood broth is a large stone slab, on which Rathann is bound. A secret tunnel connects this room to another, where a smaller version of the blood-broth bowl contains one of the dragon eggs that Tyrlaan is subjecting to his Alter Life spell. This level of the lair also includes the Nethermancer's living quarters and yet another bone circle.

In many areas of the lair, various creatures and servants stand guard. The characters must face all of these

if they are to foil Tyrlaan's plans and discover Rathann's true identity.

Themes and Images

Tyrlaan's lair is a dark, dank place, forever tainted with corrupt magic. Verjigorm's Horror mark on the Nethermancer extends to his living space, and the Horror's tainted power saturates Tyrlaan's stronghold like a rank odor. Play up a sense of dread as the characters move around the lair.

They have entered the home of an evil adversary who is eminently capable of defending himself against them and fanatically committed to accomplishing his goals.

Setting the Stage

After leaving Kaer Varenna, Tyrlaan returned to the half-built ruins of Kaer Carell and made the finished sections of it into his personal stronghold. He lives in these rooms, where he also conducts his life-altering and life-creating experiments and seeks further ways to serve Verjigorm. The following information describes the lair's entrance and interior. All rooms and areas described appear on the Lair map (p. 232).

(1) Entrance

The entrance to Tyrlaan's lair is a long tunnel hewed through a large rock formation in the Badlands, near the western edge of the Thunder Mountains. The unlit tunnel is 2 yards high by 3 yards wide and slopes gently downward for about 70 yards before leveling off. In the level section, the walls look more carved than natural. Thirty yards from the point at which the tunnel levels off, it forks. The right-hand tunnel rises, leading to the upper level of the lair; the left-hand tunnel descends further, leading to the lair's lower level.

Upper Level

The upper level of Tyrlaan's stronghold contains mostly empty rooms. However, one of the rooms serves as a prison for Icewing's drake servants.

(2) Right-hand Tunnel

The tunnel leading to the upper level appears more carved than natural, though still rough-hewn. Roughly 20 yards from the fork in the main tunnel, this tunnel turns to the left and becomes a corridor of stone slabs, each about 1-yard square. This corridor continues straight ahead for another 50 yards, then ends at an intersecting corridor. The intersecting corridor is 25 yards long, 3 yards wide, and 3 yards high, with four doors on each side. The doors are all large and made of now-rotted wood; only one of the doors is locked.

(3) Empty Rooms

The empty rooms are of varying sizes and conditions. Some of the rooms are in good shape; others are full of cobwebs and dust. A few even house nests of small rodents.

Adventure Hook

The tainted windlings guarding the **Large Experiment Room** (p. 237) seem to have been only recently turned into their corrupted condition. Once defeated, the characters may notice something odd about their equipment: it's in relatively good condition, and their packs even contain fresh trail rations. Searching the windlings' ripped, but relatively new clothes they can find a piece of parchment. The parchment contains a crude map, showing the location of Kaer Carell, as well as a place called Jirnada—only a few days walk deeper into the Badlands. Next to the spot indicating Kaer Carell is a drawing of an oddly-shaped item, which could be carved stone, or something similar. Characters familiar with the Rites of Protection and Passage might be able to determine that the stone is a *chelor*, an object that acts as a focus for a kaer's defensive wards.

If the characters search for the *chelor*, they find one in each of the larger rooms throughout Kaer Carell. Each stone is large and heavy and covered with magical runes. It is also magically inert—many *chelors* were placed here, but never activated since Kaer Carell wasn't finished. Without proper knowledge of the Rites of Protection and Passage, the stone can't be activated—and even if the knowledge was there: the *chelor* is useless outside a network of kaer wards.

If the characters travel to Jirnada, they will discover a closed windling kaer in a heavily tainted area of the Servos Jungle—the place is dangerous, occupied by swarms of wingflayers (see p. 466 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). The windlings of Jirnada don't realize that the Scourge is over and have sent a group of explorers to find a *chelor* for their kaer's failing wards. They house descendants of Carell, whose ancestors found shelter here, unable to finish their own kaer. Unfortunately, the last surviving explorers found their end when they finally reached the ruins of Kaer Carell...

(4) Crystal Coffin Room

The door to this room is magically locked; to open it, a character must make a Dispel Magic or Lock Picking (15) Test. If the character is using a skill, this action alerts Tyrlaan, who sends the Shadow Killer to investigate (see **Behind the Scenes** on p. 235). A character using a talent or spell must achieve a Good or better result to not alert Tyrlaan.

Alternatively, the characters may break down the door. The wooden door is 3 inches thick; to determine appropriate Armor and Damage Ratings, use the Barrier Rating guidelines in the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 106 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium.** Attempting to break down the door in this fashion automatically alerts Tyrlaan, who sends the Shadow Killer to investigate.

This room is roughly 5 yards wide and 10 yards long. Its walls are covered with large tapestries depicting various scenes of Horrors ravaging Barsaive. In the middle of the room, three large crystal coffins rest on stone pedestals. Two of these coffins contain male Name-givers: an elf and a human, dressed in dark brown tunics. They are both unconscious, apparently in some sort of suspended animation. The central coffin is empty.

The men in the coffins are two drake servants of Icewing the great dragon, captured by Tyrlaan and subjected to his Shatter Pattern spell. The coffins hold the drakes in a suspended state which will take them some time to rouse from if the coffins are opened. They have had plenty of time for their patterns and memories to recover (see **Opening the Coffins** on p. 236). Tyrlaan knows this and is waiting until the time is right to awaken them, shatter their patterns once more, and twist them completely to his foul ends.

(4A) Secret Passage

From the coffin room, a secret passageway (Detection Difficulty 9) obscured by tapestries, leads to the lower level of Tyrlaan's lair. The characters may also discover the secret door if the Shadow Killer uses it to investigate the characters' presence in the crystal coffin room (see **Behind the Scenes** on p. 235).

The secret door leads to a small stairway, 2 yards tall and 1 yard wide, that descends for 16 yards. This stairway leads to another secret door, which opens to the Egg Room on the lower level. The stairway is dimly lit by two crystal light quartzes, one each at the top and bottom. If Tyrlaan sends the Shadow Killer to investigate the coffin room or investigates himself, they both use this stairway. The size of the stairway restricts the movement of characters of larger races; trolls and obsidimen move at half their normal movement rates when traveling up or down these stairs.

Lower Level

Tyrlaan has made more use of the lower level of his lair, and so none of its rooms are empty.

(5) Left-Hand Tunnel

The tunnel leading to the lower level looks exactly like the one leading to the upper level. It, too, turns leftward

and becomes a corridor of sorts that comes to a dead end after 100 yards. Halfway along its length, it intersects another corridor 33 yards long, 3 yards wide, and 3 yards high. Approximately 16 yards down the left side of this corridor is a double door leading to the Large Experiment Room. Two cadaver men guard this door and will attack the characters if they approach it.

Tyrlaan has placed a ward 8 yards down the main corridor to protect his lair from trespassers. This ward is activated whenever any living creature passes it (see **Behind the Scenes**, p. 236). Near the end of the main corridor are two doors, both on the right-hand side. The first leads to the Small Experiment Room, the second to Tyrlaan's Chambers. Two cadaver men guard each door and attack the player characters if they approach.

(6) Egg Room

The Egg Room is 3 yards long by 5 yards wide, extremely warm and humid. It contains seven pedestals, positioned to form an oval. On six of these pedestals rest single large eggs covered with green ooze. If the characters examine the ooze astrally, they discover it is magical; however, they cannot tell whether or not the ooze is harmful. The seventh egg is currently boiling in blood broth in the Small Experiment Room.

Two cadaver men guard the door to this room. Whether Joran Lightfoot survived his encounter with the characters at Kaer Varenna or not, he stands guard in his Name-giver form on the inside. (See **Cast of Characters**, p. 247, for

a full description and game statistics for Joran.) A secret door (Detection Difficulty 9) in the Egg Room (marked on the Lair map, p. 232) leads to the same hidden stairway described in Secret Passage (4A).

(7) Large Experiment Room

Huge double doors of stone lead to this 6-yard by 16-yard room, the primary site of Tyrlaan's Alter Life and Create Life experiments. In addition to the two cadaver guards outside, the room is also protected by two tainted windlings who remain in the room at all times (see **Tainted Windlings**, p. 237).

The walls of this room contain shelves that hold jars and bottles full of all manner of herbs, potions, poisons, and salves Tyrlaan uses in his experiments. Most of the containers are porcelain, though some are made of glass, wood, and even metal. In the far left corner of the room lie several rectangular stone slabs of varying sizes, some as small as 2 feet by 3 feet and as large as 2 yards by 4 yards. Each of these slabs has two grooves running down its length. Tyrlaan ties his victims to these slabs and cuts them; their blood flows down the grooves to fuel the blood broth.

In the center of the room lies a huge stone bowl, 1 yard deep and 5 yards in diameter, full of dark, sticky, bubbling blood broth that Tyrlaan uses in his Alter Life and Create Life spells. The blood broth contains blood from many different Name-givers and creatures, including Tyrlaan, the captive drakes in the coffins, and cult members Garollan and Traj Quickwrist, as well as many other innocents captured and brought here by members of the Cult of the Great Hunter. Tyrlaan used this blood broth to turn his two windling servants into tainted windlings. Elementalism magic woven into the stone bowl keeps the blood broth bubbling at a constant simmer.

Floating above the blood broth is a 1-yard by 2-yard stone slab with a male elf lashed to it. If the characters look closely, they recognize this elf as their employer, Rathann. Unknown to the characters until now, members of the Cult of the Great Hunter snatched Rathann and returned him to Tyrlaan's lair just after the player characters departed Kratas.

(7A) Secret Passageway

A secret passageway (Detection Difficulty 9) leads from the Large Experiment Room to the Small Experiment Room. The door to this passage is marked on the Lair map (p. 232).

(8) Small Experiment Room

The Small Experiment Room is 5 yards square and serves as a secondary experiment room. Two cadaver men and the cultist Traj Quickwrist (see **Cast of Characters**, p. 250) guard the room's wooden door. The blood-broth bowl in the center of this room is only 1 yard deep and 2 yards in diameter, but the broth in this room is much fouler than the broth in the larger room. This blood broth contains the blood of a number of Horrors, in addition to Name-givers and creatures. Tyrlaan used this blood broth to transform Joran Lightfoot into the Shadow Killer.

If the characters look closely at this blood broth, they may notice a large, egg-shaped object in it. The object is one of the dragon eggs Tyrlaan stole from Icewing. Tyrlaan is using his Alter Life spell on the dragon hatchling inside. Tyrlaan hopes to alter all seven stolen eggs so that the hatchlings will serve him and his Horror master, Verjigorm. Hidden in this room is the door to the secret passage (Detection Difficulty 9) connecting this chamber with its larger counterpart (7A).

(9) Tyrlaan's Chambers

Tyrlaan's private living quarters measure 6 yards by 10 yards. The room contains a small table, a bed, and a strongbox. Two cadaver men guard the door. The strongbox contains several items that may be of interest to the characters: a map, identical to the one found in Tyrlaan's workroom at the temple; 2,000 silver pieces' worth of jewels and various coins; and a large wooden box containing four matching daggers.

These daggers resemble the ones carried by Tyrlaan, Garollan, and Traj Quickwrist. They are four of the Blades of Cara Fahd; for a complete description, see the **New Magical Treasures** chapter on p. 348.

When the characters enter this room, allow them to make Perception (4) Tests. Any player characters whose tests are successful notice ornate markings on the floor. If the characters look closely, they see that the markings are part of a circle 3 yards in diameter. Tyrlaan uses this circle to contact and summon Horrors. Magicians or characters with magic-related knowledge skills may make a Perception-based Half-Magic or Knowledge Skill (7) Test. If a character's test succeeds, he recognizes the circle as a summoning circle. Tyrlaan keeps his grimoires and journals of his experiments in an astral pocket (see the **Talents** chapter on p. 170 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Also, if the characters left dead companions behind at the temple or in the kaer, Tyrlaan is likely to be questioning their re-animated forms here, after using his Animate Dead or Alter Life spell. Make sure to have them join in the fight against their former friends in **The Finale**, p. 239.

(10) Bone Circle Room

A secret door (Detection Difficulty 15) is located in the back wall of Tyrlaan's room; once a character finds the door, he can automatically open it. The door leads to a 12- by 12-yard room that contains a bone circle (see p. 347 of the **Player's Compendium**). The circle is occupied by a bone spirit that attacks anyone who attempts to enter the circle. As with the bone circles at the temple and Kaer Varenna, Tyrlaan cast this bone circle so that he could use his Gateway spell to travel quickly between his cult's three sites.

Though the characters can certainly try talking to the bone spirit, it is extremely unlikely that they will get the chance, because it is unlikely that they will find and enter this room without encountering Tyrlaan first. See **The Horror's Temple**, p. 221, for a further description and game statistics for the bone spirit.

Behind the Scenes

The following text describes events that are likely to occur and actions the characters are likely to take in Tyrlaan's lair. Feel free to alter the timing and any other aspect of these events as you see fit.

Exploring the Upper Level

By exploring the upper level first, the player characters get into the lair via the "back door," and so have a better chance of discovering Tyrlaan's plans as well as the identity of their employer. Exploring the upper level also enables the characters to find the crystal coffins, which hold clues to Rathann's true nature.

Examining the Coffins

To examine the coffins astrally, the player characters must make Astral Sensing (13) Tests against the Spell Defense of the crystal. Any character whose test succeeds can detect a magical pattern of tremendous complexity and power in the crystal.

Examining the Drakes

If the characters examine the bodies of the unconscious elf and human they notice several long scars, like the ones on their employer, along the sleepers' arms, legs, and torsos (see **While in Kratas**, p. 209). Nethermancers, or characters with the Magical Lore Knowledge skill, should make Perception-based Half-Magic or Magical Lore (12) Tests; those whose tests are successful recognize the scars as those used in certain types of blood magic.

Any characters with astral sensing spells or abilities may also examine the drakes astrally by making Astral Sensing Tests against the drakes' current Spell Defense. The drakes' patterns bear a passing resemblance to Rathann's in terms of intricacy, but are more vibrant and mysterious; they appear to be very powerful adepts (see **While in Kratas**, p. 209).

Opening the Coffins

The coffins are magically sealed, but they can be opened with either a Dispel Magic spell or the Lock Picking talent. The Difficulty Number for each of these tests is 21. If the characters manage to open either of the occupied coffins, the drake inside slowly awakens over the course of 15 minutes, but remain groggy and confused. The revived drakes regain their composure and strength only after several hours' rest. For more information about the drakes, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 251, and p. 404 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Shadow Attack

If the characters fail to achieve a Good result dispelling or lockpicking, or force the lock or use another method to enter the room containing the crystal coffins, that action alerts Tyrlaan, who sends Joran Lightfoot/the Shadow Killer to investigate.

The Shadow Killer ascends the stairway in shadow form and enters the room through the secret door. Once in the room, Joran shifts into humanoid form and attacks the characters. He engages the characters in combat for at least a few rounds. If he finds himself in danger of being rendered unconscious, he shifts into shadow form, flees and alerts Tyrlaan to the characters' presence.

If the gamemaster wishes to make this fight tougher for the characters, he may have Tyrlaan ascend the secret stairway and cast spells through the secret door. In this case, allow the characters to make Perception (9) Tests to notice that someone or something is making one of the hanging tapestries move slightly. If the characters detect his presence, Tyrlaan retreats to the lower level and gathers his servants to battle the characters (see **The Finale**, p. 239).

If the player characters search the coffin room, they may find the secret stairway that leads to the lower level. If they are careful enough, they can get into the Egg Room and possibly take the Shadow Killer by surprise.

Exploring the Lower Levels

If the characters begin by exploring the lower level, they may be forced to confront Tyrlaan before they understand the purpose of his plans, the identity of their employer, and how all the pieces they have uncovered fit together. Needless to say, a premature encounter with Tyrlaan is particularly dangerous. The characters will face a tough fight early on, beginning with the magical ward trap in the lower-level corridor. This trap attacks any living creature that passes through it; its statistics appear below. Only Tyrlaan and his servants can pass the ward without harm.

Constrict Heart Ward Trap

Detection Difficulty: 19
Disarm Difficulty: 15
Spell Defense: 12

Trap Initiative: 29/D20+D12+D10+D8. The spell has a range of 8 yards. For a character to avoid the trap, he must move out of the spell's range before it can take effect.

Trigger Condition: The gamemaster makes a Step 19/D20+2D6 Spellcasting Test against the Spell Defense of any characters passing the ward. If the test succeeds, the trap triggers its effect.

Trap Effect: Constrict Heart spell (see p. 362 of the **Player's Compendium**); Spellcasting Step 19/D20+2D6, Effect Step 25/D20+D10+D8+D4. The effect of the spell lasts for 15 rounds.

In addition to harming the characters, triggering the ward alerts Tyrlaan to the presence of trespassers in his stronghold; Tyrlaan immediately sends one of his cult members, Traj Quickwrist, to investigate. When Quickwrist encounters the characters, he shouts a warning to Tyrlaan and his servants, who may then attack en masse (see **The Finale**, p. 239).

Finding the Egg Room

The characters can find the Egg Room by discovering and traversing the secret passage connecting it with the coffin room or simply by exploring the lower level until they find the Egg Room.

In the first case, the characters may gain the advantage of surprise over Joran Lightfoot, who guards the Egg Room in his Name-giver form. In the second case, the characters will face most of Tyrlaan's servants before they reach the Egg Room.

Examining the Eggs

If the characters reach the egg room in Tyrlaan's lair, they find several dragon eggs covered in a warm, moist ooze. To recognize these as dragon eggs, have each character make a Perception (12) Test. Any character with the Knowledge skills of Creature Lore or Dragon Lore gains a +1 bonus to this test. If the test succeeds, the character recognizes the eggs as dragon eggs.

The slime on the eggs is magical but can be removed easily with no side effects. If the characters succeed in saving the eggs, it would be in their best interest to hand the eggs over to Icewing's drakes. Otherwise, all three drakes take the eggs from them by force.

Reaching the Large Experiment Room

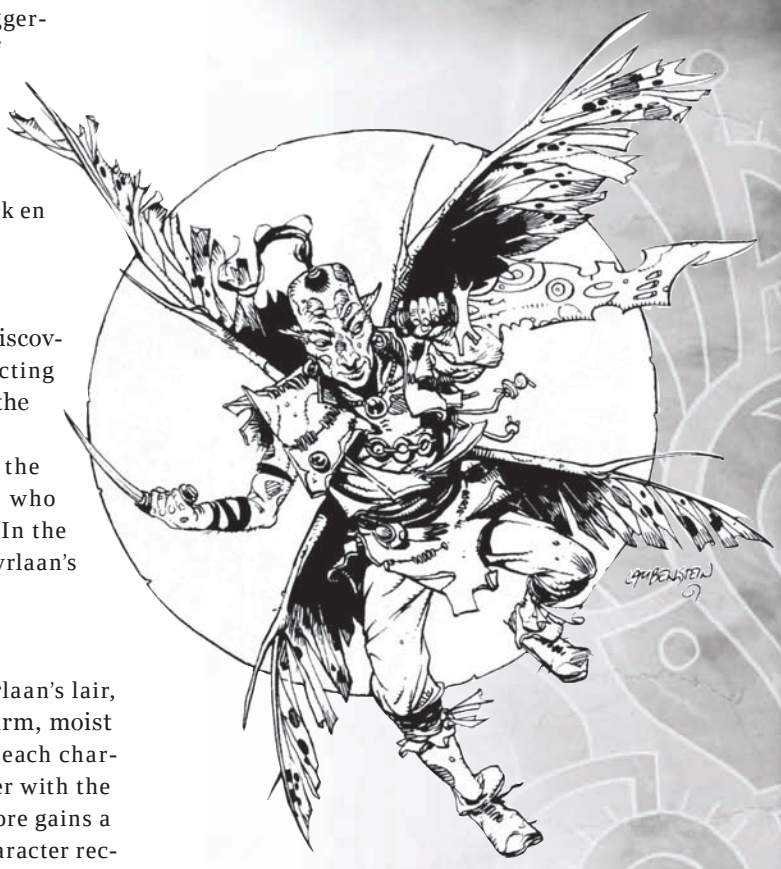
Before the characters attempt to enter this room, they must deal with the cadaver men guards. Once the characters have defeated the cadaver men and entered the room, they must then deal with the tainted windlings who guard the contents of the room.

Tyrlaan chose these two windling members of the Cult of the Great Hunter as subjects in his early attempts to create an Alter Life spell. The experiment was a glorious success, and since then Tyrlaan has used these windlings as special guards. Each one is armed with a special amulet, enchanted with the Dark Sword spell (see p. 366 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Tainted Windlings (2)

DEX: 9 **STR**: 4 **TOU**: 5
PER: 8 **WIL**: 5 **CHA**: 6

Initiative: 12 **Physical Defense**: 13
Number of Actions: 1 **Spell Defense**: 13
Attack (3): 12 (27; see text) **Social Defense**: 8
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 7
Bone Weapon (3): 7 (27; see text) **Mystic Armor**: 4



Death Rating: 31 (61) **Recovery Tests**: 2
Wound Threshold: 8 **Knockdown**: 4
Unconsciousness Rating: 23 (48)

Combat Movement: 28/52 ✦
Full Movement: 56/104 ✦

✦ The second value is the creature's flying Movement rate.

Powers: Astral-Sensitive Sight, Durability (5), Flight

Legend Points: 1,155

Equipment: Padded Leather (Phys 4), Sculpted bone weapon (Damage: STR + 3)

Loot: Dark Sword Amulet worth 100 silver pieces. The amulet counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

Commentary

Once normal windlings, these two have been corrupted by Horror-tainted magic through Tyrlaan's Alter Life spell. Because the blood broth he used on them contained the blood of Horrors, the tainted windlings are more akin to Horror constructs than the Name-givers they were born.

Superficially, they resemble normal windlings, but their skin is dark green with blotches of dark brown and black on their arms and legs. The effects of the Alter Life spell have also toughened the windlings' skin, granting them Natural Armor and increased Health Ratings. They are very strong and move swiftly in combat.

To further augment the windlings' fighting ability, Tyrlaan gave each one an amulet enchanted with the Dark Sword spell (see the **Nethermancy Spells** chapter on p. 366 of the **Player's Compendium**). When the windlings enter combat, they activate the spell and use its Effect step

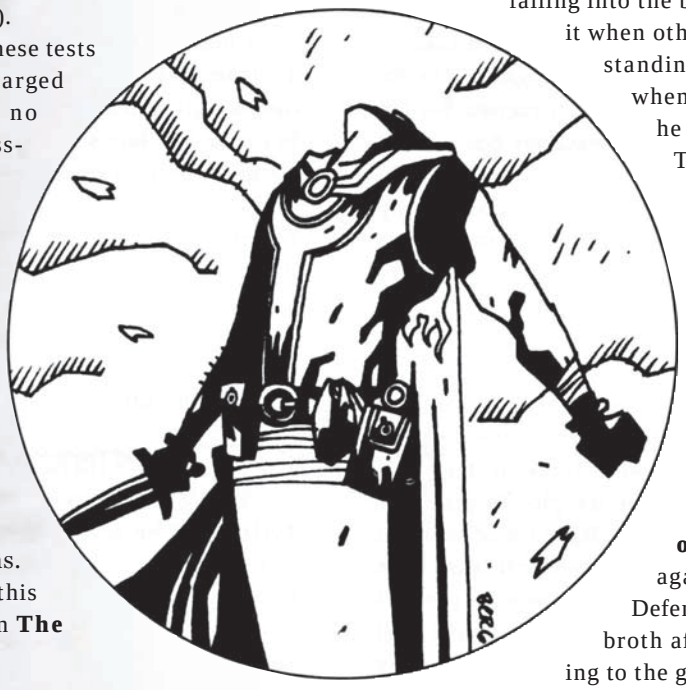
of 27/D20+D10+2D8 as either their Melee Weapons or their Damage step.

As soon as the characters defeat the windlings, they can explore the room, as described below.

Examining the Blood Broth

Characters with the Magical Lore or Blood Magic Lore knowledge skills can identify the blood broth by making a successful Knowledge Skill (13) Test. Nethermancers may make a Perception-based Half-Magic (13) Test to identify the broth. If the characters examine the broth using astral senses or spells, the Difficulty Number rises to 21 (the broth's Spell Defense).

A Poor result on any of these tests reveals that the broth is charged with magic, but conveys no other information. A successful test against the broth's Spell Defense reveals that the broth contains magical threads of many different types. A character who achieves a Good or better result can make out a single, powerful life form in the broth: the almost complete form of a drake, created by Tyrlaan from the blood of the captive drakes in the coffins. For more information about this drake, see **Creating Life** in **The Finale**, p. 240.



Freeing Rathann

Having defeated the tainted windlings, the characters can attempt to free Rathann. The elf is lashed to the stone slab, his hands and feet tied down with leather thongs. To free Rathann, the characters must first get on top of the slab. A character who is unable to fly must make a Climbing (9) Test.

If the test succeeds, the character scrambles on top of the slab. If unsuccessful, the character slips and falls into the blood broth. Alternatively, the characters may try to stand on the edge of the bowl and cut Rathann free from there. To accomplish this, a character must make a successful Dexterity (7) Test. If the test fails, the character slips and falls into the bowl. The slab is floating five feet above the bowl's rim, so only characters of sufficient height can attempt this feat.

Once a character has either climbed on top of the slab or is standing on the rim of the bowl, he takes one combat round to cut each thong. When each thong is cut, the stone slab wobbles slightly, and the movement may cause the character doing the cutting to fall into the bowl. When the slab moves, have each character on it or on the bowl rim make a Dexterity (5) Test. If the test succeeds, the character stays put; if unsuccessful, the character falls into the blood broth. The gamemaster should feel free to have Rathann remain unconscious, be too weak to be of much use except for recognizing the characters and giving them some pointers, or even have him regain more of his memories as the spell has worn off sufficiently, as suits the story. See **Freeing Rathann** on p. 241 for more details if this occurs after Tyrlaan's death.

Exposure to the Blood Broth

The blood broth is a mixture of the blood of many different Name-givers and creatures; a highly toxic brew that may significantly harm any character who comes into contact with it. Characters may be exposed to it by falling into the bowl or getting splashed by it when others fall in. If a character is standing within 1 yard of the bowl when another character falls in, he must make a Dexterity (5) Test to avoid being splashed. If the test succeeds, the character manages to duck out the way. If the test fails, the broth hits the character, who may suffer from its poisonous effects. Whenever the broth touches a character, make a Spellcasting Test using Tyrlaan's Spellcasting step (see **Cast of Characters** on p. 244) against the character's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the broth affects the character according to the gamemaster's choice; it may act as a debilitating poison or a Horror Curse (see the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 111 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**), or it may even kill the character instantly. Alternatively, the gamemaster may choose to have the broth cause a radical change in the character's True pattern such as unraveling his talents or other abilities.

Exploring the Small Experiment Room

Before the characters enter this room, they must fight the cadaver men guarding it. Once the characters enter the room, they face Traj Quickwrist. Only after defeating him can they begin to examine the room.

As in the Large Experiment Room, this chamber contains a bowl full of blood broth. Characters with the Magical Lore or Blood Magic Lore knowledge skills can identify the blood broth by making a successful Knowledge (13) Skill Test. Nethermancers may make a Perception-based Half-Magic (13) Test to identify the broth.

If the characters examine the broth using astral senses or spells, the Difficulty Number rises to 21 (the broth's Spell Defense). A Poor result on any of these tests reveals that the broth is charged with magic, but conveys no other information. An Average result against the broth's Spell

Defense reveals that the broth contains magical threads of many different types. A Good result or better reveals a single, powerful life form in the broth: the dragon egg, in the process of being horribly altered.

This batch of blood broth is even more toxic to the characters than the larger one, because this bowl contains the blood of Horrors. If any character comes into contact with this blood broth, make a Step 30/D20+D10+D8+2D6 Spellcasting Test against the character's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the character suffers effects similar to those of the larger blood broth, but more pronounced.

Removing the Dragon Egg

If the characters attempt to remove the dragon egg from the blood broth, they must exercise extreme care; even touching the broth may prove fatal. The characters may use a levitation spell, a tool, their weapons, or any other method they can dream up to lift out the egg. One of the characters may even risk his life by reaching into the broth and lifting the egg out.

If the characters use any weapons or other objects as tools to lift the egg from the broth, the broth's powerful magic may taint those objects. Make a Step 30/D20+D10+D8+2D6 Spellcasting Test against each object's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the object carries the equivalent of a Major Curse (see the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 111 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). If the characters manage to taint items they normally carry with them, the curse may affect them for some time. Tyrlaan's death reduces the power of the broth, changing a Major Curse to a Minor Curse.

Using a tool to lift the egg from the broth requires a character to make a Dexterity (7) Test. If the test succeeds, the character lifts the egg safely from the bowl. If the test fails, the egg falls back into the broth (and may splash the character).

Entering Tyrlaan's Living Quarters

Though this room has no guards, the characters must pass the Small Experiment Room to get to Tyrlaan's quarters, and so they will attract the attention of the cadaver men guarding that room. Unless the gamemaster decides otherwise, Tyrlaan is in his quarters when the characters arrive there. Once the characters enter, Tyrlaan summons all the remaining servants in his lair and launches an assault on the characters, intending not to kill them, but to render them unconscious so that he can add their blood to his blood broth (see **Troubleshooting**, below, and **Loose Ends**, p. 242).

Examining the Dragon Sculpture

If the player characters find the dragon sculpture (see **The Horror's Temple**, p. 220), they can learn little more about it than its appearance might suggest to them. The sculpture has a Spell Defense of 12; a character who wishes to examine it astrally must make a successful test against that Spell Defense using an appropriate magical ability. The character can discover that the sculpture has a magical aura but can learn nothing more.

If a character with Artisan skills in Stone Carving or Sculpture examines the artwork, he must make the appropriate test against a Difficulty Number of 13. A successful result indicates that the sculpture is made of exquisitely carved obsidian. On an Excellent result or better, the character notices that the sculpture's detail owes its beauty and fineness to magic as well as to skilled fingers, and that the obsidian has an unnaturally brilliant sheen that may result from enchantment.

Though the characters do not know this, the dragon sculpture is one of Icewing's major pattern items and so holds knowledge about the great dragon that Icewing will take extreme measures to keep hidden. Part of this knowledge is the location of Icewing's clutch, which Tyrlaan was able to learn.

If the characters succeed in the adventure, they should surrender the sculpture to the drakes. Should they attempt to keep it, the drakes will try to get the sculpture back by any means necessary.

Encountering the Throalic Soldiers

As at the other two sites, the characters may meet the Throalic soldiers camped near Tyrlaan's lair (See **Meeting an Army Encampment**, p. 217). Two other likely options are described below, but gamemasters are also encouraged to come up with other ways for the characters to meet them.

Option One: Exploring the Lair

The characters encounter members of the Army of Throal in the outer portion of the tunnel that leads to the lair. If properly approached, the dwarfs may be willing to join forces with the characters and help them explore the lair and defeat Tyrlaan.

Option Two: A Friend in Need

The characters encounter the Throalic soldiers deeper in the lair, engaged in combat against one or more of Tyrlaan's servants. If the characters help the dwarfs, the soldiers agree to aid the characters as they go deeper into the Nethermancer's den. Alternatively, the soldiers might arrive to offer help as the characters are battling Tyrlaan's servants.

The Big Finish

When the characters confront Tyrlaan and his servants, go to **The Finale**, p. 239.

Troubleshooting

Because so much of what may or may not happen in this encounter depends on the actions of the characters, the gamemaster must be thoroughly prepared to deal with any number of situations that may arise. Try to keep all of the characters alive for **The Finale**, but if one or more of the characters dies while exploring the lair, then so be it; it is a dangerous place with dangerous creatures, traps, and substances.

The Finale

This section provides several possible ways to end the adventure. Ideally, the characters defeat Tyrlaan, free the captive drakes (including Rathann), and recover the dragon eggs.

Themes and Images

The characters have traveled through some of the most dangerous terrain in Barsaive and have faced evil cultists, dangerous creatures, and many of Tyrlaan's own dreadful creations. Presumably, they have also learned of the atrocities he committed against his own people and those who offered him shelter during the Scourge. By this time, the characters have been through several kinds of hell, only to find themselves facing their most dangerous adversary yet. Make the characters feel outmatched; emphasize Tyrlaan's corrupt nature and the power he commands. Then, balance their feelings of fear by feeding any righteous anger the player characters may feel about the existence of so foul a criminal as Tyrlaan. Remind them that they are the only ones who can end the Nethermancer's malignant life and possibly rectify some of the evil he wrought.

Setting the Stage

Ideally, stage the characters' confrontation with Tyrlaan after they have discovered at least part of his nefarious plot, preferably after they have found the Large Experiment Room and discovered their employer held captive above the blood broth. These discoveries should give the characters more incentive to battle Tyrlaan. This confrontation should be the final encounter of the adventure. Depending on how the characters have fared up to this point, they may face a roughly even fight or find themselves battling against desperate odds. If one of the characters has successfully woven a thread to Tyrlaan's amulet at some point previously (see **The Amulet** on p. 209), that character benefits from the thread during this last battle. This situation provides an ideal opportunity for team play; the characters can work together to help the character with the thread use his improved abilities.

Behind the Scenes

The following information describes several events that may or may not occur during the player characters' final confrontation with Tyrlaan and his minions. Most of these events are different options available to Tyrlaan during this encounter. Though Tyrlaan most likely performs only one of these actions, he may attempt two of them if the gamemaster so desires.

Creating Life

When the characters arrive at the lair, Tyrlaan is one step away from completing a Create Life spell to create his own drake servant (the life form the characters may have detected in the blood broth in the Large Experiment Room). If the characters have a drastic advantage in the final battle (unlikely, but possible), the gamemaster may choose to have Tyrlaan finish casting the spell over the blood broth so that the drake can aid him. To accomplish this, Tyrlaan must make a Thread Weaving (21) Test and a Spellcasting (26) Test. If both tests are successful, the drake slowly emerges from the broth, dripping blood on the floor. After the Spellcasting Test is completed, it takes two combat rounds for the drake to fully form and rise from the broth. In the third round, the drake attacks the characters. For the drake's statistics, see p. 404 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

To finish the Create Life spell in time to do him any good, Tyrlaan must rush the last stages, and so the drake's pattern is never completed and begins to slowly unravel. As a result, the drake suffers Step 8/2D6 damage each round after it has fully formed. No armor protects against this damage.

Facing Tyrlaan

The gamemaster determines precisely how and where the characters confront Tyrlaan, and so the characters may encounter the Nethermancer anywhere in the lair (though the Nethermancer is most likely to be in his quarters or in one of the two experiment rooms). The least likely place for the characters to encounter Tyrlaan is in the coffin room, though the gamemaster may place him there if he wishes. However, keep in mind that staging a final confrontation in that spot makes it difficult for the characters to uncover the final pieces of the puzzle they have set out to solve.

Alternatively, the characters may face Tyrlaan when one of his servants alerts him to their presence rather than by stumbling upon him during their explorations.

A Quiet End

The characters may also end the adventure in a less dramatic fashion if they move around Tyrlaan's lair quietly and carefully, defeating each of his servants quickly and silently. This way, the adventure winds down with several small confrontations rather than a single huge one. This type of ending, though far safer (and healthier) for the characters, may be difficult to pull off because most of Tyrlaan's servants summon him as soon as they meet trespassers in the lair. Also, a quiet ending may turn out to be less satisfying for the gamemaster and players.

Escape

If the characters seem likely to defeat Tyrlaan and his servants, the gamemaster may choose to have Tyrlaan escape by using his Gateway spell to travel to the bone circle in either Kaer Varenna or the temple. To escape in this manner, Tyrlaan must get to the Bone Circle Room in his lair and cast the Gateway spell, which will take him a number of rounds.

He orders his servants to prevent the characters from pursuing him while he effects his escape. This option works well if the gamemaster wants to use Tyrlaan as an ongoing opponent for the characters. For more information about using Tyrlaan after this adventure, see **Loose Ends**, p. 242.

A Last, Desperate Act

If the characters seem likely to defeat Tyrlaan and his servants, the gamemaster may choose to have Tyrlaan use his Horror Call spell in an attempt to summon Verjigorm. To cast this spell, Tyrlaan must reach the summoning circle in his quarters. Casting the Horror Call spell will take a number of rounds, so Tyrlaan orders his servants to prevent the characters from attacking him while he casts it. If the characters manage to follow him and witness the beginnings of his spellcasting, they know instantly what he is attempting. They may choose to flee or attempt to kill the Nethermancer before he completes the spell.

Either choice is acceptable, but if the characters choose the former and fail, they may come face to face with the Hunter of Great Dragons. Luckily for them, the Horror Call spell requires Tyrlaan to weave six threads and make a Spellcasting Test, so the characters have several rounds in which to kill the Nethermancer. If the characters flee, they face opposition from Tyrlaan's remaining servants. If they dispatch the servants, they may manage to successfully abandon the lair, but may not be able to free their employer or retrieve the other two captive drakes and the dragon eggs.

If Tyrlaan succeeds in casting the spell, Verjigorm begins to manifest, quickly filling Tyrlaan's living quarters and causing the walls of the stronghold to shake and rumble. The Horror is vastly bigger than the rooms, and the walls burst outward as Verjigorm's form grows.

Once summoned, Verjigorm immediately grabs Tyrlaan and swallows him in one large bite. Tyrlaan's demise gives the characters one last chance to escape; because the lair's cramped confines severely restrict Verjigorm's movement, the characters have time to flee from the Horror. If they choose to fight Verjigorm, let them, but first remind the players that the battle will mean almost certain death for their characters. Consider this final option only if you want an apocalyptic ending. The characters will most likely die attempting to slay this powerful Horror, so allow such suicidal action only if you feel confident that it will not spoil the adventure for the players.

Death of the Nethermancer

If this encounter ends with the characters killing Tyrlaan and his servants, the characters can then search the rest of the lair, free Rathann and the drakes, and recover the dragon eggs. Optionally, Tyrlaan's death weakens the magic in the blood broth, as well as the magical seal on the crystal coffins. The levitation spell holding the stone slab on which Rathann lies also begins to falter due to the lack of Tyrlaan's or the windlings' maintenance.

The tainted windlings and Joran Lightfoot are freed from the Nethermancer's evil influence as well. Traj Quickwrist becomes the only remaining threat; if he has not yet been killed, he surrenders. The characters can either set him free or turn him over to the Throalic soldiers.

Freeing Rathann

If the characters have not yet freed Rathann, they should do so immediately after Tyrlaan dies. Shortly after the Nethermancer's death, the levitation spell suspending Rathann's stone slab fails, and the slab descends slowly into the blood broth. The characters or other drakes need to free Rathann quickly before permanent harm is done to him, but risk harm themselves in removing him as described on p. 238.

Once cut free, Rathann slowly awakens, regaining his memory along with consciousness, as the passing of time has weakened the spell's hold on him sufficiently. He remembers his Name and identity, meeting and hiring the characters, getting captured by the cultists in Kratas, and being brought to Tyrlaan's stronghold. He also remembers why Tyrlaan captured him in the first place and immediately sets out to free his fellow drakes if the characters have not already done so (see **Freeing the Drakes**, below).

Once the other drakes are freed, all three seek out the dragon eggs. After securing the six eggs in the Egg Room and cleaning the green ooze from them, Rathann runs to the Small Experiment Room to remove the last egg from the blood broth (see **Recovering the Eggs**, below).

After rescuing the eggs, Rathann and his fellow drakes offer to explain the events of the adventure to the player characters (if the characters have not yet figured it out on their own).

Freeing the Drakes

Once Tyrlaan's death dispels the magical seal on the crystal coffins, they open easily. The drakes inside them slowly awaken as soon as the coffins are opened, their memories intact now that they have had time to heal. However, the drakes will not recognize the player characters, and so the heroes may have to make Persuasion Tests to convince the drakes that they mean no harm.

Once fully awake, the drakes immediately head for the Egg Room. After securing and cleaning the six eggs in that chamber, the drakes go to the Small Experiment Room and remove the last egg from the blood broth (see **Recovering the Eggs**, below). Finally, the drakes try to find Rathann and free him if the characters have not already done so.

Recovering the Eggs

Tyrlaan's death makes it easy to recover the six eggs in the Egg Room. The magical ooze covering them can easily be wiped off. The egg in the blood broth, however, may pose a few problems, in its removal from the blood broth (see p. 238) and due to its current condition.

Its noxious bath has visibly tainted it; its shell is slightly darker in color than the others, and magical examination reveals a slight twisting of its pattern.

The characters may wish to destroy the egg but the drakes attempt to stop them, telling the characters that Icewing can easily remove Tyrlaan's comparatively minor corruption from the hatchling inside.

Joran Lightfoot's Fate

When Tyrlaan dies, Joran Lightfoot regains a portion of his former identity. Horrified at what he has become and the evils he has committed, he asks the characters to kill him. If the characters refuse, one of the drakes offers to slay the Scout. Joran cannot be healed or restored to his former state, regardless of what the characters may try.

Troubleshooting

In the worst-case scenario for this encounter, the characters unfortunately lose their battle against Tyrlaan. Some or all of them may die or the Nethermancer may take them captive—possibly a worse fate. Players of characters who die should create new characters (see **Creating Characters**, p. 41 of the **Player's Compendium**). The gamemaster might then devise an adventure for those characters as a sequel to this one; for example, the Kingdom of Throal may hire the new characters to learn the fate of the army unit sent to investigate the Cult of the Great Hunter.

If Tyrlaan captures the characters, the gamemaster can create an adventure in which the characters attempt to escape from the Nethermancer. Because the characters would begin without armor or weapons, they would have to rely on their abilities alone to escape, making such a task a challenging prospect.

Loose Ends

This section provides guidelines for resolving the adventure's loose ends and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Shattered Pattern** in future **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns.

After the Adventure

If the characters fail to defeat Tyrlaan, they most likely die at his hands or become his prisoners. They may also survive and escape from Tyrlaan, but fail to rescue Rathann and the other drakes or learn Rathann's Name. If the characters escape, the gamemaster may wish to create an adventure in which the characters return to face Tyrlaan again.

No matter what becomes of the characters if they fail, Tyrlaan finishes his experiments with the dragon eggs within a few months, forever altering the hatchlings inside. Tyrlaan then turns his attention to all three drakes, transforming them into servants of Verjigorm. Tyrlaan uses his new servants to locate Icewing and lead Verjigorm to the great dragon. If the characters are alive, they may eventually hear of Icewing's death at the hands of the Horror. Meanwhile, the cult devoted to Verjigorm continues to flourish.

The gamemaster may also create an adventure in which Icewing approaches the characters and hires them to find and destroy Tyrlaan, the drakes, and the eggs. Knowing that the hatchlings and drakes have become Verjigorm's and Tyrlaan's servants, Icewing seeks to rid Barsaive of the threat Tyrlaan poses. The characters succeed in **Shattered Pattern** if they rescue the drakes and dragon eggs, whether or not they also kill Tyrlaan. If Tyrlaan escapes, he may become a recurring threat to the characters in other adventures.

The Journey Home

The drakes accompany the characters on their homeward journey as far as Throal, if the characters head that way. If not, the drakes travel toward Throal, eventually leaving the characters behind. The drakes use two of the crystal coffins to carry the dragon eggs, and give the characters the third.

If the player characters go to Throal, the drakes ask the characters to accompany them to Icewing's lair on Mount Vapor. If the characters agree, they receive a brief audience with Icewing, who thanks them profusely and offers them rewards (see **Favors from Icewing**, p. 244). If the characters choose to remain in Throal, they encounter Rathann three days after arriving there. Rathann conveys Icewing's gratitude and rewards to the characters.

The characters' homeward trek should be largely trouble-free. Allow them to return to civilization before launching them on any further glorious adventures.

Awarding Legend Points

The following section provides guidelines for awarding Legend Points to the player characters. As recommended in

the **Introduction** on p. 6, the gamemaster should award Legend Points at the end of each game session as well as at the end of the adventure. The following guidelines for Legend Awards suggest the Points to be awarded for each task accomplished or goal reached in a game session.

Game Sessions

Shattered Pattern is intended to be played over the course of at least three game sessions. Use the following suggestions to organize your game sessions.

The three suggested game sessions outlined below each include certain encounters; if the gamemaster has organized the encounters differently in his game sessions, he should award Legend Points as appropriate.

Session One

In the first game session, set in Kratas, the characters are contacted by a mysterious party who wishes to hire them. They meet Rathann and agree to rediscover his Name and identity for him. In the process of investigating the few clues Rathann provides them, the characters travel to an abandoned temple. Upon arriving there, they discover that the temple is no longer abandoned. Instead, it is the headquarters of the Cult of the Great Hunter, devoted to the Horror Verjigorm.

This session includes the encounters **While in Kratas** (p. 207), **From Kratas to the Temple** in **Traveling the Land** (p. 211); and **The Horror's Temple** (p. 218). The session goal is to reach and explore the temple.

Session Two

In this session, the characters travel from the Temple of the Great Hunter to Kaer Varenna and explore the ruined kaer. They may or may not learn more about their employer and about Tyrlaan.

This session includes the encounters **From the Temple to the Kaer** in **Traveling the Land** (p. 212), and **The Lost Kaer** (p. 225). The session goal is to arrive at the kaer and explore it.

Session Three

In this session, the characters travel from Kaer Varenna to Tyrlaan's stronghold. Once the characters arrive at their destination, they explore the Nethermancer's lair, discover their employer held captive, battle Tyrlaan and his corrupted servants, and finally learn their employer's identity and Name. They may also free the other captive servants of the great dragon Icewing and rescue Icewing's eggs.

This session includes the encounters **From Kaer Varenna to Tyrlaan's Stronghold** in **Traveling the Land** (p. 212), and **Tyrlaan's Lair** (p. 231). The session goal is to arrive at the kaer and explore it. The adventure goal is to free Rathann and learn his Name and also rescue the other drakes and the dragon eggs.

Legend Awards

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, each game session in **Shattered Pattern** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. The potential number of Legend Awards each character may earn in each game session should take the following elements into account: completing the game session's goal (one Legend Award), defeating creatures and opponents (award the number of Legend Points listed with each creature or gamemaster character), individual deeds and roleplaying (one to two Legend Awards), and acquiring magical treasure (as listed with the magical treasure).

A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a First Circle character receives from 25 to 75 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session. In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal.

Loot

The characters have a chance to pick up a lot of loot in this adventure. Each character earns at least 400 silver pieces before things even get started; if the characters succeed in their mission, Rathann arranges to pay them the remaining silver pieces he owes them. If the characters rescue the dragon eggs and the drakes and also kill Tyrlaan, Icewing pays the group an additional 10,000 silver pieces (the value of the two orichalcum coins).

The characters can also take any of the treasure listed in the descriptions of the temple, Kaer Varenna, or Tyrlaan's lair. If the characters transport any of the crystal coffins back to Throal or Bartertown, they can sell the coffins for 1,000 silver pieces each. The Library of Throal will pay 300 to 500 silver pieces for the journals from Kaer Varenna, depending on how well the characters bargain with the library's scholars. All told, the adventuring group can earn up to 15,000 silver pieces in **Shattered Pattern**.

Campaign Ideas

Published **Earthdawn** adventures are designed to fit into an existing campaign with little or no extra work on the part of the gamemaster. Adventures do not exist by themselves if run in a campaign. The world of **Earthdawn** is dynamic and changes over time. For example, when using the events from this adventure to change the overall course of a campaign, the players can watch the changes as they happen and play an active role in it. This adds a sense of reality vital to good roleplaying. No matter how you use this adventure, it is likely to make your **Earthdawn** game more interesting; whether you use it as written or only by drawing on the ideas and information given in this book to enhance your own stories.

Many of the situations and gamemaster characters presented in this book provide hooks for further stories, and can be used to supplement a longer campaign. Feel free to use them in your ongoing **Earthdawn** campaign in whatever ways you see fit, and find some additional advice below.

The Drakes

If the characters rescue the drakes and help them recover Icewing's eggs, the drakes remember the characters and offer to repay them for their aid. In game terms, the drakes owe the characters a large favor (see the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). As described in **Cast of Characters**, p. 251, each of the drakes performs different services for Icewing among the Name-givers, and so the gamemaster can easily ensure the drakes are able to help the characters when necessary.

If the characters roleplay their interaction with the drakes especially well, the drakes may become contacts or informants of sorts regarding activities in and around Barsaive, giving the gamemaster a convenient way of sending various tidbits of information to the characters as needed.

The Dragon Eggs

Once the drakes return the dragon eggs to Icewing, the characters hear nothing about them for some time. Within a year or so, the characters may hear from one of the drakes that some of the eggs have hatched. As time passes, the hatchlings grow into common dragons and take their places in the complex dragon society of Barsaive.

If the gamemaster so desires, the egg that was submerged in the blood broth may remain tainted despite Icewing's efforts to cleanse it. This taint eventually becomes one of Verjigorm's Horror marks. If the gamemaster chooses this option, he can create a future adventure in which Icewing or one of the drakes asks the characters to hunt down the tainted hatchling while it is still young enough to kill with relative ease.

Favors from Icewing

If the characters succeed in this adventure, they draw the attention of Icewing, the great dragon. Knowing how much of a threat Tyrlaan posed to him and to all dragonkind, Icewing is profoundly grateful to those who killed the Nethermancer. If the characters rescue the drakes and the dragon eggs and also slay Tyrlaan, Icewing grants them a small favor (see the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**): the services of one of his drakes, some bit of treasured information, the Key Knowledges of an important magical treasure, such as the Blades of Cara Fahd (see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 348, for more information—if you intend to run the **Blades** adventures, this option should not be given to the players, however), or any other favor the gamemaster deems appropriate. However, make sure that any favor granted by Icewing does not unbalance your campaign.

Icewing also pays the characters the value of the two remaining orichalcum coins: ten thousand silver pieces' worth of gold and silver pieces. The orichalcum coins themselves are too valuable to give to the characters, and Icewing will not part with them.

If the characters rescue the dragon eggs and the drakes but allow Tyrlaan to escape, Icewing still offers them a favor, but does not pay them for the orichalcum coins. If the characters found the dragon sculpture in the temple, Icewing demands that they return it to him, as the sculpture is a very powerful item.

Blades of Cara Fahd

These powerful, unique items comprise the one significant treasure that the characters can obtain in this adventure. The fate of these daggers will be explored in **Blades**, p. 254.

The Throal Army

If the characters meet and end up working with the Throalic soldiers, the dwarfs may become future allies and contacts. If either the characters or the soldiers came to the other group's rescue, that act lays strong groundwork for future friendship and trust. If the meetings between the two were less amicable, the soldiers may play less of a future role. As with the drakes, the gamemaster can use the Throalic soldiers to convey to the characters stories, legends, and news from around Barsaive. This information can be the basis for many different adventures.

Tyrlaan and the Cult of the Great Hunter

Even if the characters kill Tyrlaan, they have not rid Barsaive of the Cult of the Great Hunter. Tyrlaan's group was one of the larger sects of the cult in Barsaive, but other groups exist in other areas. If the gamemaster wishes, the Cult of the Great Hunter can become a recurring force in the campaign. Cultists not associated with Tyrlaan will use different methods to achieve their ends than those used by the cultists in **Shattered Pattern**, but they still turn all their efforts toward aiding Verjigorm in his perpetual hunt for great dragons.

If Tyrlaan escapes, he can become a recurring villain in an **Earthdawn** campaign. He does not take his defeat lightly and seeks revenge against the characters. First, however, he tries to re-establish his cult group. Rather than returning to any of the places he used in this adventure, Tyrlaan moves to a different part of Barsaive: perhaps the Tylon Mountains, or even the Poison Forest. In some future adventure, the characters might join forces with one or more of the drakes to hunt Tyrlaan down and rid Barsaive of him for good.

Cast of Characters

This section provides information and game statistics for the major gamemaster characters in **Shattered Pattern**. If necessary or appropriate, modify these statistics to suit the abilities of the player characters in your game. Because these characters likely appear more than once in the course of the adventure, their statistics and descriptions are grouped here for convenience.

The gamemaster characters are presented in order of their general importance to the story. Descriptions and statistics for other, minor characters are provided in the encounters where the characters first appear.

Note that Tyrlaan, Garollan, and Traj Quickwrist have created a group True pattern that enables the group's mem-

bers to enhance their abilities through the use of thread magic (see the **Thread Magic** chapter on p. 271 of the **Player's Compendium**). These threads enhance several of the group members' abilities, as noted in those characters' game statistics.

TYRLAAN

Born centuries before the Scourge, Tyrlaan embraced the spiritual world and sought to follow the five paths of the Wheel of Life. Beginning with the Path of the Warrior, Tyrlaan then followed the Discipline of the Beastmaster, seeking to understand the relationship between the world's Name-givers and animals. Upon attaining the Eighth Circle in this Discipline, Tyrlaan chose the Path of Travelers and followed the Discipline of the Troubadour, sharing tales of Barsaive's people and uniting them in preparation for the coming Scourge. After attaining the Eighth Circle in this Discipline, he moved to the Path of Sages and chose the Discipline of the Nethermancer, seeking to unravel the mysteries of life and death. Nethermancy held secrets and power unlike any other Discipline he had known, and so Tyrlaan chose not to move on to the next path. Instead, he remained a Nethermancer. As a *Sa'mistishsa* (see p. 44 of the **Name-giver's Compendium**), Tyrlaan loses the abilities of his previous Disciplines.

As the Scourge grew closer, Tyrlaan used his abilities to study the Horrors in hopes of finding weaknesses in those alien beings that he could exploit to defeat the entities. Unfortunately, one of Tyrlaan's experiments left him Horror marked. A Horror corrupted Tyrlaan, granting him great power while slowly twisting his mind until his lust for power far exceeded his loyalty to his fellow Name-givers and the world itself. In exchange for more power and knowledge, Tyrlaan betrayed the people of his own town of Carell to the Horror that had marked him. However, Tyrlaan turned against his master and killed the Horror with the very powers it had granted him.

When the Scourge began, Tyrlaan approached the nearby town of Varenna and asked for refuge in their kaer, explaining that the Horrors had already ravaged his home town and left him the sole survivor. Despite their instinctive mistrust, Varenna's leaders accepted Tyrlaan because they had no other magicians and believed his powers would prove useful.

However, before Kaer Varenna sealed its doors, Tyrlaan allowed another powerful Horror to mark him. As he had done in Carell, Tyrlaan sacrificed the people of Varenna one after another to his new master in exchange for knowledge and power. When the Scourge ended, Tyrlaan emerged from Kaer Varenna and destroyed the Horror and began traveling the ravaged land of Barsaive. Upon learning of Verjigorm, Tyrlaan summoned the Great Hunter and offered to become Verjigorm's willing pawn. To please his new master, Tyrlaan formed a sect that served Verjigorm as well as himself: the Cult of the Great Hunter. Of course, Tyrlaan's plan is to overthrow his master when the time is right, but the elf hasn't proven to be powerful enough yet.

Recently, Tyrlaan learned of the existence of a small obsidian dragon sculpture. Suspecting that the sculpture had some magical connection to the great dragons of Barsaive, Tyrlaan obtained it, along with two drake servants of the sculpture's previous owner, the great dragon Icewing. Tyrlaan soon discovered that the sculpture was one of Icewing's pattern items and used it to find a clutch of Icewing's eggs. He coerced the drakes into stealing several of these, intending to subject the eggs to powerful blood magic spells that would transform the hatchlings into Horror constructs to serve Verjigorm.

Arrogant and overly confident of his abilities, Tyrlaan sees his past triumphs over the Horrors as proof that his powers are beyond the scope of Name-givers. He looks upon all opposition with contempt, certain that no one can defeat him. His lust for knowledge and power and the effects of multiple Horror marks have left him corrupt beyond redemption.

This corruption also leads most spirits to disdain him resulting in a number of bad experiences with summoned spirits. In addition the Horror and blood magic taint that clouds his dwellings make summoning of any entities save Horrors and simple tasked spirits rather difficult. Thus, Tyrlaan depends on his cult members and servants of his own making to due his bidding.

In addition to his formidable Nethermancer abilities, Tyrlaan's Horror corruption allowed him access to talents and Horror powers otherwise unavailable to him. Additionally, his increased connection to corrupt astral energies has greatly improved his use of Karma.

Tyrlaan knows most of the Nethermancer spells known to exist in Barsaive (including those listed in the **Player's Compendium**). Tyrlaan also carries a Spell Matrix staff and wears a suit of crystal ringlet armor to augment his magical abilities.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (11): 5/D8
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (18): 7/D12
Willpower (17): 7/D12
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9 [12] [P]
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 12 [15] [P]
Physical Armor: 5
Social Defense: 10
Mystic Armor: 8

Death Rating: 35 (75)*
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 27 (56)*

[P] Enhanced by +3 through place True patterns (see Notes).
* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60

Karma Points: 5
Karma Step: 7/D12

Talents (Knacks)

Animal Possession (8): 15/D20+D6
Arcane Mutterings (4): 10/D10+D6
Armored Matrix (11): 11
Armored Matrix (11): 11
Astral Pocket [D] (11): 18/D20+D12
Astral Sight [D] (11): 18/D20+D12
Bargain with Summoned Creature [D] (9): 15/D20+D6
Creature Analysis (10): 17/D20+D10 (Creature Remains, Horror Analysis)
Casting Pattern (11): 18/D20+D12
Durability(4/3) (11): 11
Effect Pattern (11): 18/D20+D12
Enhanced Matrix (11): 11
Enhanced Matrix (11): 11
Frighten (4): 11/D10+D8
Hold Thread (11): 18/D20+D12
Hypnotize (11): 17/D20+D10
Item History (11): 18/D20+D12
Karma Ritual (5): 5
Lifesight [D] (11): 18/D20+D12 (Deathsight)
Orbiting Spy [D] (11): 18/D20+D12
Range Pattern (11): 18/D20+D12
Read and Write Magic [D] (11): 18/D20+D12
Read and Write Language (11): 18/D20+D12
—Human, Obsidiman, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Theran, T'skrang, Troll, Windling
Spellcasting [D] (11): 18/D20+D12 [24/D20+ D12+D10] [G] (Anchored Spell)
Spell Matrix (11): 11
Spell Matrix (11): 11
Spell Matrix (11): 11
Spell Matrix (11): 11
Spirit Hold [D] (11): 18/D20+D12
Spirit Talk [D] (11): 18/D20+D12
Summon (Ally Spirits) [D] (11): 18/D20+D12
Summoning Circle [D] (11): 18/D20+D12
Thread Weaving (Nethermancy) [D] (11): 18/D20+D12 [23/D20+2D10] [G] (Create Spell Matrix Object, Create Thread Item)
Willforce (11): 18/D20+D12

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
[G] Enhanced by +5 steps through group True pattern (see Notes); an additional +1 step to Spellcasting from the Blade of Cara Fahd when the group True pattern enhancement is active.

Horror Powers

Animate Dead (8): 15/D20+D6
Astral Camouflage (8): 15/D20+D6
Corrupt Karma (7): 14/D20+D4
Cursed Luck (7): 14/D20+D4
Create Shadow (7)
Disrupt Magic (8): 15/D20+D6

Skills

Artisan:
Robe Embroidery (3): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Alchemy and Potions (4): 11/D10+D8
Creature Lore (5): 12/2D10
Cult of the Great Hunter Lore (5): 12/2D10
Horror Lore (5): 12/2D10
Verjigorm Lore (5): 12/2D10

General:
Alchemy (4): 11/D10+D8
Read and Write Language (1): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Sperethiel*

Equipment

Thread Crystal Ringlet (Rank 3; Phys 5; Myst 5; Init 1; see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 350)

Blade of Cara Fahd Dagger (Rank 1; Damage 7/D12; Ranges 9–15–18; see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 348)
Knife (Forged +1; Damage 7/D12)
Skull-Tipped Quarterstaff (Forged +1; Damage 8/2D6)
Sling (Damage 7/D12; Range 20–40–80)
Belt Pouch (w/ 15 stones)

Kaer Carell Tapestry (two threads at Rank 3; place True pattern item)*
Kaer Varenna Stone Slab (two threads at Rank 3; place True pattern item)*
Spell Matrix Staff (Rank 7; Constrict Heart spell attuned, see the **Magical Treasures** chapter on p. 178 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**)
Temple Statue Piece (two threads at Rank 3; place True pattern item)*
Tyrlaan's Amulet (stolen by Rathann; group True pattern item)*

Cloaksense Brooch
Elfweave Robe
Experiment Journals
Grimoire
2 × Healing Potions

Trail Rations (1 week)
Wealthy Traveler's Garb
Writing Kit

* see Notes.

Spells

Nethermancy spells (any up to Eleventh Circle), Alter Life [A], Animate Dead [E], Astral Horror [M], Bone Shatter [E], Constrict Heart [M], Create Life [A], Gateway [M], Horror Call [M], Wither Limb [M]

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix (Note: With hisSpell Matrix staff, Tyrlaan has 5 Spell Matrices available).
[E] Denotes a spell currently attuned to an Enhanced Matrix.
[A] Denotes a spell currently attuned to an Armored Matrix.

Loot

100 gold pieces; a strongbox in **Tyrlaan's Chambers** (p. 235) contains his other loot.

Legend Award

28,355 Legend Points

Notes

Tyrlaan possesses the elf racial ability of Low-Light Vision. The elf has formed a group True pattern within his own sect of the Cult of the Great Hunter. He has two Rank Five threads attached to his Spellcasting and Thread Weaving (Nethermancy) talents, and a Rank One thread attached to the Blades of Cara Fahd further increases his Spellcasting bonus by +1. However, Rathann has stolen his group True pattern item, Tyrlaan's amulet, denying Tyrlaan access to these increases unless he can regain the amulet.

If Tyrlaan regains his amulet, use the Step and Action Dice listed in brackets [ ] for his Spellcasting and Thread Weaving (Nethermancy) talents. Tyrlaan has also attached three Rank Three threads to the place True patterns of the temple, Kaer Varenna, and Kaer Carell improving his Physical, Spell, and Social Defense by +3 when at these three locations. Use the Defense values listed in brackets when he is at these three locations. He keeps the pattern items for these threads in his astral pocket.

Lastly, Tyrlaan's Karma Points are low as he has been using them to empower his various blood magic creations through the weaving and casting of Alter Life and Create Life. If the gamemaster wants to give Tyrlaan a boost in combat during **The Finale** (see p. 239), he should feel free to spend more Karma as needed.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests
Sixth Circle: +1 Spell Defense
Seventh Circle: +1 Social Defense
Eighth Circle: Karma on controlled creatures or spirits Action Tests
Ninth Circle: Karma on Recovery Tests; Karma on spell Effect Tests
Tenth Circle: +1 Physical and Social Defense
Eleventh Circle: Otherworldly Control (2 Damage Points)
Twelfth Circle: +1 Social and Spell Defense

Thread Weaving Notes

Tyrlaan has made extensive use of thread magic. He has woven a Rank Seven thread to his spell matrix staff; a Rank Three thread to his crystal ringlet armor; a Rank One thread to one of the Blades of Cara Fahd (this thread is attached to Tyrlaan's Nethermancy talent); two Rank Three threads each to the True patterns of the temple, Kaer Varenna, and his lair in Kaer Carell; and two Rank Five threads to the group pattern of his sect of the Cult of the Great Hunter. The threads connected to Tyrlaan's three working sites are attached to his Physical Defense and Spell Defense (one thread each), and he keeps the pattern items for these threads in his astral pocket. The threads woven to the cult's group pattern are attached to Tyrlaan's Spellcasting and Nethermancy talents. Tyrlaan's amulet is the pattern item for these threads. Because Rathann stole Tyrlaan's amulet, the Nethermancer's Spellcasting and Nethermancy talents gain no increase from the group pattern unless Tyrlaan regains the amulet. If he does, use the step numbers in brackets for these talents.

Spell Notes

Tyrlaan usually has the spells listed above in his matrices. Note that he must keep Create Life and Alter Life in matrices because he is in the process of casting these spells during the adventure. As mentioned previously, Tyrlaan has access to basically every Nethermancy spell known in Barsaive, so the gamemaster should feel free to customize the listing to his liking.

Joran Lightfoot / The Shadow Killer

A Scout in the Army of Throal, Joran Lightfoot was one of the dwarfs sent to investigate the activities of the Cult of the Great Hunter along the border between the Badlands and the Servos Jungle. Joran set out ahead of the main group to scout the sites said to be used by the Cult of the Great Hunter, and he died at the hands of Tyrlaan's two lieutenants, Garollan and Traj Quickwrist. They brought the corpse to Tyrlaan's experiment chambers in the half-built ruins of Kaer Carell, where Tyrlaan used his Alter Life spell to transform Joran into a hideous shadow-creature that the Nethermancer dubbed the Shadow Killer. The transformation combined Joran's Scout talents with the characteristics of a Horror construct known as a shadow and drove Joran mad. Later, when Tyrlaan captured Icewing's drake servants, he used the Alter Life spell to give his Shadow Killer some of the drakes' enhanced abilities, making it an even deadlier creature.

Though Joran still retains a bit of his memory, he has virtually forgotten his life in the Army of Throal. He serves Tyrlaan with a crazed passion and relishes every chance to draw the blood of those who oppose his master. Because Tyrlaan's magic changed him so profoundly, Joran cannot be restored to his Name-giver form.

A Seventh Circle dwarf Scout before his transformation, Joran retains all the talents of his former Discipline and has been given many more through Tyrlaan's magic.

The Shadow Killer's specific talents and ranks appear below. The Shadow Killer can take three forms. In his Name-giver form, that of a dwarf, he can only use his Scout talents and abilities. In his shadow form, the creature cannot attack or be attacked physically; only certain magical spells, such as Mind Dagger, can harm him. The creature cannot cast spells while in shadow form either. In his third form—that of a blackened, twisted humanoid—the Shadow Killer can use any or all of his abilities but is vulnerable to physical attack.

If the player characters kill Joran but leave his body behind, Tyrlaan can resurrect him by using the spells Alter Life and Animate Dead.

Attributes

Dexterity (17): 7/D12 | **Strength** (16): 7/D12
Toughness (18): 7/D12 | **Perception** (11): 5/D8
Willpower (14): 6/D10 | **Charisma** (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10 | **Initiative**: 7/D12
Spell Defense: 8 | **Physical Armor**: 0
Social Defense: 7 | **Mystic Armor**: 3

Death Rating: 42 (82)* | **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 12 | **Knockdown**: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34 (67)*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 30 | **Full Movement**: 60

Karma Points: 25 | **Karma Step**: 10/D10+D6

Skills

Artisan:
Acting (4): 10/D10+D6
Craftsman; Trapmaking (2): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Dwarven Military Organization (4): 9/D8+D6
Throal History (4): 9/D8+D6
Throal Politics (4): 9/D8+D6

General:
Disarm Trap (4): 11/D10+D8
Lock Picking (4): 11/D10+D8
Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)

Talents

Astral Sight [D] (6): 11/D10+D8
Avoid Blow [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Climbing [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Detect Trap [D] (7): 12/2D10
Durability (6/5) (7): 7
Endure Cold [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Great Leap (7): 14/D20+D4
Karma Ritual (7): 7
Lock Sense (7): 12/2D10
Maneuver (7): 14/D20+D4
Melee Weapons (7): 14/D20+D4
Read and Write Language (5): 10/D10+D6
—Human, Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Theran, T'skrang
Riposte (7): 14/D20+D4
Silent Walk [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Speak Language (5): 10/D10+D6
—Human, Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Theran, T'skrang
Sprint (7): 14/D20+D4
Tracking [D] (7): 12/2D10
Trap Initiative [D] (6): 13/D12+D10

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Powers*

Claw Shape [T] (7): 14/D20+D4
Enhanced Matrix [T] (6): 6
Spellcasting [T] (6): 11/D10+D8
Spell Matrix [T] (6): 6
Spell Matrix [T] (6): 6
Thread Weaving (Wizardry) [T] (6): 11/D10+D8
Unarmed Combat [T] (7): 14/D20+D4
Willforce [T] (6): 12/2D10

* See Notes, below.

Spells*

Astral Sense, Astral Shield, Combat Fury, Counterspell [M], Doom Missile, Mage Armor, Mind Dagger [M], Razor Orb [E], Wizard's Cloak

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix.
[E] Denotes a spell currently attuned to an Enhanced Matrix.
* See Notes, below.

Equipment

Peasant's Garb (Joran's other equipment is in Garollan's chest in his room, p. 219)

Loot

None (Joran's loot is in Garollan's chest in his room; see p. 219)

Legend Award

2,440 Legend Points

Notes

Joran possesses the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight. He can only access these powers and spells in his True form. While in his True form, Joran may make 2 Actions per round and can use any of the Scout talents from his Name-giver form or Shadow powers from his Shadow form.

Fourth Circle: Enhance Senses (2 Damage Points)
Fifth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests
Sixth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests
Seventh Circle: +1 Physical Defense

Shadow Form

DEX: 7 | **STR**: 7 | **TOU**: 7
PER: 5 | **WIL**: 6 | **CHA**: 6

Initiative: 8 | **Physical Defense**: NA
Number of Actions: 2 | **Spell Defense**: 14
Attack: NA | **Social Defense**: 15

Damage:
Unarmed: NA

Physical Armor: NA
Mystic Armor: 7

Death Rating: 42 (82)
Wound Threshold: 12
Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34 (67)

Combat Movement: 34
Full Movement: 68

Karma Points: 25
Karma Step: 10/D10+D6

Powers: Astral Sight [T] (6): 11, Confusion (7): 13, Durability (7): 7, Evil Eye (7): 13, Find (7): 12, Lifesense (7): 12, Manifest (7): 7

Legend Points: 2,440

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

A shadow is a corrupted ally spirit. See the **Spirits** chapter on p. 370 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on shadows.

Garollan and Traj Quickwrist

Before joining Tyrlaan's cult, the elf Named Garollan and the ork Named Traj Quickwrist were part of an adventuring group that crossed too far into the Badlands in search of a lost kaer. The group stumbled on a Horror's lair, and all but Garollan and Traj died at the Horror's hands. The two survivors fled into the expanses of the Badlands, wandering without food and water for several days before they found a cave entrance leading to Tyrlaan's stronghold in Kaer Carell. Tyrlaan's cadaver servants captured the near-delirious adepts and brought them to the Nethermancer, who used his powers to dominate their minds and compel them to serve the Cult of the Great Hunter.

Since that time, the pair has become Tyrlaan's lieutenants, maintaining the temple and acting as special guards when necessary. Tyrlaan finds Garollan's Fourth Circle Beastmaster talents and Quickwrist's Fifth Circle Swordmaster abilities particularly handy. Tyrlaan has also drawn both adepts' blood to add to the blood broth he uses for his Create Life and Alter Life spells.

Garollan

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (11): 5/D8
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (9): 4/D6
Charisma (15): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 2/D4-1
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 11
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 36 (62)*
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 10
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 28 (50)*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 32
Full Movement: 64

Karma Points: 20
Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents

Animal Bond [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Cat's Paw [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Claw Shape [D] (4): 9/D8+D6
Creature Analysis [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Dominate Beast [D] (4): 8/2D6
Durability (7/6) (4): 4
Karma Ritual (4): 4
Tracking (4): 10/D10+D6
Thread Weaving (Beast Weaving) [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Unarmed Combat (5): 16/D20+D8 [G]

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
[G] Enhanced by +5 steps through group True pattern.

Skills

Artisan:
Wood Carving (7): 13/D12+D10

Knowledge:
Cult of the Great Hunter Lore (1): 7/D12
Elf History (1): 7/D12

General:
Climbing (1): 7/D12
Melee Weapons (1): 7/D12

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17)
Espagra-Scale Cloak (Phys 3; Myst 1; Init 0/1)
Chainmail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Blade of Cara Fahd Dagger (Rank 1; Damage 7/D12; Ranges 9–15–18; see **New Magical Treasures**, p. 348)
Short Sword (Damage 9/D8+D6; w/scabbard)

Griffin Talon (Cult of the Great Hunter pattern item)

Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tool
Climbing Kit
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

50 silver pieces

Legend Award

260 Legend Points

Notes

Garollan possesses the elf racial ability of Low-Light Vision. The elf has formed a group True pattern within his own sect of the Cult of the Great Hunter. He has one Rank Four thread attached to his Unarmed Combat talent and his Rank One thread attached to the Blades of Cara Fahd further increases his Unarmed Combat bonus woven to his group True pattern by +1.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

Traj Quickwrist

Attributes

Dexterity (20): 8/2D6
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Perception (12): 5/D8
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 12 [G]
Physical Armor: 9
Social Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 9 [G]

Death Rating: 36 (64)*
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 10
Knockdown: 6/D10**
Unconsciousness Rating: 28 (51)*

[G] Enhanced by +5 through group True pattern.
* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.
** Traj knows the Wound Balance talent.

Combat Movement: 43
Full Movement: 86

Karma Points: 24
Karma Die: 5/D8

Talents

Avoid Blow [D] (5): 13/D12+D10
Durability (7/6) (5): 5
Karma Ritual (5): 5
Heartening Laugh (5): 12/2D10
Maneuver [D] (5): 13/D12+D10
Melee Weapons [D] (5): 19/D20+2D6[G]
Riposte [D] (5): 13/D12+D10
Second Weapon [D] (3): 11/D10+D8
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Human, *Sperethiel*
Taunt (5): 12/2D10
Thread Weaving (Blade Weaving) [D] (5): 10/D10+D6
Throwing Weapons (4): 12/2D10
Wound Balance (3): 9/D8+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
[G] Enhanced by +6 steps through group True pattern.

Skills

Artisan:
Runic Carving (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Ancient Weapons (1): 6/D10
Cara Fahd History (3): 8/2D6
Horror Lore (3): 8/2D6

General:
Climbing (1): 7/D12
Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
Swimming (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Espagra-Scale Cloak (Phys 3; Myst 1; Init 0/1)
Living Crystal (Phys 6; Myst 3; Init 2; 5 Damage Points)

Broadsword (Forged +2; Damage 13/D12+D10; w/scabbard)
Bone Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9-15-18; Cult of the Great Hunter pattern item)
Dwarf Sword (Forged +2; Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
2 × Hawk Hatchets (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 24–40–48)

Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tool
Climbing Kit
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

85 silver pieces

Legend Points

820 Legend Points

Notes

Traj possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*. The ork has formed a group True pattern within his own sect of the Cult of the Great Hunter.

He has three Rank Five threads attached to his Spell Defense and Mystic Armor as well as his Melee Weapons talent and his Rank One thread attached to the Blades of Cara Fahd further increases his Melee Weapons bonus woven to his group True pattern by +1.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

Thread Weaving Notes

Quickwrist has one Rank Three thread each attached to his Physical Defense, Spell Defense, and Mystic Armor ratings. He also has a Rank One thread attached to one of the Blades of Cara Fahd. This thread further enhances his Spell Defense.

The Drakes

The three drakes in this adventure—Rathann, Arondry and Tellanion—all serve the great dragon Icewing. These three small, dragonlike creatures can shapeshift into Name-giver form and act as Icewing's agents among the Name-givers of Barsaive. They spend much of their time roaming the land, acting as their master's eyes and ears.

Rathann first learned of the obsidian dragon sculpture being sold in the markets of Throal; Arondry and Tellanion obtained the sculpture for Icewing, only to be captured by Tyrlaan and his cultists.

Though the characters do not interact much with the drakes during **Shattered Pattern**, they are described here for gamemasters who may wish to use them in further adventures.

Rathann

Rathann is a Seventh Circle Beastmaster in addition to his drake abilities. In his Name-giver form, Rathann resembles an elderly elf with white hair and light skin. He stands 5 feet, 11 inches tall, somewhat short for an elf. Rathann is the drake most often sent into Barsaive's cities and settlements. In his elf form, he is known in the Kingdom of Throal as a Beastmaster adept; no one there knows that he is a drake in the service of Icewing.

For more information on Rathann, see the **Dragons** chapter on p. 406 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Arondry

Like Rathann, Arondry becomes an elf when in Name-giver form. Taller and stockier than Rathann, Arondry stands 6 feet, 2 inches tall and weighs 200 pounds. He has light brown hair and dark skin, and is a Sixth Circle Wizard.

For more information on Arondry, see the **Dragons** chapter on p. 405 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Tellanion

In Name-giver form, Tellanion is a short, dark-skinned human apparently of Dinganni stock (see p. 53 of the **Name-giver's Compendium**). Tellanion stands 5 feet, 8 inches tall, weighs 155 pounds, and is a Sixth Circle Thief.

For more information on Tellanion, see the **Dragons** chapter on p. 407 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Tharr Strongfist

Tharr Strongfist, a Seventh Circle dwarf Warrior, leads the 35 man contingent of the Throal Army sent to investigate the Cult of the Great Hunter. Tall for his race, Tharr stands 5 feet high and weighs 150 pounds. He has dark brown hair and a full, braided beard.

Devoutly loyal to Throal, Tharr is no stranger to Barsaive's potential dangers and attempts to protect Throal from them in any way he can. If the characters speak with Tharr, he responds warily at first. But if they convince him of their sincerity, they gain a steadfast ally.

Tharr and his fellow soldiers all wear armor bearing the symbol of the Kingdom of Throal, which is engraved on one shoulder and painted on the front of their shields. Tharr wears chain mail armor, and his weapons have been magically enhanced by the Throal Army's Weaponsmiths.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (16): 7/D12
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (12): 5/D8
Charisma (12): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8 [9]*
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 7 [9]*
Physical Armor: 8
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 39 (102)
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11
Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 31 (80)

* See Notes, below.

Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Karma Points: 25
Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike (7): 13/D12+D10
Anticipate Blow [D] (6): 11/D10+D8
Air Dance (7): 10/D10+D6*
Avoid Blow [D] (6): 12/2D10
Down Strike [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Durability (9/7) (7): 7

Earth Skin (7): 14/D20+D4
Gliding Stride (7): 13/D12+D10
Karma Ritual (7): 7
Life Check [D] (7): 14/D20+D4
Melee Weapons [D] (8): 14/D20+D4 (Improvised Weapons)
Missile Weapons (6): 12/2D10
Second Attack (7): 13/D12+D10
Swift Kick [D] (7): 13/D12+D10
Thread Weaving (War Weaving) [D] (6): 11/D10+D8
Throwing Weapons (6): 12/2D10
Tiger Spring (7): 7
Unarmed Combat [D] (7): 13/D12+D10
Wood Skin [D] (7): 14/D20+D4

D Indicates a Discipline talent.
* Air Dance adjusted for –3 armor Initiative Penalty.

Skills

Artisan:
Armor Rune Carving (4): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Dwarven Military Organization (4): 9/D8+D6
Military Procedures (4): 9/D8+D6
Throal History (4): 9/D8+D6

General:
Hunting (4): 10/D10+D6
Spellcasting (4): 9/D8+D6
Tactics (6): 11/D10+D8
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17; w/carved Throal symbol)
Chainmail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Spell Sword (Rank 6; Damage 17/D20+D10; +1 Physical Defense and +2 Spell Defense when wielded; 3 Spell Matrices with: Bellow of the Thundras, Dodge Boost, Lightning Shield)

Broadsword (Forged +3; Damage 15/D20+D6; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)
Dwarf Sword (Damage 10/D10+D6; w/scabbard)
2 × Throwing Axes (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 12–20–24)
Medium Crossbow (Damage 12/2D10; Range 70–140–280)
Quiver (w/15 medium crossbow bolts)

Gauntlets (Rank 3; +3 bonus to unarmed Damage Tests)
Adventurer's Kit
Carving Tool
Cloaksense Brooch
Dwarf Winternight Cloak
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

250 silver pieces

Legend Award

1,925 Legend Points

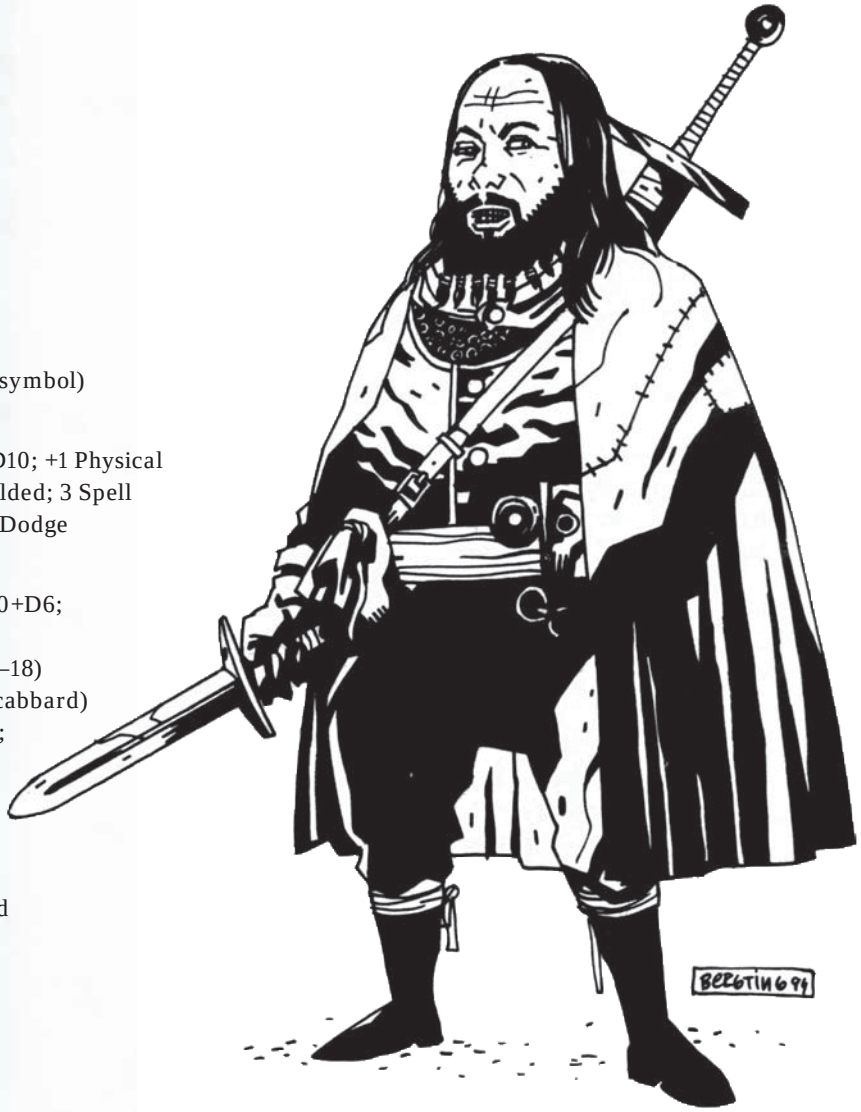
Notes

Tharr possesses the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight. When Tharr is wielding the Spell Sword use the Physical and Spell Defense values listed in brackets [ ] above.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests
Sixth Circle: Karma on Strength-only Tests
Seventh Circle: Karma on melee weapons Damage Tests

Thread Weaving Notes

Tharr has Rank Two threads attached to his Spell Sword and his magic gauntlets.



Throalic Soldiers (30)

All 30 non-adept soldiers in Tharr's army unit are dwarfs of average build, clad in leather armor bearing the symbol of the Kingdom of Throal. Each of them carries a hand-axe, a dagger, and a buckler painted with the Throalic symbol.

Like their leader, these soldiers hold undying loyalty toward the Kingdom of Throal.

Attributes

Dexterity (12): 5/D8
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Willpower (8): 4/D6
Strength (14): 6/D10
Perception (10): 5/D8
Charisma (8): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 5
Initiative: 5/D8
Physical Armor: 4
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 38
Wound Threshold: 10
Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Combat Movement: 20
Full Movement: 40

Skills

Artisan:
Painting (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Dwarven Military Organization (1): 6/D10
Military Procedures (1): 6/D10

General:
Anticipate Blow (2): 7/D12
Avoid Blow (3): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (5): 10/D10+D6
Tactics (1): 6/D10
Speak Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17; w/painted Throal symbol)
Leather Armor (Phys 3; w/painted Throal symbol)

Hand-Axe (Forged +2; Damage 12/2D10)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit
Painting Tool
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb

Loot

25 silver pieces

Legend Award

70 Legend Points

Notes

The soldiers possess the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight.

BLADES

Magical weapons, treasures, gold. You may think it will make you happy, but sometimes it doesn't. Be careful of accumulating too much power in too short a time—or you're bound to get tricked by slumbering evil.

• Brel'kath, Advisor to the Crown •

The smell told them they were close. Sickly-sweet, the smell of fresh blood grew stronger with every step the little band of orks took down the stony path by the river. The sound of rushing water echoed off the walls and roof of the tunnel, taking on the tones of mocking laughter. Ahead, the orks saw a faint greenish glow. The Seven Spokes walked in single file, each with one hand on a comrade's shoulder and the other clutching the hilt of a dagger. Grim and determined, they walked toward the place where the Horror waited. Their eyes showed no sign of fear. They were orks; they had grabbed life by the throat in their time, and they knew how to die well.

A few paces shy of the dreadful light, Pobov Gaarz halted the line. He turned to face his comrades, smiling the smile he always wore in battle. Green sparks glinted off the tips of his tusks. "It is a good day to avenge a friend," he said. His six companions rumbled their assent.

Gaarz held out his blade at arm's length. "Let us pledge to each other once more before we die!"

Silently, with grim smiles, the other six orks came around and touched the tips of their daggers to Gaarz's. The joined daggers made up the spokes of a wheel, with a gap where an eighth blade should have been. Together, they chanted, "Eight we are, eight we shall be—united, indivisible, eternally."

"To the memory of Kragen Overtall," said Nhag Katurn, who had been Kragen's closest friend. All the orks bowed their heads, paying one last tribute to the comrade whom the Horror had led to betray them.

Pobov Gaarz was the first to raise his head. "We strike to avenge Kragen, and all the other Name-givers that this Horror's poison has touched. By the Blades of Cara Fahd, we shall have victory!"

As one, they raised their dagger blades. The light glinted off the metal, turning the wheel to green fire.

⅄ ⅄ ⅄

R'ashani paced back and forth across her tent, her tail switching violently from side to side. Vainly, she strove to shut her ears to the distant echoes of horrible laughter drifting up from the caverns. Surely the thing below could not triumph over seven such bold heroes, armed as they were with the rite she had made for them. The best fruits of her sorcery she had given to these strangers, that they might destroy the Horror whose touch had brought so many of her own folk to ruin. She could not do it on her own—but they could slay the entity. They must. If the orks failed, House Ch'elann would fall to the Horror.

R'ashani stopped pacing abruptly and clenched her fists. She was *shivalahala*—she refused to admit the possibility of defeat.

The green glow came from the small lake at the grotto's heart. Dark patterns turned and twisted in the water, signs of the Horror's power. The Horror itself was a nightmare shape, black and glistening, its narrow snakelike body held up by eight limbs that the creature could transform from hard-shelled insect legs to flailing tentacles. On three sides of its massive head—crested like a t'skrang's—huge eyes glowed the same sickly green as the water the thing sat in. As the Seven Spokes watched, greenish ichor shot through with red blood welled up and dripped from the Horror's left-side eye. It splashed on a jutting edge of rock, sending bubbles of the stuff flying through the grotto. One of them struck Nhag, who screamed and clutched at her neck. The ichor bubble dropped off, leaving a patch of burned flesh behind.

"*Buunda*!" shouted Pobov Gaarz, darting toward the Horror. Lazily, it hurled a tentacle at him. He side-stepped the blow, striking at the glistening flesh as he moved. Then he darted away, drawing the Horror's attention just long enough to let Mogrok the Proud rush up for the second

blow. Six of the Seven Spokes danced around the Horror, stabbing at its flailing limbs and dodging its blows. Several feet behind them, Nhag Katurn untied her waist pouch and pulled from it a small copper bowl and a medallion of soft wood. Forcing herself to ignore her comrades' battle shouts and cries of pain, Nhag placed the cool point of her dagger against the back of her hand and cut a shallow triangle—the shape of two-eighths of a wheel. She turned her hand over the bowl, palm-up, and clenched a fist. "For both of us, Kragen," she whispered as her blood dripped into the bowl. When the blood flow slowed, she blotted the wound on her sleeve and charged shrieking toward the battle.

One by one, the Seven Spokes cut their hands and squeezed blood into the bowl. While each of them performed the rite, the others kept the Horror busy. A tentacle caught Mogrok across the face—he screamed as it burned his right eye but stood his ground and slashed at the Horror. Nhag drew her hunting knife, fighting two-fisted with the Blade of Cara Fahd in one hand and the iron knife blade in the other. The knife struck, bit deep—and crumbled into nothing, melted away by the Horror's blood.

Pobov Gaarz, the last to give blood, ducked away from a flying gob of ichor. It struck a stalactite behind him and turned its gleaming crystal surface ash grey. Nhag threw herself at the Horror with a blood-curdling yell; Gaarz took advantage of the distraction to dash toward the bowl. Breathing hard from exertion he rested the tip of his dagger against his hand—and stopped. Suddenly, the thought of cutting himself seemed fantastic to him. Why was he doing this? What kind of warrior deliberately wounded himself in battle? And on his knife hand, yet? It was all right for the others, they fought left-handed more often than not. But he fought right-handed, so this magical ritual required him to risk himself in a way not asked of his fellows. Gaarz flushed with sudden, furious resentment, throwing down his dagger with a growl. "Harm myself—cripple my fighting hand—for Kragen Overtall? To avenge a traitor who tried to kill me?! No!" He slammed his hand into the side of the burnt stalactite. "No!"

The pain of the blow made him gasp and cleared his head a little. He saw the Blade of Cara Fahd winking up at him from the cavern floor. Its light seemed to pierce through to his soul. For a single, blinding moment he recognized his anger as the Horror's creation and threw it aside like a mange-eaten cloak. He picked up the dagger and cut a triangle in the back of his hand, then clenched his fist over the bowl with a howl of defiance. After a few moments, he sat down and pulled the bowl of blood and the wooden medallion next to him. He gave the Horror a long, steady look, as if memorizing it—then dipped two fingers in the blood and began to trace the thing's outline on the wood. When he finished, he took up the Blade of Cara Fahd and slashed it across the painted medallion. The Horror howled with pain and rage. Laughing, Gaarz charged back into the fray.

One by one, the Seven Spokes drew the Horror's shape in blood and slashed at the medallion. With every stroke of steel across wood, the Horror shrieked and a part of its body crumbled to dust. As Nhag made the last stroke with a shout of triumph, the Horror's terrible head melted into nothing. The greenish glow died away, leaving nothing but the light of a few sputtering torches.

Nhag held up her Blade; the metal had turned a dark slate-blue. "Victory!" she crowed. "The blood of Betrayer darkens our blades—destroyed by the heroes of Cara Fahd!" Battered but defiantly alive, the Seven Spokes raised their daggers and shouted their joy.

R'ashani drifted off to sleep feeling more hopeful than she had in many a long night. The Horror was dead. The Seven Spokes had saved enough of her people from the thing's taint to rebuild House

Ch'elann. After so long a darkness, all was finally well. R'ashani fell asleep smiling and soon began to dream. She stood in the grotto where the Horror had laired. It was quiet and dark, except for a single point of light by the far side of the lake. Curious, R'ashani walked around for a closer look.

The light shone from a dagger, one of the Blades of Cara Fahd. It gleamed as white as crystal, so captivating that R'ashani had to pick it up. As she took the blade in her hand, the light began to change, darkening to the pale green of swamp-fire.

The sudden, overpowering smell of blood made R'ashani double over. The dagger fell from her hand, stabbing into the rock floor. As she watched, horrified, the rock began to bleed. R'ashani screamed, but the sound was lost in a rising tide of mocking laughter.

The Blades of Cara Fahd

This section provides the history of the Blades of Cara Fahd, the Seven Spokes who wielded them, and the Horror—Betrayer—that corrupted them. The section also includes information on using the weapons in the game, guidelines for incorporating Betrayer's influence, and directions for using these adventures in an **Earthdawn** campaign.

History of the Blades

The history of the Blades of Cara Fahd begins in Barsaive's distant past, during the Orichalcum Wars. At that time, the Theran Empire needed vast amounts of orichalcum for its magical research, including the Rites of Protection and Passage that would one day protect the world from the Scourge. As a result, the Therans offered Barsaive's various kingdoms high prices for the precious element. As the nations and peoples of Barsaive battled each other for the valuable ore, the threat of the Horrors grew with each passing year. Soon, Barsaive's people found themselves fighting the Horrors as well as each other.

The Blades and Their Wielders

In the southwestern corner of Barsaive, the ork kingdom of Cara Fahd battled its nearest neighbors and rivals—the humans of Landis and the trolls of Ustrect. While many of Cara Fahd's soldiers fought these enemies, other ork adepts were recruited to protect the kingdom from the Horrors. Eight of these adepts performed heroic exploits that captured the attention of Cathon Grimeye, leader of Cara Fahd's military. Grimeye chose these eight adepts to serve as a symbol of heroism and devotion to Cara Fahd. He Named them Cara Fahd's Protectors, so that all Barsaive would know of their deeds in the name of the ork kingdom they served.

Grimeye also charged the famed ork Weaponsmith Rugaah Gloh to forge the band a set of weapons that would be their trademark and symbol. Gloh worked for months on the weapons, a matched set of enchanted daggers inscribed with runes identifying them as belonging to the ork kingdom. He Named these daggers the Blades of Cara Fahd and gave one to each of Cara Fahd's Protectors. So long as the Protectors served Cara Fahd, their bond to each other and to the kingdom would strengthen the Blades' magic.

The Arrival of Betrayer

Armed with the Blades, Cara Fahd's Protectors defeated countless Horrors and Horror constructs. They met their nemesis, however, in the Horror known as Betrayer. While many other Horrors attack with claws and teeth, Betrayer subtly caused its victims to betray those around them. Under the influence of this entity, soldiers betrayed their leaders in battle, villagers revolted against their leaders, and families betrayed their loved ones. When Betrayer grew bored with corrupting the minds of ordinary folk, it sought powerful adepts whose magic it could pervert to betray hundreds or even thousands of victims. In its search for these more toothsome morsels, Betrayer discovered Cara Fahd's Protectors.

Horror-Marked!

Betrayer led Cara Fahd's Protectors into battle against one of its servitors, a construct that the ork heroes easily defeated. But during the course of the battle, Betrayer marked one of the eight orks—a Swordmaster Named Kragen Overtall. Through the Horror mark, Betrayer infiltrated the entire group. And through the group, the Horror caused discord and betrayal among the communities the orks passed through. Eventually the heroes realized that a Horror had somehow touched them. Scant days after that, they discovered that their comrade Kragen Overtall bore the Horror mark that plagued them. At this discovery, Overtall fled Cara Fahd and headed northeast into the Liaj Jungle. The remaining seven heroes followed their Horror-marked friend, first with hopes of saving him—then with the intention to kill him. After weeks of tracking Overtall across Barsaive, Cara Fahd's Protectors caught up with the fugitive and slew him. Grief-stricken at what they had been forced to do, the seven heroes built a small crypt where they laid their departed to rest.

The Seven Spokes

The betrayal of Kragen Overtall remained a painful memory in the minds of the remaining heroes as they traveled back to Cara Fahd. On their return, one of them—Pobov Gaarz—proposed that the seven re-Name themselves and forever sunder the bonds between them, Kragen Overtall, and the Horror that had marked him. The only one to protest was Nhag Katurn, Overtall's closest friend, who only reluctantly agreed with the wisdom in Gaarz's proposal.

The orks began by destroying Kragen's dagger, thereby severing it from the magical pattern of the remaining Blades. Then they performed the Naming ritual, re-Naming themselves the Seven Spokes. They sealed the rite with a blood oath to protect each other and Cara Fahd. To end the ritual they engraved a new symbol onto one side of each of

the remaining Blades. This symbol—a wheel with seven spokes—could only be seen if the Blades were arranged as a wheel with their tips touching in the center. This symbol also showed a break in the pattern, a hole where an eighth spoke should have been. This gap was the heroes' tribute to the memory of their fallen companion.

Their re-Naming complete, the Seven Spokes believed they had rid themselves of the Horror. Unknown to them, however, Betrayer's corruption had spread into the pattern of the Blades themselves.

Betrayer and the Liferock

The destruction of Overtall's dagger and the re-Naming of the group severely weakened Betrayer. Rather than rebuild its power slowly through the Blades, Betrayer sought new victims. It found a Brotherhood of obsidimen whose Liferock lay in the Tylon Mountains, near the Horror's lair. As it had done with the ork heroes, Betrayer penetrated the Brotherhood by slowly corrupting one of its members and using him as a gateway to the rest. Once it had its first victim completely under its influence, Betrayer sent its unwitting pawn into the Liferock. Through the tainted obsidiman, Betrayer corrupted the remaining members of the Brotherhood and the Liferock itself. When the Liferock's cries of pain reached the Brotherhood's absent members, they came from all over Barsaive to aid their Liferock. Betrayer consumed them as well, one by one—all save for the last.

Its strength somewhat restored by the betrayal of the Liferock and the Brotherhood, Betrayer turned its attention back to the Seven Spokes. Once again, the Horror worked its malevolent magic, and the Spokes carried the Horror's influence with them across Barsaive. Soon the Seven Spokes realized that they had failed to rid themselves of Betrayer. Determined to confront and destroy the Horror, they set out in search of it and eventually came to the Liferock in the Tylon Mountains. As they searched for traces of the Horror, the Seven Spokes were attacked by corrupted obsidimen that Betrayer had turned into Horror constructs. As they fought, the last of the Brotherhood emerged from the Liferock—himself free of the Horror's taint, but driven mad by the corruption of the Liferock. The ork heroes defeated the constructs and trapped the mad obsidiman in a small crevasse near the Liferock, where he remained throughout the Scourge.

The Battle

After several more weeks of travel in and around the Tylon Mountains, the Seven Spokes discovered the Horror's lair. Betrayer had gone to ground deep within the mountains, near an underground community of t'skrang Pale Ones. With aid from the *shivalahala* of the t'skrang foundation, the Seven Spokes devised a blood magic ritual intended to destroy the Horror. The Seven Spokes confronted Betrayer in a small grotto deep beneath the Tylon Mountains. As the orks attacked the Horror, one by one they scarred the backs of their hands with the Blades and let their blood flow into an enchanted bowl. As each member performed the ritual, the Horror grew weaker and weaker, its body shriveling and drying up. As the last of Seven Spokes performed the ritual, the Horror's body melted into nothingness. The Seven Spokes stood triumphant over the Horror that had so long bedeviled them.

Betrayal From Beyond

For a long while, the Seven Spokes believed that they had indeed banished Betrayer from the world and their lives. They did not know that they had only succeeded in destroying Betrayer's body. Its spirit remained alive, split into seven parts and trapped within the magical pattern of the Blades of Cara Fahd. Though much weaker than it had been, Betrayer was now safe from physical attack. Again the Horror began to exert its influence over the Seven Spokes and everyone who came into contact with them.

Over the next few years, the Seven Spokes brought tragedy and betrayal wherever they went. During the last months of the Orichalcum Wars, the heroes unknowingly betrayed the very kingdom for which they fought. Because of the Horror-cursed daggers they carried, the Seven Spokes ensured Cara Fahd's downfall.

Soon after Cara Fahd collapsed, Pobov Gaarz—the last surviving member of the Seven Spokes—gathered the Blades together and placed them in an ornate enchanted box. He sealed the box with blood magic so that the Blades might never be seen or wielded again. With this act, Betrayer's power waned. Over time the Horror slept, waiting for new victims to discover and wield the Blades.

The Blades Since the Scourge

No one knows exactly what happened to the Blades after the death of Pobov Gaarz, or how they survived the Scourge intact. A generation or so after the Scourge ended, the Blades were discovered by an elven Nethermancer Named Tyrlaan, a servant of Verjigorm, the Hunter of Great Dragons. Tyrlaan detected the Horror magic within the Blades and wove threads to them, hoping they would aid the plans of his master. His act awoke Betrayer, but before the Horror became fully aware, a group of adepts took the daggers from Tyrlaan and his servants. These adepts seek to unlock the magic of the Blades of Cara Fahd, not knowing the danger they unleash on all of Barsaive by doing so.

Using the Blades

The Blades of Cara Fahd are a matched set of seven daggers, each with a dark red wooden hilt set with a small, dark emerald. Runic carvings cover both sides of the hilts, the pommels, and the gleaming steel blades. One side of the blades contains the runic symbols for the ancient ork kingdom of Cara Fahd. The other side contains larger runes that together form the symbol of the Seven Spokes. This symbol can be seen only when the seven daggers are arranged so that each forms a wheel spoke, with the daggers' tips in the center and their pommels at the outer edge.

Each of the original eight wielders carried one of these daggers until the Horror Betrayer marked the Swordmaster Kragen Overtall. Kragen eventually betrayed his fellow group members and Cara Fahd. Afterward, the other members killed him and destroyed his dagger.

The **New Magical Treasures** chapter, p. 348, provides detailed game information for the Blades and describes the powers and abilities Betrayer can use while trapped within the daggers. This information includes the Key Knowledges and Deeds associated with each of the Blades' thread ranks, the specific preludes appropriate to each thread rank (see **Preludes**, p. 261), and the adventure in which the characters learn the thread rank's Key Knowledge.

Weaving Threads

Only members of a group that has formed a group True pattern (see p. 271 of the **Player's Compendium**) can use the magic of the Blades of Cara Fahd. Each individual dagger is meant to be carried by one member of the group, and each character weaves his own thread to his dagger. The daggers enhance the abilities granted by the group True pattern, as well as increasing the wielders' Spell Defenses against Horrors and Horror constructs.

The increase to a wielder's abilities—via threads woven to his dagger—can never exceed the rank of the thread woven to that ability from the group's True pattern or pattern item. Threads woven to the Blades count toward the maximum number of threads a character can have active at any time. The daggers have a maximum of eight threads because eight daggers existed originally, even though only seven exist now. This also allows two characters to weave threads to a single dagger, which may be necessary if the player characters' group contains eight members. For more information, see **How Many Characters?** on p. 260.

The characters can weave threads to the Blades as soon as they have learned the appropriate Key Knowledge and performed any Deeds associated with the thread rank. Thread Weaving is described in the **Thread Magic** chapter on p. 268 of the **Player's Compendium**.

Keep in mind that each character must weave a thread to the individual Blade he carries to gain the benefits of the Blades, and characters cannot skip a thread rank when weaving threads. For example, a character must have previously woven a Rank Two thread to his dagger before he can weave a Rank Three thread.

Betrayer's Powers

The spirit of Betrayer still lives in the pattern of the Blades, awakened by Tyrlaan and his servants when they wove threads to the Blades (see the adventure **Shattered Pattern** on p. 202 for more information about Tyrlaan). Since the characters have taken possession of the Blades, the Horror has grown stronger and begun to exert its influence over those near the Blades.

As the characters weave higher-ranked threads to the Blades, the Horror grows in power. The **Plot Synopsis** for each adventure suggests ways to use the Horror's influence. Some of the specific actions the Horror causes in each

adventure appear below as well. During **Bond Breaker** (p. 264), the characters weave no threads to the Blades. Therefore, Betrayer's power remains weak and its influence is limited in this adventure. At this point, Betrayer can only strengthen feelings of betrayal and anger in victims physically near the Blades. For example, Betrayer strengthens Gnanagh's feelings of jealousy toward his brother and thereby inspires Gnanagh to attempt murder.

Weaving Rank One or Rank Two threads to the Blades strengthens the Horror's power enough to let it pervert emotions slightly—for example, turning simple envy into obsessive jealousy. Weaving Rank Three or Rank Four threads to the Blades strengthens Betrayer substantially. At this point Betrayer can influence those near the Blades quite easily, even causing friends and companions to turn on one another. For example, in **A Traitor's Fate** (p. 296) the Horror causes the leader of a jungle tribe to slay her people and herself.

By weaving Rank Five or Rank Six threads to the Blades, the characters make Betrayer powerful enough to cause those near the Blades to attack their closest friends and loved ones. Betrayer's influence can also spread throughout communities, as happens in **With an Axe in Hand** (p. 309). Rank Seven threads increase the Horror's power so much that even the most loyal of friends or followers can be prompted toward betrayal. This effect occurs in the adventure **Pure Liquids** (p. 326), when Betrayer manipulates a group of t'skrang to attack their *shivalahala*.

Effects on Gamemaster Characters

Betrayer can use its mind-manipulating Influence power against gamemaster characters who are physically

close to the Blades of Cara Fahd. The effective area of this power grows larger as the Horror grows stronger. As each new rank of thread is woven to the Blades, Betrayer can exert its influence over more people within a greater area.

The specific instances in which the Horror uses its power in these adventures need no game mechanics because they happen as part of the stories. However, if the gamemaster wishes the Horror to manipulate gamemaster characters in other ways, he can use the following game mechanics or simply declare that the Horror's power works in the manner he wishes.

The step number for the Influence power is 7, plus the highest rank of the threads woven to the Blades of Cara Fahd. When Betrayer uses this special power, the Horror makes an Influence Test against the target's Spell Defense. Add a +3 to +7 bonus to the test if the victim is feeling anger or jealousy or is contemplating betrayal prior to the test. The gamemaster sets the specific bonus, based on the strength of the target's thoughts and feelings. Keep in mind that Betrayer usually seeks out angry or jealous victims on whom to use its powers. If the test succeeds, the victim does as Betrayer suggests. If the Horror achieves a Good or better result, the act of betrayal perpetrated by the victim is intensified. For example, in **Bond Breaker** an Average result on Betrayer's part might have led Gnanagh to simply create dissent or distrust among the Righteous Vipers instead of poisoning his brother's drink.

Effects on Player Characters

The Influence power is intended for use against gamemaster characters. If the gamemaster wishes to turn Betrayer's powers against one of the player characters, use the Horror's Karma Tap power. The connection between the characters and the Blades allows Karma Tap to function because the characters' threads are essentially connected to the Horror. This connection has the same game effect as a Horror mark. The Horror gains a +3 bonus when using Karma Tap against any of the player characters.

Running Blades

Blades is designed as an **Earthdawn** campaign supplement for use throughout an ongoing **Earthdawn** campaign. The exact role of these adventures in a campaign is up to the gamemaster and, to a lesser extent, the players. The following paragraphs offer suggestions for dealing with the unique structure of this product and integrating the **Blades** adventures into your campaign.

Getting the Blades

The adventures assume that the characters possess the Blades of Cara Fahd. They may have acquired the weapons in a number of ways, the most likely of which are described below.

Shattered Pattern

The most likely way for the characters to have obtained the Blades is at the conclusion of the adventure **Shattered Pattern** (p. 244). The Blades are the primary treasure the characters gain in that adventure, and most groups should have obtained the Blades at that time. In **Shattered Pattern**, the characters take the Blades from the elf Nethermancer Tyrlaan and his lieutenants in the Cult of the Great Hunter, a Horror cult devoted to Verjigorm. Tyrlaan and his flunkies have already woven threads to the Blades, thereby awakening Betrayer before the adventures in **Blades** begin. Betrayer's awareness and ability to act are important elements of the subplot that plays throughout the **Blades** adventures.

Other Means

If the characters have not played **Shattered Pattern** or did not obtain the Blades at the end of that adventure, devise some other way for the characters to obtain them. For example, the characters may stumble across the Blades locked away in the ruins of Parlainth. Or perhaps the characters receive them as payment for some important task they perform.

Tailor the specific circumstances to your campaign. How the characters obtain the Blades is not important. To run these adventures, the characters need only possess the weapons and realize that they must research the Blades' history to use their magical powers.

The Blades' Curse

If the characters obtain the Blades in some other way than through the **Shattered Pattern** adventure, the Horror must be awakened somehow before the characters weave their first threads to the Blades. Someone may have previously woven threads to the daggers, or the gamemaster may simply assume that the Horror awakens when the characters begin studying the Blades. The so-called "curse" on the Blades—actually a manifestation of the Horror within them—must be active when the characters learn the first Key Knowledge (see **Bond Breaker**, p. 264). The characters must also understand that the Blades have cursed them. See **Blades and Your Campaign**, p. 262, for more information about the effects of the Blades and the Horror on the campaign.

Discovering the Truth

Over the course of the adventures, the characters should deduce that the Blades carry more than a simple curse. If the characters decide to astrally sense the Blades to determine the truth, allow them to do so. **Do not offer this option unless the characters request it.** The characters learn the truth in the final adventure. If they haven't figured it out by then, a lot of their questions about the Blades and the curse should be answered at that point.

Characters may make Astral Sensing Tests against Betrayer's Spell Defense of 23 and must achieve a Good or better result to detect anything beyond the effects of the "curse." The Difficulty Number is reduced by –1 for each thread rank that the characters have woven to the Blades. If any of the characters achieves a Good or better result, he notices elements of Horror taint, which imply that the "curse" on the Blades is similar to a Horror curse. An Excel-

lent result reveals a definite living pattern intertwined with that of the Blades, while an Extraordinary result reveals that a Horror lives in the Blades' pattern.

Any character who does not achieve a Good or better result but whose test result equals the Spell Defense of the Blades (18) detects the "curse" on the pattern of the weapons. An Average result against the Horror's Spell Defense also reveals the "curse."

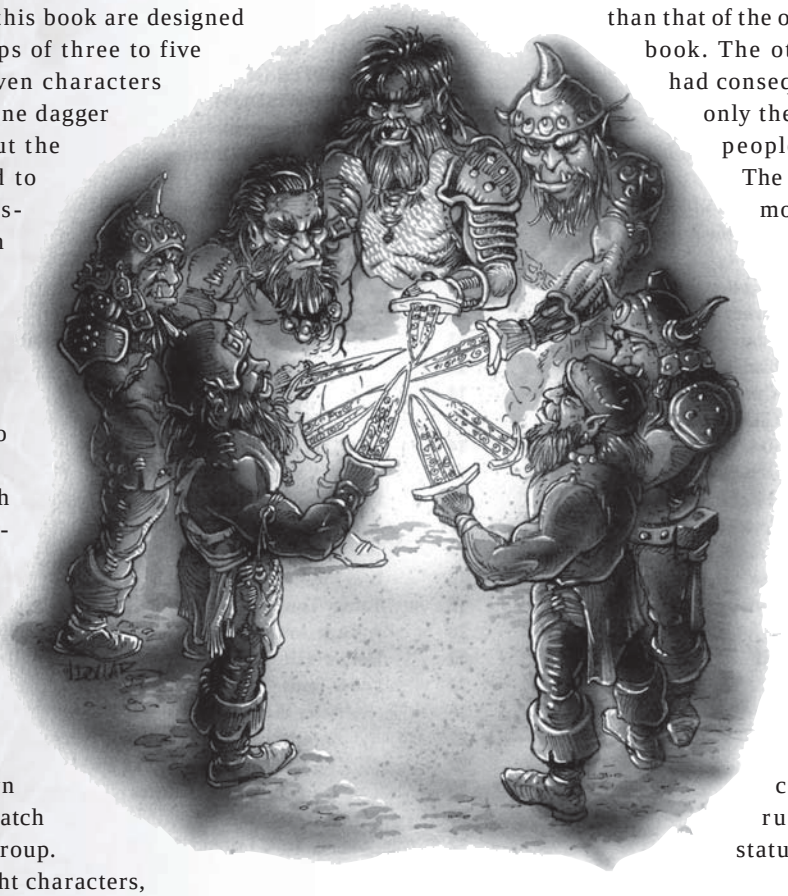
How Many Characters?

The adventures in this book are designed to accommodate groups of three to five adepts. A group of seven characters is also possible (with one dagger for each character), but the gamemaster will need to scale the game statistics for the opposition accordingly (see p. 220 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** and p. 10 of the **Introduction** chapter for guidelines on how to do this).

A player group with less than seven characters poses no real problem, because all seven of the Blades need not be wielded for the characters to harness their powers. Obviously, care needs to be taken to scale down certain encounters to match the capabilities of the group.

If the group has eight characters, the gamemaster has a few options. First, one of the characters may choose not to wield a Blade for some reason or other. Second, a group might consist of several adepts who have formed a group pattern, plus one or two companions who have yet to join the pattern. Such companions cannot use the Blades, and so should not wield them. Third, two of the characters in a group may weave threads to a single dagger. The two characters must decide which character will carry the dagger, but each character benefits from the enhancements granted by his thread.

If a player group has more than eight members, at least one of the characters will not be able to weave a thread to a Blade. If desired, the gamemaster may solve this problem by simply changing the number of daggers available throughout the adventures, and by changing the history of the Blades appropriately. Conversely, the gamemaster may see how the loyalty of these extra characters plays out during the corruption of their eight friends.



Adventure Style

The adventures in **Blades** differ from the previous ones in a number of ways. First, each adventure forms part of a larger picture, although each can stand alone. As the characters progress through the **Blades** adventures, they learn the history of the Blades and the heroes who wielded them. At the same time, they uncover a serious threat to Barsaive, a threat they become inextricably linked to. This threat grows with each adventure and each thread the characters weave to the Blades.

Also, the scope of each adventure is much smaller than that of the other adventures in this book. The other adventures have had consequences that affect not only the characters, but other people and places as well. The **Blades** adventures are more self-contained.

Except for the final adventure, **Pure Liquids** (p. 326), the characters simply seek to learn the next Key Knowledge of the Blades. They are not out to free a small town from the Grim Legion, defeat a major Horror, or anything else potentially earth-shaking. These limited objectives allow a gamemaster to run these adventures between others in his campaign without disrupting the campaign's status quo.

Researching the Blades

Researching the Blades of Cara Fahd is central to the adventures in **Blades**. These adventures only work if the characters decide they want to study the Blades and weave threads to them. Before running **Blades**, the gamemaster may want to re-read the material on thread magic (see p. 264 of the **Player's Compendium**) so that he has a clear idea of how threads are woven to magical items.

Learning each Key Knowledge of the Blades involves three steps. First, a character must make an Item or Weapon History Test to learn the nature of the Key Knowledge (the so-called Test Knowledge) and any Deeds associated with the rank of the thread he wishes to weave. Second, the characters must discover how they can learn the Key Knowledge—at this point, the **Preludes** section comes into play (see below). Third, the players must go and play through the adventures to allow their characters to learn the Key Knowledge (the so-called Research Knowledge) and, if necessary, perform the Deeds.

Making Item or Weapon History Tests

A character makes the Item or Weapon History Test against a Difficulty Number of 18 (the Spell Defense of the Blades). If this test succeeds, the character learns the nature of the Key Knowledge, known as the Test Knowledge, needed to weave a specific thread rank to the Blades. If none of the characters in the group has either of these talents, the group may find a Troubadour or Weaponsmith to perform the test for them. After learning the nature of a Key Knowledge, the characters must figure out how to learn the specific information they seek—the Key, or Research, Knowledge itself.

Preludes

The first section at the beginning of each adventure contains a **Prelude**. This section contains all the information the gamemaster needs to point the characters in the right direction when they investigate the Key Knowledges of the Blades. Each Key Knowledge has its own prelude, which provides suggestions for conveying the information that the characters need to begin the adventure. Feel free to modify the information presented to suit your campaigns and styles of play. Each prelude is organized like a standard encounter, and each leads directly into one of the five **Blades** adventures. The preludes assume that the characters have previously used the Item History or Weapon History talents and understand the information they need to learn. Whether the characters move directly from these preludes to the adventures connected with them is up to the gamemaster and the players.

Using Preludes

Run preludes wherever they are convenient. For example, if the characters are in Vivane researching the Rank Five Key Knowledge, the prelude for the Rank Five Key Knowledge can take place in or near Vivane. This saves the characters from excessive travel across Barsaive that might upset the gamemaster's plans for the campaign. Each prelude's text appears at the beginning of the appropriate adventure that follows the prelude.

THE ADVENTURES

Each **Blades** adventure assumes the characters have completed the appropriate prelude for that adventure. Each adventure begins with the characters arriving at the general location where the adventure takes place and assumes that the characters will complete the adventure once they begin. The **Blades** adventures are short and relatively straightforward. Generally, the characters will already have done considerable work toward learning the Key Knowledges they need. However, the adventures are not simple to complete or lacking in hazards. Many of the obstacles the characters face are potentially lethal. Such is the life of an adventurer in Barsaive.

The adventures are structured so that the characters learn the relevant Key Knowledge at the end of each one. This forces the characters to play the entire adventure to get the information they seek. Obtaining the Key Knowledge is also the Adventure Goal of each adventure, and so the characters have failed if they do not find what they are looking for. As a result, they will earn far fewer Legend Points if they fail. Assuming the characters succeed, they can weave the appropriate thread once they have completed the adventure.

Bond Breaker

In **Bond Breaker**, the players become tangled in the political intrigue surrounding two rival ork scorcher bands as they attempt to learn the Rank One Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The adventure assumes that the players have already found the Blades of Cara Fahd, either through the adventure **Shattered Pattern** or in the course of an adventure of the gamemaster's own design.

Bond Breaker is intended for a group of three to five adept characters of Fifth to Seventh Circle. The gamemaster should be familiar with the entire adventure before starting it and should pay particular attention to the personal dynamics between the adventure's various gamemaster characters. **Bond Breaker** has a number of possible conclusions, depending on the choices the players make.

Grave Wisdom

Grave Wisdom takes the characters to the ruins of an ancient shrine to fallen ork heroes, in search of the Rank Three Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The characters must discover the Name of the group of ork heroes who wielded the daggers. They must also perform a Deed; they must build a monument to the Seven Spokes in the Spokes' original home, ten miles away from the Hold of Courage. The adventure is best suited for three to five adept characters of Sixth or Seventh Circle.

A Traitor's Fate

A Traitor's Fate takes the adventurers from the relative safety of a Barsaivian settlement into the dangerous depths of the Liaj Jungle. The adventure is best suited for a group of three to five adept characters of Sixth or Seventh Circle. The particular nature of the characters' quest requires **A Traitor's Fate** to be linear in structure, but feel free to add encounters and other obstacles to increase the difficulty or complexity of the adventure if desired.

With an Axe in Hand

With an Axe in Hand takes the adventurers to the Tylon Mountains in search of an obsidiman Liferock that they believe holds the Rank Seven Key Knowledge of the Blades—the Name of the Horror that killed the Seven Spokes. The Horror's Name is Betrayer. **With an Axe in Hand** is intended for a group of three to five adept characters of Seventh to Eighth Circle.

Pure Liquids

Pure Liquids sends the adventurers to the underground rivers beneath the Tylon Mountains for a confrontation with Betrayer, the Horror that lives within the Blades of Cara Fahd. The adventure assumes the characters already know that the Rank Eight Deed consists of traveling to the spot where Betrayer was slain, and that

the Rank Eight Key Knowledge is the means the Seven Spokes used to originally defeat the Horror. The adventure is intended for a group of three to five adept characters of Seventh to Ninth Circle.

As with all of the **Blades** adventures, the gamemaster should be thoroughly familiar with the adventure before running it.

Can't We Get Rid of These Things?

When the characters learn that the Blades are cursed, they may wish to get rid of the curse by throwing away the weapons. If they learn that the curse is actually the spirit of a Horror, they may want to ditch the Blades even more. This impulse might well pose a problem, as the adventures assume that the characters continue to research the Blades all the way up through the Rank Eight Key Knowledge. The suggestions below can help you deal with this issue, should it arise in your campaign.

Cursed, Like It or Not!

Point out to the players that the characters cannot escape the curse simply by getting rid of the Blades. Curses in **Earthdawn** are not so easily dealt with. The characters can only get rid of the curse by destroying its source—the Horror called Betrayer. Obviously, do not divulge the Horror's Name if the party has not learned it yet.

Throwing the Blades Away

If the characters toss the Blades away—down a deep well, into the Serpent River, or some such inaccessible place—they lose the Blades' benefits but do not escape the effects of the curse. The Horror's magic is strong enough to maintain an astral link between the patterns of the characters and the Blades, and so the Horror can continue to use its powers while preventing the characters from defeating it. Throwing away the Blades would prevent the characters from weaving higher-ranked threads to them and thereby prevent them from increasing the Horror's power, but even this is not really the benefit it first appears to be—Betrayer can always increase its strength in other ways.

If the characters want to throw the Blades away in spite of these considerations, arrange for some powerful individual to visit them and explain the importance of finding a way to destroy Betrayer. High-ranking questors, or even a great dragon, are possible choices. If the characters obtained the Blades through the adventure **Shattered Pattern**, Rathann and the other drakes who serve Icewing might turn up to talk to them. This option adds continuity to the campaign as well.

Alternatively, the curse that Betrayer brings into their lives could be used to drive the characters to recover their discarded Blades, which might prove to be an adventure in itself.

Destroying the Blades

The characters may consider destroying the Blades in an attempt to destroy the Horror. In fact, this choice is worse than keeping the Blades or throwing them away. Destroying the Blades releases Betrayer into astral space, allowing it to roam freely across Barsaive wreaking havoc. The freed Horror can even create a new physical body for itself, which would enable it to do physical damage in addition to manipulating innocent minds.

Warn the characters of these circumstances if they contemplate destroying the Blades. If the characters destroy the Blades anyway, have a much more powerful Betrayer seek them out later in the campaign. The Horror likely will want to thank them for its freedom personally.

The characters may also receive a visit from a powerful questor, Lightbearer, or some such figure demanding to know why they have released such a powerful Horror—and very likely demanding that they clean up the mess they have caused.

Doing the Right Thing

Despite the dangers, the characters have several reasons to keep investigating the Blades. First, the Blades' considerable power can help their adventuring group become truly legendary in Barsaive. Second, the Blades provide an opportunity to destroy a legendary Horror.

The Seven Spokes unsuccessfully attempted to destroy the Horror several times—any adventuring group that succeeds where these orks failed would gain considerable respect. And Betrayer poses a major threat to Barsaive as well. Destroying Betrayer is a great public service, and only a group armed with the Blades stands a chance of succeeding at the task.

We've Been Cheated!

The player characters may feel cheated or manipulated once they learn that Betrayer has tainted them through the Blades. If they do, remind the players that their characters wanted to learn about the Blades in the first place.

If they have already woven threads to the daggers, remind them that power never comes without a price; the Horror within the Blades is simply a particularly nasty price they must pay for the Blades' magic. If the players still feel that a Horror living inside their magical treasure is unfair, remind them that the Horrors do not play fair.

Blades and Your Campaign

Blades is designed to fit easily into a variety of campaigns. The story is divided into brief, stand-alone adventures that gamemasters may run between other planned adventures. Whenever the characters wish to learn the next Key Knowledge of the Blades, the gamemaster can simply work the events described in **Blades** around the rest of his campaign.

Gamemasters may easily control how much impact **Blades** has on their campaigns. By confining Betrayer's influence to the **Blades** adventures, for example, a gamemaster can minimize the effects of the story on the rest of his campaign. Alternatively, developments from **Blades** can have considerable impact on the rest of the campaign. For example, the player characters may become quite famous throughout Barsaive if they defeat Betrayer. And such fame could attract jealous enemies, pleas for help from those afflicted by other Horrors, and job offers.

In addition, the player characters possess the Blades themselves, a powerful magical treasure that can help them build their legend. Of course, the player characters are also being shadowed by a Horror, whose malign influence can topple governments and cause irreversible harm. And if things go badly, the characters may unleash a new Horror on Barsaive—a Horror they would have a responsibility to hunt down and destroy.

Running the Adventures

The **Blades** adventures should be spaced between other adventures of a campaign for maximum enjoyment.

The adventures are designed for increasingly powerful characters—the first adventure for characters of Fifth to Seventh Circles, the last adventure for characters of Seventh to Ninth Circles. Spacing the **Blades** adventures between other encounters provides the player characters with opportunities to advance in circle. Gaps between the **Blades** adventures provide the characters with time to weave threads to the Blades as well.

For example, the first adventure in this chapter deals with the Rank One Key Knowledge; the next adventure deals with the Rank Three Key Knowledge. The characters cannot weave the Rank Three thread before weaving the Rank Two thread, and so they likely will want to do this between the first and second **Blades** adventures. Think of the events in **Blades** as a subplot in your campaign—a series of connected occurrences that run their course around and between the campaign's other major events.

Take care with the spacing of these adventures in your campaign as players may be eager to charge ahead and rid themselves of the Blades' curse. Allowing them time to grow in power and slowly appreciate both the power and burden of the Blades can help them to survive and more thoroughly enjoy the **Blades** adventures. Strong motivating factors in the other plotlines of your campaign can aid in this endeavor, but don't force the players' hands as they still have a say in what their characters do. They may be made to face hard choices at times, and if they do decide to abandon or delay other concerns to unravel the mystery of the Blades, let their characters suffer the natural consequences of such actions.

If it seems as if the players really do need to be slowed down, however, then utilizing the hooks and side adventures that occur throughout **Blades** can help to fill this need by allowing the party to feel as if they are still working towards their goal, while not charging through the main adventures that drive the plot forward.

Threads Woven Prior to Blades

The Blades of Cara Fahd first appear in the adventure **Shattered Pattern**, and so some groups of player characters may already have woven threads to the Blades. Additionally, gamemasters may have already established histories for the Blades that differ from the information provided in this book. In these cases, gamemasters have a few options.

If the characters have learned one or two Key Knowledges, the gamemaster can adjust the information in this book to match his campaign, or vice versa. He can then proceed to the adventure surrounding the next Key Knowledge and pick up the story there. In this case, simply use the skipped adventure later in the campaign and omit the Key Knowledge information from the adventure.

If the characters have progressed much further than one or two Key Knowledges, the history and Key Knowledges provided in this book may differ significantly, requiring the gamemaster to make greater adjustments. In this case, the gamemaster can try to fit the rest of **Blades** into his campaign or use the adventures and the history of the Blades for another magical item of his own design. The latter option requires a significant amount of work but enables the gamemaster to use this product as intended.

Bond Breaker

My word is my bond. Should I break that bond, deal with me as you will. Should you *break it, only the Passions can save you.*

• Bradak Cragfist, Troll Sky Raider •

"To loyalty! To honor!" bellowed Moschtug, self-proclaimed king of Cara Fahd. Around him, lit by the glow of a bonfire, stood the sum of his followers—a typically ragged lot of ork scorchers, no more than four dozen in number. Crude depictions of the Cara Fahd coat of arms adorned their shields and helmets. They belched their approval of their sovereign's words, then continued quaffing the contents of their wineskins.

Adding their number to this rude summit were three dozen or so similarly attired ork raiders—members of the Righteous Vipers. The Vipers' hungry eyes were on their leader, Orguk. Orguk was slim and tall for an ork, especially when compared to the beefy and square-shouldered Moschtug. He raised his own wineskin in the direction of his fellow chieftain.

"To true love," he said. His city accent stood out against the rough mountain speech of Moschtug and his followers. "To the love between my delightful daughter, Tirag, and your valiant son, Uvtug."

Orguk turned toward the two young orks, who were paying little heed to the speechmaking as they groped one another with an enthusiasm that any but an ork would consider unseemly in the presence of others. The two groups of orks joined in guttural laughter, ringing their approval of the couple. "Ha! Our matchmaking skills are superior!" grunted Moschtug.

"Indeed," replied Orguk. "Our alliance shall make the other foothill bands quake in terror."

"They shall soil themselves when they hear of it!" shouted Moschtug. "Our alliance shall make the miners weep and wail."

"They shall flee at the pounding of our thundras' hooves!"

"Even the Therans shall tremble at our might."

The two chieftains continued their ceremonial boasting, to the elation of their drunken followers. But one ork was not drunk. He was sober with rage, a rage that tightened his fists and throat. Gnanagh, brother to Moschtug, stood apart from the festivities. He kept his fury as a prisoner in his heart.

Again, he thought, my work is ignored. It is my negotiation that brought this union to pass, but I receive no credit. All my life it has been so. You grin and raise a wineskin, and all are with you. They hang on your stupidest words as though they were newly discovered pearls from the lips of the great poets of Cara Fahd. *Buunda*! It is I who have sweated and toiled to reveal our family's birthright. It is I who uncovered the tactical manual of the great Cathon Grimeye and laboriously stuffed its lessons into your thick skull. Yet what do I receive in return? Your men barely tolerate me, think of me as a foolish pedant. And you, Moschtug, when your skin is threatened, you summon me for advice. But when I save you from whatever scrape you've gotten yourself into, I get not even a mumbled "thank you." The magic has always been yours, Moschtug, the magic and the luck. My fate is naught but hard, painstaking labor. The only glory I receive is that which is reflected from you. If only you had even half a brain, you would know just how much I long to place my hands around your throat and—

And as he had done a thousand times before, Gnanagh stopped himself from voicing, even in his own mind, the Unthinkable Thought. For blood was blood, and Moschtug was his brother. Thousands of years of ork tradition required that Gnanagh show his brother unswerving loyalty, no matter how little he might deserve it. And so Gnanagh swallowed his anger, once again burying it deep within his soul.

Meanwhile, the two young lovers crept off behind a hill, unnoticed by the joyously howling scorchers.

Plot Synopsis

The players possess the Blades of Cara Fahd and wish to empower them by weaving threads to them. To do so, the players must discover the Blades' first Key Knowledge—the Name of the items and the Name of the Weaponsmith who forged them. Through investigations, the characters learn that the runes on one side of the Blades indicate that they were manufactured in the ancient ork kingdom of Cara Fahd. The characters also learn that the area's foremost expert on the history of Cara Fahd is one Gnanagh, advisor to a small ork scorcher band known as the Fists of Fahd.

The players track down the nomadic raiders and discover that the group has descended on Copper Cauldron, a mining town in the southern foothills of the Delaris Mountains. In Copper Cauldron, the Fists of Fahd are meeting with another scorcher tribe, the Righteous Vipers. These once-sworn foes have made a peace bond and sealed it with a wedding. The daughter of Orguk, chieftain of the Vipers, has married the son of Moschtug, the self-styled king of the Fists of Fahd. The players have arrived just in time for the celebratory wedding feast. If they impress the scorchers, the orks invite them to the party.

The players do not know that their very presence—or more precisely, the presence of the Blades—is a grave danger to the precarious peace arrangement between the tribes. The daggers' power intensifies existing tensions between Orguk, Moschtug, and Moschtug's jealous brother, Gnanagh, until Gnanagh attempts to poison Moschtug. Gnanagh flees with the Righteous Vipers, fearing retribution, and Moschtug swears to exact cruel vengeance on his brother.

The players must find Gnanagh and extract from him the secret of the Blades before Moschtug's forces capture and slay him. The climactic encounter takes place in the cliff-side fortress of the Righteous Vipers. During this encounter, the players may find themselves storming the fortress alongside the Fists of Fahd, defending it against the Fists or attempting to broker a new peace arrangement between the Fists and the Vipers. After this final scene, Gnanagh reveals the first Key Knowledge of the Blades, as well as their betrayal-inducing influence and power.

Betrayer's Influence

During **Bond Breaker**, the Horror called Betrayer curses the characters and links their patterns with the pattern of the Blades and its own pattern. From this adventure onward, the player characters carry the Horror's influence with them until they are able to destroy it or they are destroyed themselves. The Horror also influences Gnanagh to betray his brother Moschtug by poisoning his ale.

Secret of the Runes

Use this prelude when the characters begin seeking the Blades' Rank One Key Knowledge. The unspecified setting of this prelude allows gamemasters to run it from wherever the adventurers happen to be when **Blades** begins.

The facts the adventurers must discover in this prelude are:

- The daggers were manufactured in the now-defunct ork kingdom of Cara Fahd.
- One of Barsaive's foremost experts on Cara Fahd is an ork Named Gnanagh, a member of a small scorcher band called the Fists of Fahd.
- The best place to look for the Fists of Fahd is just south of the Delaris Mountains in southwestern Barsaive.

Setting the Stage

When the adventurers begin to investigate the Blades, read the following aloud:

> *You scrutinize the daggers and see that each of the seven is perfectly matched to the others. Even their balance and heft is the same. Each has a wooden handle covered with deep red lacquer; and small, dark, identical emeralds glitter in the pommels of all seven daggers. Runic carvings decorate both sides of each handle and surround each gemstone. Similar carvings cover each gleaming steel blade; these runes are stranger-looking than the others, but you can't say exactly how. Clearly, the runes contain a message. But what might that message be?*

Themes and Images

Emphasize the appearance of the Blades: alluring, beautiful, and deadly.

Behind the Scenes

The adventurers most likely have some ability to gather information and probably know (or should easily be able to find) a scholar of ork history in their immediate area. The process of getting clues from each source is described below.

Adventurer Investigations

If any of the adventurers has the Item or Weapon History talents, he can use it to learn some of the Research Knowledges of the Blades. The Spell Defense of the Blades is 18. This prelude deals with the first Key Knowledge: the collective Name of the items and the Name of the Weaponsmith who forged them.

Examining the Runes

If any character has Read and Write Language (*Or'zet*) as a skill or talent, he recognizes most of the runes as an unusual style of written ork. A character who makes a Read and Write Language (9) Test may learn more about the writing on the daggers, depending on the level of success achieved, as follows:

Pathetic: Runes? What runes?

Poor: The runes on one side of each blade say: "Caravan Fails." The runes on the other side and on the hilt are too strange to decipher.

Average: The runes on one side of each blade say: "Cara Fahd." The runes on the other side of the blade are not the ork language. The runes on the hilt are a poem, but the language and the calligraphy are from legendary times and it is hard to make out the details. The poem seems to be about friendship, loyalty, or partnership.

Good: The character learns the information for an Average result, plus the following. The runes on each handle are a verse in some ancient ork language. The word for "eight" appears three times in the poem, as does the word for "our." The verse seems to be an oath of allegiance designed for a group of ork heroes.

Excellent: The character learns the information for a Good result and can translate the verse:

Eight we are, eight we shall be.
United, indivisible, eternally.
In fear shall the foes of Fahd be kept.
The step of eight feet in one footstep.
To one another, our fates are threaded.
To legendry, our tales are headed.

Extraordinary: The character learns the information for an Excellent result and recognizes the style of the language as sixth- or seventh-century ork, according to the Throalic calendar.

On Cara Fahd

Once the adventurers know that the runes on the Blades spell out "Cara Fahd" they can try to recall anything they might know about this place. Any adventurer with an appropriate Knowledge skill such as Ork History or Ork Lore can make a Knowledge Skill (6) Test. For general Knowledge skills, such as Barsaive History or Ancient Legends, a character may make a Knowledge Skill (9) Test. If the adventurers have access to an average or better library, they can also make a Research (5) Test to gain the information. What they learn depends on the result level they achieve.

Pathetic: Cara what?

Poor: "Cara Fahd" sounds really familiar. Its meaning is right on the tip of your tongue, but you can't quite grasp it.

Average: Cara Fahd was an ancient ork kingdom.

Good: Cara Fahd was an ancient ork kingdom destroyed just before the Scourge.

Excellent: Cara Fahd was an ancient ork city-state, destroyed during the Orichalcum Wars in a final suicidal stroke by its military commander. The ruins of Cara Fahd lie somewhere in southwestern Barsaive, north of Vivane and Sky Point and south of the Delaris Mountains.

Extraordinary: The character learns the information for an Excellent result, plus the following. The memory of the conflagration that destroyed Cara Fahd has obscured the kingdom's achievements. It prospered for several centuries as a flourishing center of art and culture and serves as a reminder that the ork race is capable of more than raiding and mercenary work.

Learning from the Scholar

Eventually the adventurers need to consult an outside source for further information. If the adventurers are in familiar territory and already know a scholar in the area, use that gamemaster character. If they are away from their usual stomping grounds, suggest that they do a little checking around. They should swiftly discover the most prominent scholar nearby, a young female dwarf Named Sarania.

Sarania

Sarania is a friendly sort and loves to talk. If the adventurers have not uncovered the aforementioned information about the dagger inscription and Cara Fahd on their own, Sarania can do it for them. She can read written *Or'zet*—modern and archaic—and translates the verse written on the Blades' hilts. She also knows quite a bit about the history of Cara Fahd and gives the characters all the historical material. Finally, she gives them the Name of the best-known expert on Cara Fahd: Gnanagh the Querulous, whom she has never met but knows by reputation. He is a legendary eccentric among historians.

Though Gnanagh is an expert researcher and author of several sought-after scrolls on the antiquities of Cara Fahd, he spends most of his time as advisor to a scorcher band known as the Fists of Fahd. The members of this band claim direct lineage from the kings of Cara Fahd, although most scholars dispute this claim. The Fists of Fahd live by raiding mining villages in the southern foothills of the Delaris Mountains. If the adventurers truly want to know the secrets their newly acquired daggers hold, they should journey to the scorcher lands and attempt to win an audience with this notoriously irritable old ork.

Once the characters discover that they should seek out Gnanagh, go to **Copper Cauldron**, p. 267.

Attributes

Dexterity (9): 4/D6
Strength (9): 4/D6
Toughness (9): 4/D6
Perception (16): 7/D12
Willpower (12): 5/D8
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6
Initiative: 4/D6
Spell Defense: 9
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 6
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 30
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 7
Knockdown: 4/D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 21

Combat Movement: 14
Full Movement: 28

Skills

Artisan:
Storytelling (3): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Cara Fahd History (6): 13/D12+D10
Legends and Heroes (4): 11/D10+D8

General:
Conversation (3): 7/D12
Read and Write Language (6): 13/D12+D10
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zat**, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Troll
Research (2): 9/D8+D6
Speak Language (5): 12/2D10
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Troll

* *Or'zat* is the ancient language of the orks, shorter and more guttural than the modern *Or'zet* (see p. 297 of the **Name-giver's Compendium**).

Equipment

Knife (Damage 5/D8; Range 6–10–12)
Arcane Tomes
Belt Pouch
Scrolls
Wealthy Traveler's Garb
Writing Kit

Loot

35 silver pieces

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Notes

Sarania possesses the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight.

Troubleshooting

As long as the adventurers get the basic information they need, nothing can go wrong in this prelude.

Copper Cauldron

The adventure begins when the characters travel to the Delaris foothills in search of Gnanagh, from whom they seek the first Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The characters arrive in the town of Copper Cauldron as the ork wedding feast is about to take place and are invited to join in the festivities before they can get answers from Gnanagh.

Copper Cauldron cuts right to the characters' arrival in the town. Gamemasters can extend the adventure by beginning with the player characters' journey to the town and introducing a variety of dangerous episodes along the way depending on where they are hailing from.

Setting the Stage

As the adventurers approach Copper Cauldron, read the following aloud:

You have traveled along a rocky trail through the foothills for several hours and can now see a low stone wall in the distance. Beyond the wall lie a number of buildings—Copper Cauldron. The town is identical to countless other mining communities you have passed in the past few days with one exception—nearly four dozen war horses and thundra beasts graze in the scrub outside its walls.

You draw closer to the town and note a pair of guards stationed on the wall, above the town gate. Both of the guards are young, strapping humans. Each carries a spear and wears partial leather armor. As you approach closer, one of the guards hails you in Throalic: "Who goes there?"

Themes and Images

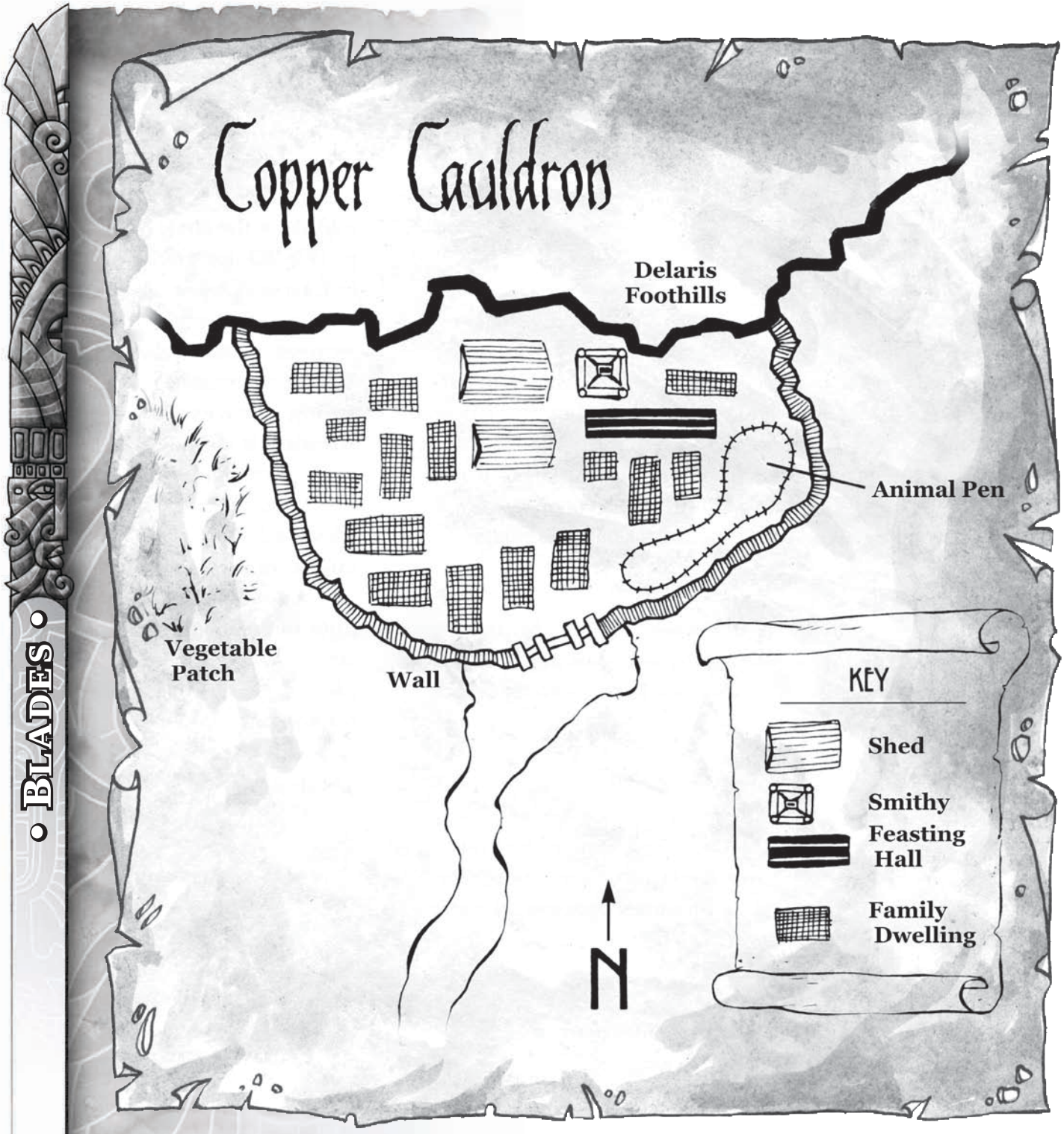
The mood should be tense, at least at first. Copper Cauldron is a hard place, full of hard people. The town's inhabitants are far from villainous, but they have good reason to be suspicious of strangers. Give the players the impression that their characters have to be on their best behavior.

Behind the Scenes

The people of Copper Cauldron are suspicious because they have many enemies. Like the residents of countless other villages in the foothills, Copper Cauldron's inhabitants make their living by collecting precious metals. Many places in the mountains contain large gashes in the rock—whorls left by earth-eating Horrors of the Scourge. Often times these gashes expose veins of copper, silver, and iron. The able-bodied folk of Copper Cauldron head out in small groups to find and retrieve these easily obtainable metals. Then they sell or barter the metals to traders.

During their mining expeditions, the people must always watch for various small scorcher bands that attack them for their spoils. Both the Fists of Fahd and Righteous Vipers make their livings by such attacks. Copper Cauldron has a special arrangement with the Fists—they occasionally shelter the raiders—so the town's residents need not fear the band. However, some neighboring villages view Copper Cauldron residents as traitors for aiding orks, and these villages sometimes launch punitive raids against the town's mining parties or Copper Cauldron itself. And Copper Cauldron's arrangement with the Fists does not keep other ork bands from attacking the town and its mining parties, either. The residents must also face the ever-present threat of Theran encroachment. Officials at Sky Point have made several attempts to seize the mining towns, enslave their inhabitants and force them to turn their metals directly over to the Theran authorities. And finally, Barsaive being Barsaive, there are always Horrors to worry about. All of this explains why the guards are suspicious of the adventurers.

The guard who does most of the talking is Named Jopren; the other is Named Macan. Use the game statistics for miners provided in **Cast of Characters**, p. 281, for the guards. Jopren listens to the adventurers' responses when he asks them to identify themselves. He then asks them which scorcher band they're affiliated with. If they



deny being scorchers with any degree of sincerity, he asks them if they are allies of Thera. If they deny such connections (he's especially impressed if they spit or curse at the very idea of being Theran allies), he tells them to prove that they are not Horrors. As any Barsaivian knows, the correct response in such situations is to display one's Artisan skill. After they pass this test, Jopren asks the adventurers their business. He tells them that Gnanagh is indeed in town if they ask him directly.

If the adventurers try to force their way in, Jopren and Macan yell for help, jump down from the wall and draw back, ready to pick off anyone who tries to scale it. They are joined by 1-6 townsfolk and ork scorchers every round, until 45 defenders are present. No amount of coaxing convinces the folk of Copper Cauldron to let the adventurers in if they have attacked the guards or any other citizens. (Any such attacks throw a major curve at the plot line—see **Troubleshooting**, p. 271.)

Once inside the town, the adventurers should try to find Gnanagh. Introduce them to some of the other major gamemaster characters at this time as well. See **Loose Ends**, p. 275, for information on these characters.

Copper Cauldron Layout

Copper Cauldron's north side nestles up against a sharply sloped foothill. A brick wall extends from the hill

around the rest of the town. Most of its buildings are long, one-story brick structures, occupied by entire extended families. Two large communal storage buildings to the north of the town square contain mined metals and purchased trade goods. The town also contains a smithy, where the town smith (not an adept) plies his trade. Copper Cauldron's newest building is a large wooden banquet hall recently erected to keep the Fists of Fahd happy and occupied when they come to town.

An animal pen lies along the inside of the southeast section of the town wall, although the village's beef cattle and horses are usually allowed to graze outside the wall unless trouble is expected. A small vegetable patch lies outside the wall. It provides a few basic staples, but most of Copper Cauldron's food is acquired through trade.

Ork Festivities

Copper Cauldron is filled with orks when the adventurers enter the town. The town square contains a large group of them watching what seems to be a fight. Others are on rooftops of buildings, some are dancing, and still others are banging away at clattering ork musical instruments. All are drinking copious amounts of *hurlg*, the throat-burning alcoholic liquor beloved by orks everywhere.

The adventurers need to learn that the orks are members of rival scorcher bands, the Fists of Fahd and Righteous Vipers, here to seal an alliance. They need to know that the alliance will be sealed with a wedding between the son of the Fahd "king" and the daughter of the Viper leader. The people of Copper Cauldron are tolerating the presence of these orks because both raider bands have promised to leave the people unmolested in exchange for their hospitality. Finally, the players should learn the Names and roles of the major players in the adventure—Moschtug, Gnanagh, Orguk, Tirag, and Uvtug.

Talking to the Locals

The people of Copper Cauldron are wary around strangers. But they are also avid traders, so a friendly and diplomatic approach eventually draws any citizen into polite conversation. If the adventurers ask questions about particular subjects, any villager can provide the following information and opinions.

The Fists of Fahd

Copper Cauldron has maintained an alliance with the Fists for several years. The group's leader is Moschtug, who styles himself as a king, heir to some ancient ork kingdom. He is an honorable fellow, as brigands and killers go. He has always abided by his word to leave Copper Cauldron alone.

The Righteous Vipers

The Vipers have been around the foothills for ages. Recently the group has become much bigger and more threatening, thanks to their new leader, Orguk. He is surprisingly polite and well-spoken for an ork, but many people blame him for a number of atrocities, including some perpetrated against the people of Copper Cauldron. It is a good thing that he is allying with Moschtug, because he will now be bound by Moschtug's agreement with the village.

Gnanagh

Gnanagh is Moschtug's brother. He's an impatient, cruel, thoroughly unpleasant ork—most of us steer clear of him and he steers clear of us. No one knows exactly where he is at the moment, but he is in town.

The townsfolk also supply any of the basic information about Copper Cauldron provided earlier in this section, although they will not reveal where the mined metal is stored. And they play down the fact that some neighboring villages regard them as enemies because of their alliance with the Fists.

Carousing With the Scorchers

The adventurers can also get information from the raiders. To befriend a scorcher, one needs to act like a scorcher. Ork player characters have an immediate advantage in this regard. They know the basics of ork etiquette and the happy, intoxicated bandits easily accept them.

Characters who participate in the revelry also impress the scorchers. Any character who drinks too much *hurlg*, especially to the point of passing out or becoming ill, garners much esteem. Non-orks attempting to drink *hurlg* must make a Willpower (7) Test. If they fail, they involuntarily spit the acidic stuff right back out. Any orks viewing such a display laugh uproariously, believing the *hurlg* spitter to be irredeemably weak and simpering.

For each flagon of *hurlg* any character consumes after the first, he must make a Toughness (7) Test. If a character fails, he becomes sick or passes out, at the gamemaster's discretion. If the test succeeds, add +1 to all Difficulty Numbers for actions attempted while under the *hurlg's* influence—including additional Toughness Tests made when drinking more *hurlg*. This effect is cumulative when more *hurlg* is consumed, eventually resulting in most everyone, even the orks, succumbing to the effects of this foul liquor.

Alternatively, characters can impress the raiders by joining in the impromptu wrestling matches in the town square. To participate, a character simply charges into the middle of the circle of orks and takes on an opponent. (See the **Combat** chapter on p. 411 of the **Player's Compendium** for grappling rules.) Use the scorcher statistics in **Cast of Characters**, p. 282, for opponents. Any character who puts a successful grapple hold on an opponent receives cheers and backslaps from the surrounding orks. Even unsuccessful wrestlers impress the orks for simply trying. However, attempting to actually harm other wrestlers is a definite faux pas that arouses the wrath of the orks—they pile on the offender and pummel away.

Wagering over the various matches is part of the fun. Clever adventurers can use this as a way of making acquaintances while possibly even picking up a few silvers. An entertaining performance, especially in the ork style of combining singing, dancing, acting, and juggling, impresses the orks as well. The Difficulty Number for pleasing the orks with such skills is 7 for ork characters, 8 for non-ork characters.

Talking with the Fists

If the characters impress any Fist of Fahd members, these orks provide the following opinions when asked appropriate questions.

The Alliance: The upstart Righteous Vipers have finally recognized the obvious superiority of the Fists of Fahd. The true love of the courageous Uvtug and the terrifying Tirag has brought our peoples together. The foothills will now quake in fear at the joining of these two great war bands!

The Fists of Fahd: The Fists of Fahd are heirs to the great traditions of the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd, an inspiration to all orks to bravely loot, pillage, and despoil.

Gnanagh: He is advisor to his brother, the great king Moschtug. He knows many boring things about Cara Fahd. Moschtug humors him and listens to his advice, but as far as most of us are concerned concerned, he is a foul-tempered bore.

Talking with the Vipers

Here are paraphrases of the Righteous Vipers' opinions on the same subjects.

The Alliance: The gray and fading Fists of Fahd have made a wise move in allying themselves with the Righteous Vipers. Without us, they would have been left behind in the dust.

The Righteous Vipers: The clever and cruel Orguk's ambitions extend far beyond these meager foothills. Within a generation all of Barsaive will fear the Name of the Righteous Vipers. Most of our members have joined in the last year or so. The spoils are good, and we have driven several lesser bands from the territory.

Gnanagh: Orguk spends much time in conversation with him, and Orguk is a brilliant ork—so Gnanagh must have something worth saying. But he is not the sort the rank-and-file Viper would wish to share a jug of *hurlg* with. He is foul-tempered and rude.

At some point a medium-ranking member of either band should be sufficiently impressed by the adventurers to invite them to attend the wedding feast. Orks place little stock in ceremonies, but there will be much food to wolf down and *hurlg* to guzzle.

Meeting Gnanagh

After a fair bit of looking, the characters find Gnanagh, who is ending a conversation with an ork they later identify as Orguk, the leader of the Righteous Vipers. Gnanagh is extremely distracted; Orguk has once more been slyly provoking Gnanagh's *gahad* by listing the achievements that Moschtug has made at his expense.

The last thing Gnanagh wants is to help a pack of adventurers he doesn't know. But when the adventurers speak to him, a strange thing happens. A reaction occurs in astral space. The strength of Gnanagh's resentment and the power of his temptation to break the bonds of loyalty to his brother attracts the attention of Betrayer, the Horror that lurks within the Blades. Betrayer feeds on Gnanagh's swirling, ambivalent emotions, using the energy to curse the characters through the Blades. Make a Curse Test for the Horror. The step number for this test is 23/D20+2D10, Betrayer's Spellcasting step (see p. 338). If the test result equals or exceeds the Spell Defense of any of the characters, they are all affected by the curse (the group has already woven its True pattern in preparation for using the Blades). Once cursed, the characters carry Betrayer's influence with them. The Horror can exert its influence near and around wherever the characters travel. The effect lasts until they are able to rid themselves of the curse. For more information about the Horror's curse and its effect, see **Running Blades**, p. 259. Note that the characters should have no idea that anything unusual has happened until Gnanagh tells them about the Blades' curse at the end of the adventure.

The change in Gnanagh, however, has a much more immediate effect. The Horror's influence smashes the last of his inhibitions against murdering his brother. Sometime between this encounter and the next, Gnanagh meets with Orguk and proposes that they poison Moschtug's *hurlg* at the wedding feast.

For the moment Gnanagh is too shocked by his sudden murderous urge to talk to the adventurers for long. He says that he will perhaps be able to look at the daggers later.

Talking to the Others

Orguk is pleasant and noncommittal when the players speak to him; he is too wily to let any hint of his sinister plans slip. He tries to determine who the adventurers are by encouraging them to talk about their own exploits. If the adventurers watch Orguk carefully, they note that he is not drinking nearly as much *hurlg* as the other orks.

In contrast, Moschtug is pickled to the gills. He brags relentlessly about his exploits, his cleverness in bringing about this alliance and his capacity for *hurlg*.

Tirag and Uvtug both want to spend all of their time alone with one another and are quite surly with any adventurers who interfere with their expressions of mutual passion.

Troubleshooting

If the adventurers try to fight their way past the town guards, they never get a chance to enter the town. If they camp out within spying distance of Copper Cauldron, they can rejoin the story when the Righteous Vipers sneak out of town after the attempt on Moschtug's life, as described in **Poisoned Rites**, below; although without the Blades present in town, this was done solely by Orguk, and Gnanagh flees with him fearing he will be suspected due to his guilty conscience. In this case have Betrayer's influence turn up later as the characters seek to resolve the situation and contact Gnanagh. If they track the Vipers to their lair or otherwise accost them, the characters discover that Gnanagh is among the group. Then they can either help the Vipers defend themselves against Moschtug or go to Moschtug and offer to get Gnanagh for him. In this event, go to **Fort in the Foothills**, p. 273.

Poisoned Rites

In **Poisoned Rites**, the characters attend the wedding feast of Tirag and Uvtug, which unites the Fists of Fahd and Righteous Vipers as well. As Moschtug raises a toast to the newly wed couple, he drinks from a poisoned cup but survives.

Gnanagh casts the blame on one of the townsfolk. During the middle of the night, Gnanagh sneaks out of Copper Cauldron virtually unnoticed, along with the Vipers.

Setting the Stage

The gamemaster determines the exact amount of time that passes between the arrival of the adventurers in Copper Cauldron and the actual wedding feast. Gauge this based on how much time the player characters want to spend gathering information beforehand. When the time comes, read the following aloud:

One of the orks, who invited you to attend the ceremony waves to you, looking up at the sun (or

Adventure Hook

After their encounter with the ork Gnanagh, the characters have some traveling to do, passing through a number of small mining villages similar to Copper Cauldron. They come upon a particularly well fortified village Named Golden Treasures, which has found wealth in mining both gold and occasionally orichalcum from the hills nearby. These spots often boast their own stockades as the miners need all the protection they can get from bandits and ork scorchers.

The adventurers are met with extreme caution and paranoia upon their arrival and are repeatedly asked to perform Greeting Rituals, one character at a time. Once let in, they find the place to be foreboding and somewhat unwelcoming. The marketplace is outfitted surprising well, especially in the department of common magical charms, blood charms, and even thread weapons. The characters will have a hard time avoiding being accosted by those selling their magical wares here. It will also not take them long to hear murmurings of the recent series of mysterious murders that have taken place in town.

A Horror is suspected, but no one knows how it is influencing those in town as no one appears to be marked, even after thorough examination and proving in front of the town's magicians and elders. Any character buying magical equipment is likely to find himself to be the next victim, or rather: murderer, as the Horror involved will attempt to influence him through the tainted orichalcum that was used to enchant his new acquisition.

When the characters fall under scrutiny, they will have to figure out this connection themselves or be scapegoated by the populace. Those possessing tainted orichalcum might take some convincing to rid themselves of the precious metal even if the elders realize the danger.

moon) in the sky. "It is time for the great union of our bands to be celebrated!" he cries, making a rude gesture to coincide with the word "union."

You troop into the village's wooden meeting hall, which is packed to the rafters with profusely sweating orks and a surprising number of villagers. You are unable to move very far to the front; those of you who are not windlings, trolls or obsidimen have a poor view of the proceedings.

At the far end of the hall, Moschtug, Orguk, Tirag, Uvtug and Gnanagh are seated behind a long table. Moschtug pounds his fist on the table, shouting: "Pay attention! The wedding now takes place!"

There is an enthusiastic rumble from the crowd. Moschtug then stands. "By the authority vested in me as a big tough ork who can kill anyone who dares gainsay me, I now pronounce Uvtug and Tirag ork and wife! Drink up, all!"

The enthusiastic rumble becomes a cacophony of cheers and shouts. Tirag leaps on Uvtug, drowning him in a deluge of sloppy kisses. Moschtug, Orguk, Uvtug and Tirag drink deeply from cups on the table. Suddenly, Moschtug lurches to his feet, his face drained of blood. He shouts, "Poison! I've been poisoned!" and collapses on the table.

Gnanagh points to a villager: "Grab him! He poured the hurlg!"

Orks surround the frightened man and pile on top of him, fists flying. Bedlam breaks loose.

Behind the Scenes

Gnanagh and Orguk conspired to poison Moschtug's *hurlg*. Gnanagh, his mind clouded by the Horror's influence in the Blades, believes the Fists of Fahd will follow him after Moschtug's death. Orguk correctly realizes that the Fists would desert Gnanagh and aims to recruit most of them, doubling his power. For the moment, Gnanagh's cooperation assures that he will not be the obvious suspect.

When the chaos ebbs, the orks realize that Moschtug is not dead. He is, however, unconscious. Uvtug grabs the poor villager Gnanagh has fingered and slams the man repeatedly against a wall, demanding a confession. The unfortunate patsy's Name is Hosya (pronounced HOSS-ya).

The villagers proclaim Hosya's innocence. The Fist scorchers then accuse the villagers of plotting to destroy them. Accusations fly back and forth.

The adventurers can step in and try to calm both sides down. Roleplay this exchange or have the characters make Charisma or appropriate persuasion talent tests to lower the tension level. As neither group has any particular reason to trust or heed the adventurers, these tests require a Good result. If the adventurers do not intervene, a series

of scuffles break out, and many villagers are hurt. Eventually they surrender, and the orks demand copper and silver ore from them as reparation.

Unless the adventurers have somehow calmed him, Uvtug drags Hosya to the village square and starts torturing him for information. Uvtug's brutality is extreme; if allowed free rein, he cripples Hosya for life. Eventually, the commotion fades, though the tension between the two ork tribes swells as suspicions rise.

In the middle of the night, Gnanagh and Orguk decide to slip out of town, as they don't want to risk Moschtug figuring things out when he regains consciousness. Do not let the characters interrupt them at this point. If the characters are staking out the walls of the city, members of the Vipers engineer a diversion so that the characters miss this departure. Once their leader is safely away, the rest of the Vipers sneak out of town. The characters may note this larger migration. If they rouse the Fists, a brief skirmish between the two bands ensues but most of the Vipers escape into the foothills. Without Moschtug or Gnanagh to issue orders, the Fists are not organized enough to block the Vipers' escape.

Once the Fists of Fahd learn that the Vipers have fled, the Fists make plans to follow the fleeing orks. The tribe is ready to move out at daybreak. Go to **Fort in the Foothills**, below.

If the characters notice the Vipers leaving and follow them to their fortress without telling the Fists, the characters are on their own. Following the tribe is easy enough, but unless the characters are careful, the fleeing Vipers notice the characters and attempt to capture them.

Troubleshooting

Few things can go wrong here. If the characters wish to aid in determining who poisoned Moschtug's drink, they meet with great resistance. Neither Uvtug nor Orguk allows any members of their tribes to be subject to magical means of divination, as both are firmly convinced of their followers' innocence. Only an Interaction Test that achieves an Extraordinary result against the Social Defense of either of the ork leaders persuades them to allow the characters to use magical means of finding the guilty party.

If the characters determine that Gnanagh is involved, both he and Orguk flee immediately, if they have not already done so. In this case, the remaining Vipers attack both the Fists and the characters to allow Orguk and Gnanagh enough time to escape. Once the pair is safely away, the rest of the Vipers flee, eventually meeting up with Orguk and Gnanagh at the Vipers' fortress. Again, without Moschtug or Gnanagh to issue orders, the Fists are not organized enough to prevent this. Go to **Fort in the Foothills**, below.

Fort in the Foothills

In **Fort in the Foothills**, the characters, along with the Fists of Fahd, track down Moschtug, Gnanagh and the Righteous Vipers to their fortress in the foothills of the Delaris Mountains. There the characters can either help the Fists of Fahd storm the fortress or attempt to negotiate a peace between the ork bands. Of course, the characters' ultimate objective is to talk to Gnanagh, who has the information they seek about the Blades.

Setting the Stage

Read the following to the characters when they leave Copper Cauldron:

> *You set off from Copper Cauldron in hopes of finding Gnanagh, the ork historian who holds the information you seek. His disappearance, along with that of Orguk and the Righteous Vipers, leads you to believe that perhaps Moschtug's brother has betrayed his tribe. But are you walking into a battle between the two ork tribes? Or can you help them establish the peace they were so close to achieving?*

Behind the Scenes

To get to Gnanagh, the adventurers must find and penetrate the Righteous Vipers' fortress. The Fists of Fahd do not know where the fortress lies, but any character who makes a successful Tracking (7) Test finds the Vipers' stronghold.

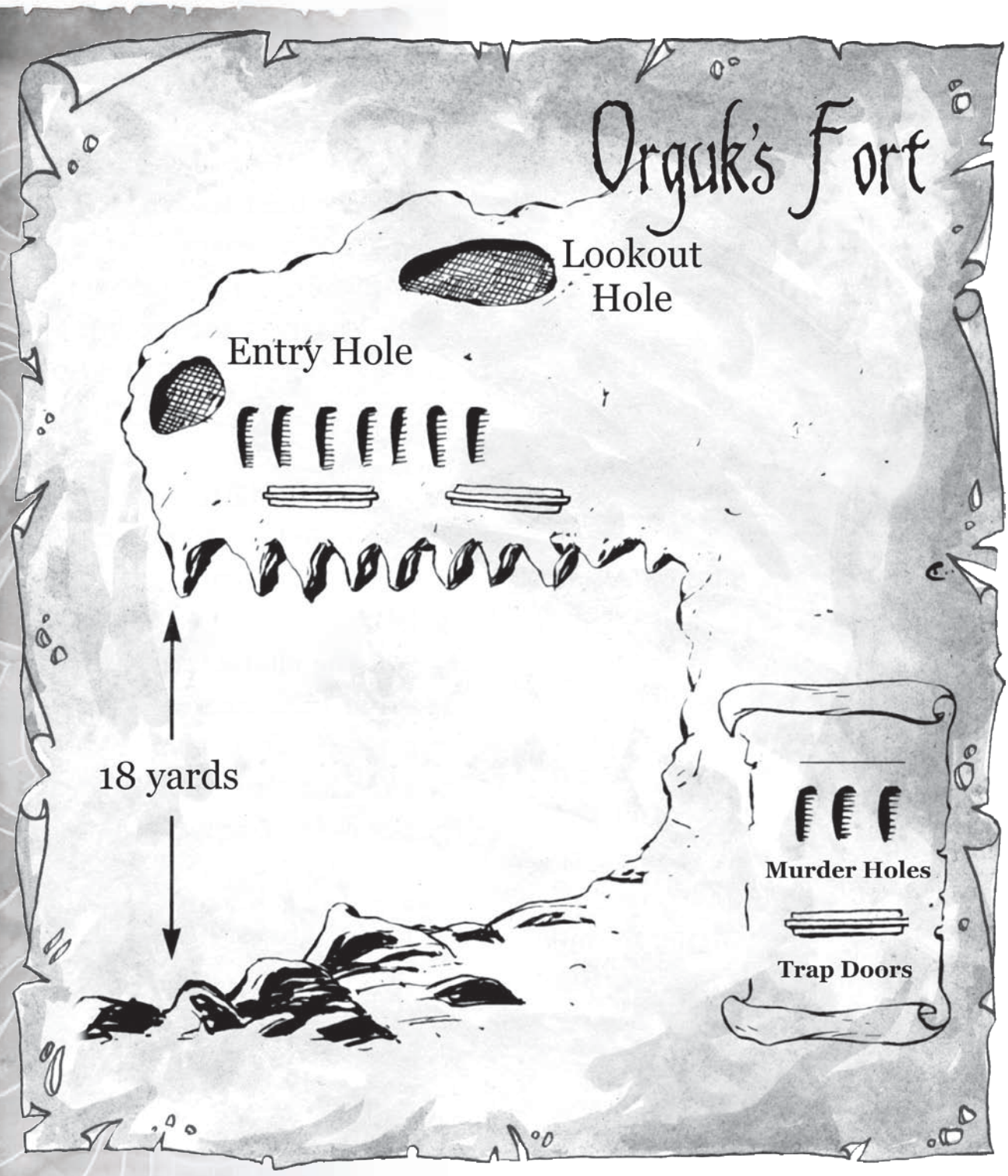
The fort is located in the side of a cliff in a box canyon. The fort is actually a hollowed-out fossil skull of a gigantic lizard from a distant age (see the map of Orguk's Fort on p. 274).

The Vipers enter the fort by climbing up rope ladders dropped from an entry hole located fifty feet up the cliff face. The ladders are rolled out only for the Vipers and their allies. Vipers inside the fort watch the canyon entrance from the lookout hole, which they have fitted with several "windling catchers." These are ballistas modified to fire small, weighted nets. Any windling hit by one of these nets plummets to the earth and takes appropriate Falling damage (see the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 107 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). No armor protects against this damage.

The nets are coated with a contact poison that induces instant paralysis; its Effect step is 14/D20+D4 (see **Poison** in the **Adventuring** chapter on p. 122 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). This poison causes only numbness in any target larger than a windling.

Seven "murder holes" are located long each side of the skull. These holes provide Full cover (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**) to any scorcher archer stationed at one.

The floor of the skull contains two trap doors that allow the Vipers to loose a deadly deluge on anyone unfortunate enough to get under the skull's upper jaw. The Vipers keep large pots of ore standing ready. If intruders appear under the skull, they toss elemental fire into the pots to create molten metal. Then they pour the molten metal through the trap doors onto anyone below. The molten metal causes Step 15/D20+D6 damage for 3 rounds to anyone struck by it. Any character within 3 yards of a direct target suffers



Step 6/D10 damage for 2 rounds. Non-magical armor provides no protection against the molten metal. The Vipers have enough elemental fire to melt four pots of molten metal.

Attackers may scale the 24-yard high cliff beside the skull and enter the skull through the lookout or entry holes. The cliff face goes up another 10 yards above the skull and then terminates in a mesa. At a point an hour's ride to the north, attackers may ride a trail to the top of the mesa. From there, they can climb down to the skull. Vipers come out of the skull to engage enemies trying to attack the fortress from either approach.

Orguk, Tirag and Gnanagh, as well as 36 Vipers, defend the fort against attacks. Make sure Gnanagh does not get killed before he explains the Blades to the adventurers. Moschtug has Uvtug and 48 members of the Fists at his disposal.

Gnanagh's Words

The adventurers can gain an audience with Gnanagh by storming the fort and capturing him—with or without Moschtug's help—or they can talk their way into the fort. Offering help (such as inside information) against Moschtug's upcoming attack gains them entrance to the fortress. If the characters end up defending the fort alongside the Vipers, reduce the number of murder holes and

decrease the height that attackers must climb to enter the skull.

If the adventurers come up with some other clever way of getting Gnanagh's ear, reward them for their creativity but make it tough enough to prevent the ending from becoming an anticlimax.

When the adventurers finally meet with Gnanagh and show him the Blades, he turns pale. He begins to tear at his hair and, if not restrained, smashes his head repeatedly into the nearest wall. He now realizes that his betrayal of his brother was magically triggered.

Read the following dialogue to your players:

"Now I understand! The Blades—the Blades of Cara Fahd, forged by the great ork Weaponsmith Rugaah Gloh. You have terrible weapons there—terrible! The details are not all clear; they are only hints, dread insinuations in a dozen vague documents. But those Blades carry a curse. They cut, they sever the bonds that hold Name-givers together. They breed betrayal. Now they are weak; they could push a weak, angry ork like myself over the brink, but later even healthy folk will—

"It may be too late for you. The Blades have no doubt cursed your patterns, and you now bear their curse. You are bond breakers; you will bring discord and betrayal wherever you go. The only way to break the curse is to follow it to its conclusion. Continue to attach threads to the Blades, until you reach the final thread. Then you will be sorely tested and possibly destroyed. But if you succeed, you will destroy a great menace and you shall win a place among Barsaive's legendary heroes.

"You can ignore this task—never weave another thread to them. But doing so will mark you as small and petty beings—like myself."

Gnanagh then attempts to commit suicide. If still inside the fort with Orguk, he throws himself at the Viper chieftain, hoping to atone either by killing Orguk or dying in the attempt. Otherwise, he grabs one of the Blades of Cara Fahd and tries to stab himself with it.

If the adventurers restrain him, he can provide extensive information about the history of Cara Fahd, though he knows little else about the Blades themselves .

Troubleshooting

Gnanagh *must* deliver the speech provided above or the rest of the adventures in Blades will not work. The gamemaster might consider making the references to the curse more oblique, however, in order to encourage the characters to explore other plotlines in their campaign and not to focus solely on the **Blades** subplot until it is completed (see **Running Blades**, p. 259, for more suggestions on pacing the **Blades** adventures). Nothing else will derail the adventure at this stage.

Loose Ends

This section wraps up the adventure's loose ends, provides ideas for possible sequels to **Bond Breaker**, and outlines Legend Point awards .

After the Adventure

The adventurers may capture Gnanagh and turn him over to his brother after they get the information they need. Moschtug wants to burn his brother at the stake, despite Gnanagh's remorse and his claim of having been magically influenced. The adventurers can wash their hands of the affair and let Gnanagh be tortured and slain, or they can use their persuasive abilities to effect a reconciliation between the brothers.

This earns the player characters the enmity of Orguk, however, who will attempt to have them killed if they ever return to the Delaris foothills. On the other hand, they may ally themselves with Orguk and Gnanagh and participate in the destruction of Moschtug and the Fists of Fahd.

As a third alternative, the characters can attempt to help re-establish the peace between the Fists of Fahd and the Righteous Vipers. This is an extremely difficult proposition, but is possible.

In any case, the adventurers may befriend the people of Copper Cauldron, who have little to lose in the short term from either chieftain's triumph. The characters may also return to the town at some point to defend it against various threats. Depending on the characters' choices, they may make friends among the Fists of Fahd, the Righteous Vipers or even both bands. And if the characters prevent Gnanagh from being killed or killing himself, they may gain an ally in the ork historian. Unfortunately, Gnanagh knows little more about the Blades of Cara Fahd, but he does know much about Cara Fahd and its history. If the gamemaster wishes, Gnanagh can aid the characters in their further search for the Blades' Key Knowledges.

The most significant consequence of the adventure is the curse placed on the characters by Betrayer. Even if the characters destroy the Blades, they still carry the Horror's influence with them. As Gnanagh mentioned, the only way the characters can free themselves and Barsaive from the Blades' curse is to weave threads to the Blades and see the curse through to the end. Only in this way can the Horror's influence be stopped. (See **Running Blades**, p. 259, for more information about Betrayer's influence and the curse on the characters.)

Awarding Legend Points

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, an adventure like **Bond Breaker** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a Fifth Circle character receives from 500 to 1,500 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session.

In the final game session that concludes the adventure,

the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal. The creatures presented in this adventure have listings for Legend Points. These are the points characters earn for defeating the creatures.

The adventure goal for **Bond Breaker** is to obtain information on the Blades from Gnanagh and survive the fight at Orguk's fort. The side the characters choose does not affect the award.

Cast of Characters

Major gamemaster characters in **Bond Breaker** appear below in order of general importance to the story.

Gnanagh the Querulous

Gnanagh is a well of bitterness. His long-held grudge against his brother has made him a prime candidate for influence by the bond-breaking aura of the Blades of Cara Fahd. When still a young ork, he stumbled across ancient documents from the ruins of Cara Fahd. These convinced him that his family was directly descended from the kingdom's royal family.

Gnanagh achieved no success in his attempts to exploit this knowledge, but his younger and more charismatic brother, Moschtug, used it to gain followers and form the Fists of Fahd. Gnanagh has roamed far and wide, becoming an expert on Cara Fahd, but has always dreamed of taking over the "kingship." He returns to the band whenever they get into trouble. His failure to become an adept despite years of tortuous effort also rankles, especially in view of Moschtug's apparently effortless progress in his own Discipline.

Gnanagh is cranky, irritable, distrustful, and insecure. Like all orks, Gnanagh is subject to *gahad*, a powerful biological response that causes extreme discomfort in any ork that fails to act on his instincts. Gnanagh's *gahad* is especially likely to be triggered by slights against his abilities or the quality of his scholarship.

His Name is pronounced GAH-nag.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (16): 7/D12
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 2/D4–1
Spell Defense: 9
Physical Armor: 10
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 35
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 27

Combat Movement: 32
Full Movement: 64

Skills

Artisan:
Calligraphy (3): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Cara Fahd History (7): 14/D20+D4
Legends and Heroes (5): 12/2D10

General:
Animal Bond (4): 9/D8+D6
Animal Handling (4): 10/D10+D6
Arcane Mutterings (6): 11/D10+D8
Avoid Blow (3): 9/D8+D6
Battle Shout (3): 8/2D6
Charge (3): 9/D8+D6
Disarm (6): 12/2D10
Evidence Analysis (3): 10/D10+D6
Melee Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8
Missile Weapons (3): 9/D8+D6
Read and Write Language (6): 13/D12+D10
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zat**, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Troll
Research (6): 13/D12+D10
Second Attack (3): 9/D8+D6
Speak Language (5): 12/2D10
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Troll
Trick Riding (3): 9/D8+D6
Wheeling Defense (6): 12/2D10

* *Or'zat* is the ancient language of the orks, shorter and more guttural than the modern *Or'zet* (see p. 297 of the **Name-giver's Compendium**).

Equipment

Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)
Rider's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1)

Broadsword (Forged +3; Damage 14/D20+D4; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9-15-18)
Long-Spear (Forged +1; Damage 12/2D10)
Medium Crossbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 70–140–280)
Quiver (w/15 medium crossbow bolts)

Adventurer's Kit
Arcane Tomes
Fine Quality Hat
Painting Tools
Scrolls
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
2 × Waterskins
Writing Kit
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Thundra Beast:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Large Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

80 silver pieces

Legend Award

290 Legend Points

Notes

Gnanagh possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

Moschtug, "King of Cara Fahd"

Moschtug is a natural leader of orks, able to inspire confidence and loyalty in others without any apparent effort or thought. It may be his unthinking zest for the good things in life: food, drink and battle. It may be his knack for always finding the right bit of luck to get him and his band out of one impossible scrape after another. Or it may simply be the value he places on loyalty—he never fails to reward those who perform well in his service.

Unfortunately, Moschtug is also about as perceptive as a saddlebag, especially when it comes to his brother, Gnanagh. He's never caught on to the fact that his brother envies him, that his every triumph is a stinging blow to Gnanagh's pride. He expects loyalty from Gnanagh because they are brothers. Although he will go out of his way to praise even the scruffiest, most disreputable new recruit to the Fists of Fahd, he takes Gnanagh's wise counsel for granted.

Moschtug's *gahad* is especially likely to be triggered by displays of disloyalty, threats to the safety of the orks under his command or refusals to treat him as a king.

His Name is pronounced MOSH-tug. He is a Sixth Circle Cavalryman and Fifth Circle Warrior.

Attributes

Dexterity (18): 7/D12
Strength (19): 8/2D6
Toughness (17): 7/D12
Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (20): 8/2D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10
Initiative: 4/D6
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 7
Social Defense: 10
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 40 (96)
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11
Knockdown: 8/2D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 32 (80)

Combat Movement: 38
Full Movement: 76

Karma Points: 30
Karma Step: 5/D8

Cavalryman Talents (Knacks)

Animal Bond (6): 14/D20+D4
Avoid Blow (6): 13/D12+D10
Charge [D] (6): 14/D20+D4
Durability (7/6) (8): 8
Karma Ritual (6): 6
Melee Weapons (8): 15/D20+D6
Mount Durability (6/5) (6): 6
Resist Taunt [D] (6): 11/D10+D8
Trick Riding [D] (6): 13/D12+D10 (Mountain Hoof)
Wheeling Attack (6): 13/D12+D10
Wheeling Defense [D] (6): 13/D12+D10

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Warrior Talents

Acrobatic Strike (5): 12/2D10
Air Dance (5): 9/D8+D6*
Down Strike [D] (5): 13/D12+D10
Swift Kick [D] (3): 10/D10+D6
Throwing Weapons (5): 12/2D10
Tiger Spring (5): 5
Unarmed Combat [D] (5): 12/2D10
Wood Skin [D] (5): 12/2D10

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
* Talent step adjusted for –3 armor Initiative Penalty.

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Leatherworker (2): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Ancient Tactics (1): 6/D10
Local Geography (3): 8/2D6

General:
Battle Shout (3): 11/D10+D8
Tactics (1): 6/D10

Equipment

Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Two-Handed Sword (Damage 15/D20+D6; w/scabbard)
Lance (Damage 14/D20+D4)
2 × Spears (Damage 12/2D10; Range 18–30–36)
Spiked Mace (Damage 14/D20+D4)
Dagger (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit
Craftsman Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Thundra Beast:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Large Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

210 silver pieces

Legend Points

950 Legend Points

Notes

Moschtug possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*. His Thundra Beast has a Death Rating of 102 and an Unconscious Rating of 88.

Cavalryman

Fourth Circle: Karma on Strength-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Toughness-only Tests
Sixth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

Warrior

Fourth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests

ORGUK

Orguk is an opportunistic ork who spends most of his time contemplating the quickest and easiest route to wealth and power. Not long ago, Orguk and his daughter, Tirag, appeared in the area, on the lam after incurring the anger of Garlthik One-Eye, ruler of Kratas. Orguk encountered the former leader of the Righteous Vipers in a tavern and won leadership of the Vipers in a card game. In just over a year, he managed to dramatically improve the ork band's fortunes. Once a motley gang of dispirited orks barely fit to be called scorchers, the Righteous Vipers have become one of the most feared raider bands in the region, thanks largely to the devious workings of Orguk's mind.

Unlike other raider chieftains, Orguk never rushes into a conflict. He always figures the angles, concerned with obtaining the maximum benefit for the minimum effort. In fact, Orguk has been working several angles at once in his alliance with the Fists of Fahd. Having Moschtug on his side allows him to concentrate on lesser rivals. But killing Moschtug and combining the two scorcher bands would be even better, he thinks. Orguk identified Gnanagh's fierce jealousy of Moschtug the first time he met the two brothers, and he has been subtly pricking Gnanagh's resentment during the wedding negotiations. Orguk's been careful enough not to suggest any outright treachery—instead, he's waiting for Gnanagh to decide to betray Moschtug.

Orguk is cool-headed for an ork and is unusually good at suppressing his *gahad*. However, particularly apt or cutting insults to his intelligence rile him. Orguk is a Seventh Circle Swordmaster and Third Circle Cavalryman.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (11): 5/D8
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8 **Initiative**: 2/D4-1
Spell Defense: 8 **Physical Armor**: 10
Social Defense: 8 **Mystic Armor**: 1

Death Rating: 38 (103) **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 10 **Knockdown**: 6/D10*
Unconsciousness Rating: 30 (84)

* Orguk knows the Wound Balance talent.

Combat Movement: 32 **Full Movement**: 64

Karma Points: 37 **Karma Step**: 5/D8

Cavalryman Talents

Animal Bond (4): 10/D10+D6
Charge [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Empathic Command [D] (3): 8/2D6
Trick Riding [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Wheeling Attack (3): 9/D8+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Swordmaster Talents (Knacks)

Avoid Blow [D] (7): 13/D12+D10
Disarm [D] (7): 13/D12+D10
Durability (7/6) (9): 9
Engaging Banter (7): 13/D12+D10
First Impression (3): 9/D8+D6
Karma Ritual (7): 7
Heartening Laugh (7): 13/D12+D10
Maneuver [D] (7): 13/D12+D10
Melee Weapons [D] (9): 15/D20+D6 (Armor Beater)
Resist Taunt [D] (7): 12/2D10
Taunt (7): 13/D12+D10
Thread Weaving (Blade Weaving) [D] (7): 13/D12+D10
Throwing Weapons (3): 9/D8+D6
Winning Smile (7): 13/D12+D10
Wound Balance (7): 13/D12+D10

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:
Juggling (3): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Games of Chance (1): 7/D12
Kratas Lore (3): 9/D8+D6

General:
Blade Juggle (3): 9/D8+D6
Streetwise (3): 9/D8+D6
Tactics (3): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3; w/horned helmet)
Rider's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1)

Broadsword (Forged +3; Damage 14/D20+D4; w/scabbard)
3 × Daggers (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Long-Spear (Forged +1; Damage 12/2D10)

Thread Gauntlet (Rank 3; +3 close combat Damage Tests)

Adventurer's Kit
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

War Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

240 silver pieces

Legend Award

710 Legend Points

Notes

Orguk possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests
Sixth Circle: +1 Social Defense
Seventh Circle: Karma on melee weapons Damage Tests

TIRAG

Tirag is the daughter of Orguk, who has trained her to be as sneaky and devious as he is. She feels a passionate attraction to her husband-to-be, Uvtug, but she does not expect this to last very long. (Ork marriages rarely outlast the birth of one or two offspring anyway.) When it comes down to a conflict between Uvtug's interests and her father's, her father wins. There is not a throat she would not cut for him. Her *gahad* is provoked by anyone who implies that she is less than ferocious or insults her father in any way.

Her Name is pronounced TEER-ag. She is a Fourth Circle Swordmaster.

Attributes

Dexterity (18): 7/D12 **Strength** (19): 8/2D6
Toughness (14): 6/D10 **Perception** (16): 7/D12
Willpower (10): 5/D8 **Charisma** (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10 **Initiative**: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 9 **Physical Armor**: 8
Social Defense: 8 **Mystic Armor**: 0

Death Rating: 36 (64) **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 10 **Knockdown**: 8/2D6*
Unconsciousness Rating: 28 (52)

* Tirag knows the Wound Balance talent.

Combat Movement: 38 **Full Movement**: 76

Karma Points: 20 **Karma Step**: 5/D8

Talents

Avoid Blow [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
Durability (7/6) (4): 4
First Impression (4): 10/D10+D6

Karma Ritual (4): 4
Heartening Laugh (4): 10/D10+D6
Maneuver [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
Melee Weapons [D] (6): 13/D12+D10
Riposte [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
Taunt (4): 10/D10+D6
Thread Weaving (Blade Weaving) [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
Throwing Weapons (4): 10/D10+D6
Wound Balance (4): 12/2D10

[D] Indicates Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:
Acting (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Kratas Lore (2): 9/D8+D6
Ork Scorcher Tactics (2): 9/D8+D6

General:
Animal Bond (4): 10/D10+D6
Animal Handling (3): 8/2D6
Flirting (2): 8/2D6
Seduction (2): 8/2D6
Streetwise (2): 9/D8+D6
Tactics (2): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19)
Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

Broadsword (Forged +2; Damage 15/D20+D6; w/scabbard)
Dagger (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 9–15–18)
2 × Spears (Damage 12/2D10; Range 18–30–36)

Thread Ring of Accuracy (Rank 4; +3 close/ranged combat Attack Tests; +2 close/ranged combat Damage Tests)

Adventurer's Kit
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Riding Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

50 silver pieces

Legend Award

345 Legend Points

Notes

Tirag possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests

UVTUG

Uvtug is Moschtug's son and Tirag's husband-to-be. He is much like his father—brave, benevolent to his allies and just a bit dim. Tirag's passion thrills him—the first time he saw her, she was skewering an unfortunate miner with her sword. The bloodlust in her eyes that day entranced Uvtug, and he became determined to have her as his bride. Although thoroughly besotted with her, he will not abandon his father if forced to choose between the two. His *gahad* is provoked by the need to prove himself every inch the equal of his father in combat.

His Name is pronounced OOV-tug. He is a Third Circle Cavalryman.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (20): 8/2D6
Toughness (19): 8/2D6
Perception (8): 4/D6
Willpower (7): 4/D6
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 5
Physical Armor: 7
Social Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 43 (64)
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 12
Knockdown: 8/2D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 35 (53)

Combat Movement: 32
Full Movement: 64

Karma Points: 15
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Animal Bond (4): 11/D10+D8
Avoid Blow (3): 9/D8+D6
Blood Share [D] (3): 11/D10+D8
Charge [D] (3): 11/D10+D8
Durability (7/6) (3): 3
Karma Ritual (3): 3
Melee Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8
Trick Riding [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Wheeling Attack (3): 9/D8+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Leatherworker (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Local Geography (2): 7/D12
Ork Scorcher Tactics (2): 6/D10

General:
Flirting (2): 9/D8+D6
Tactics (2): 6/D10
Taunt (2): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)

Dagger (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 9-15-18)
Lance (Damage 14/D20+D4)
Pole-Axe (Damage 16/D20+D8)

Adventurer's Kit
Craftsman Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

War Horse:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Small Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

30 silver pieces

Legend Award

190 Legend Points

Notes

Uvtug possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

MINERS

The miner statistics can be used for any able-bodied resident of Copper Cauldron. The town's population is predominately human, with some orks and a few dwarfs thrown in for spice. Folks here have to be physically stronger than the average city dweller to make a living, and they have to be able to defend themselves from a variety of foes.

In general, they are a taciturn lot, though not unfriendly once one wins their trust.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12
Strength (18): 7/D12
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (16): 7/D12
Charisma (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Initiative: 7/D12
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 3
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 39
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11
Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 31

Combat Movement: 28 [D] or 32 [H] or 34 [O]
Full Movement: 56 [D] or 64 [H] or 68 [O]

[D, H, O] Denotes dwarf, human, or ork Movement rates, respectively.

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Blacksmith (1): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Mining (2): 7/D12
Subterranean Geography (2): 7/D12

General:
Avoid Blow (2): 9/D8+D6
Climbing (2): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6
Missile Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6
Streetwise (2): 7/D12
Wilderness Survival (2): 7/D12

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)

Warhammer (Damage 14/D20+D4)
Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)
Longbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 60–120–240)
Quiver (w/40 longbow arrows)

Adventurer's Kit
Climbing Tools
Craftsman Tools
Dwarf Mine Rations (1 week)
Mining Tools
Peasant's Garb
Waterskin

Loot

None

Legend Award

100 Legend Points

Notes

Dwarf miners possess the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight. Ork miners possess the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

Ork Scorchers

Use these statistics for the Fists of Fahd and Righteous Viper ork scorchers.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Strength (16): 7/D12
Toughness (19): 8/2D6
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (8): 4/D6
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 2/D4–1
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 10
Social Defense: 6
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 43
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 12
Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 35

Combat Movement: 32
Full Movement: 64

Skills

Artisan:
Tattooing (3): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Caravan Trade Routes (3): 8/2D6
Creature Lore (3): 8/2D6

General:
Animal Bond (4): 8/2D6
Animal Handling (4): 8/2D6
Animal Training (4): 8/2D6
Charge (4): 11/D10+D8
Fence (3): 7/D12
Melee Weapons (7): 13/D12+D10
Missile Weapons (7): 13/D12+D10
Sure Mount (4): 11/D10+D8
Tactics (3): 8/2D6
Trick Riding (4): 10/D10+D6
Unarmed Combat (7): 13/D12+D10

Equipment

Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)
Rider's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19; cannot be used with battle-axe or longbow)

Battle-Axe (Damage 13/D12+D10)
Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)
Lance (Damage 13/D12+D10)
Longbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 60–120–240)
Quiver (w/40 longbow arrows)

Adventurer's Kit
2 × Oil Flasks
Tattooing Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins

Thundra Beast:
Bit, Bridle, and Harness
2 × Large Saddlebags
Stirrups, Saddle, and Blanket

Loot

Miscellaneous jewelry and small gems worth 50 silver pieces

Legend Award

200 Legend Points

Notes

Ork scorchers possess the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

GRAVE WISDOM

Wisdom is given to the old so that it may be passed to the young. But wisdom is denied to the young. Only those that grow old understand this.

• Quag Nokor, Ork Shaman •

Donack stepped aside, allowing Elder Pillad to enter the Hold of Courage first. Donack prided himself on knowing the correct way to behave, despite his youth and recent arrival at the court of Cara Fahd. He was also proud of his achievement, his monument to the greatest heroes of the ork kingdom. He followed the elder into the Great Hall and stepped beside him to see the expression on his face.

To Donack's surprise, Elder Pillad's face bore no expression at all. No pleasure, no satisfaction, no approving pride; nothing that Donack had eagerly anticipated. Donack cleared his throat, forcing himself to sound as if all was well. "Elder Pillad, the pedestal is complete. Word has just reached us that Pobov Gaarz has died. He was the last. All that remains is the ritual, and then the Seven Spokes will join the Hold of Courage."

Pillad remained silent. Unsure what else to say, or whether he should say anything at all, Donack looked down at the nearby pedestal. It bore the symbol of the Seven Spokes: the wheel forged after the betrayal, after they had become seven rather than eight. Donack reached down and patted the stone, then ran his fingers lightly over the design. Seven lines in the wheel, with seven hollows where the great heroes' soul-stones would rest. Next to the symbol of the Seven Spokes was a single well in which the soul-stone of the lost hero would lie. Traitor and Nameless though he had become, he must have once fought as heroically for Cara Fahd as any of his seven comrades, and Donack was determined to honor all eight of Cara Fahd's Protectors. He had prepared the eight stones needed for the ritual, seen to everything necessary. All he needed now was Elder Pillad's permission.

"It cannot be done," said Pillad, his voice ringing through the hall.

Donack gaped, then began to sputter as he groped for words. "But they are among our greatest heroes! Surely they deserve placement here, alongside Hrak Gron and all since who have served Cara Fahd!" He heard the strident note in his voice and tried to swallow it; the shock had made him incautious, or he would never have spoken in such a tone to a leader of the Order of Courage.

"By their deeds, they deserve all that we can give them." Pillad said, his voice soft and sad. "But the curse of the Blades of Cara Fahd pervades their patterns. To bring that curse to the Hold would spell disaster, for us and for our descendants."

Donack turned away from the elder, desperately wanting to kick something. All my work, gone for nothing because of a few tales fit only to frighten elves. The greatest heroes of our kingdom, dishonored for a child's nightmare!

Pillad thumped his staff on the floor, forcing Donack to look at him. "The curse is real, Donack. Why do you think so many disasters have befallen our land? Do you believe so strongly in bad luck, or that we have offended the Passions somehow or that our blood has grown thin and weak as our enemies say? Do you think all our calamities stem from these things?"

Donack rubbed the tip of his tusk, even as he cursed himself for giving in to the nervous habit. The elder's words had struck a chord, and Donack didn't like it. "But Elder," he began feebly, "surely if the tales are true, then it is the Blades that carry the curse. I do not see why—"

"Listen and learn," Pillad growled, thumping his staff again. "The Blades carry the curse, yes. But to bring the Seven Spokes here is to bring the Blades, for they are as bound to each other as we are to the Hold. We cannot have one without the other, and we dare not destroy our children's birthright for the sake of honoring the dead."

Donack bowed his head, signifying his submission. The note of fear in Pillad's voice convinced him, even as a part of him struggled to disbelieve it. As the ranking elder of the Order of Courage, Pillad was within his rights to deny anyone entry to the Hold. For him to deny the Seven Spokes meant that he feared their admission—and anything that could frighten the old Nethermancer surely posed a threat to the Hold and to all of Barsaive.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

During Cara Fahd's heyday, a small group of Nethermancers in the service of the kingdom created a ritual that enabled the leaders of Cara Fahd to store and use the knowledge of the kingdom's fallen heroes. This ritual trapped the spirit of a dead hero in an enchanted stone known as a soul-stone. The Nethermancers, who called themselves the Order of Courage, built a shrine to house the soul-stones and Named it the Hold of Courage. Whenever word of a hero's death reached the Order, they used the ritual to capture the hero's spirit in a soul-stone. The Nethermancers then placed the stone into an enchanted statue, through which they could speak with the hero's spirit.

After the fall of Cara Fahd during the Orichalcum Wars, certain members of the Order of Courage wished to enshrine the Seven Spokes in the Hold. To this end, they constructed a pedestal to hold their soul-stones and set

aside an area of the Hold for it. The leaders of the Order of Courage, however, warned that the curse of the Blades of Cara Fahd would corrupt the Hold of Courage and refused to allow the Seven Spokes' soul-stones to be placed in the shrine. Over time, the members of the Order died before they could induct new members. Donack Roundhorns, the last surviving leader of the Order, constructed a special pedestal for himself and arranged for the remaining members—a pair of hastily taught novices—to perform the soul-stone ritual for him after his death. He hoped thereby to preserve his own knowledge and that of the Order, so that future generations would be able to call up the knowledge of the fallen heroes of Cara Fahd.

During the Scourge, the unprotected Hold of Courage fell victim to the Horrors. The trapped spirits in the stones offered the Horrors victims who could do little to fight back. The Horrors corrupted the spirits who grew more malevolent with each passing century.

The characters' quest for the Rank Three Key Knowledge begins with research into how they might discover the Name of the Seven Spokes. After learning of the Hold of Courage, the characters head toward Cara Fahd to search for the fabled shrine, joined by a young ork Troubadour Named Vanyk. After long days or even weeks of travel, the characters arrive at the border of the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd. Vanyk informs the characters that if the object of their search exists, they will find it here. The group begins scouring the ruined countryside for the shrine, fending off attacks by strange creatures and the tribes of savage orks that still live within the lands of the ancient kingdom.

When at last the characters find the shrine, they may not recognize it. The shrine is a simple, unadorned wooden building. The building's well-preserved condition is the only immediate clue to its special nature—it has not rotted away in five centuries. The Hold is full of small glowing stones set in niches atop stone pedestals. The glowing stones are the spirits of ork heroes who died in the service of Cara Fahd, trapped by the Order of Courage.

Characters who study the pictograms above the niches may decipher the stones' purpose, but they also discover that the niches of the particular ork heroes they seek are empty. When placed within specially constructed statues in the shrine, the soul-stones reveal the histories of the souls they contain and allow the characters to hold brief conversations with the dead. Unfortunately, the corruption of the Horrors and the influence of Betrayer cause the spirits to attack the characters. The adventurers must fight them off, while searching for Donack's soul-stone and asking his soul the right questions. Only Donack's spirit can reveal the Key Knowledge the characters seek.

Betrayer's Influence

Betrayer's influence does not come into play until late in this adventure, when the characters reach the Hold of Courage. When the characters attempt to communicate with the spirits, the Horror's influence combined with the spirits' corruption prompts the spirits to attack.

If desired, the gamemaster may also have Betrayer influence Vanyk's behavior. For example, Vanyk might assault one of the characters at a crucial juncture of the battle with the spirits.

In Search of Knowledge

Use the prelude when the characters begin seeking the Blades' Rank Three Key Knowledge: the Name of the group of heroes that wielded the Blades of Cara Fahd—the "Seven Spokes." This prelude assumes that the characters begin by searching in a library. They arrive at the library of their choice, hoping to find at least part of the answer to their questions hidden in the pages of some musty tome. Instead, they find an unexpected ally, willing to lead them to the one place in Cara Fahd where they can find the information they need.

If necessary, adjust the following text to fit the place where the characters perform their research.

Setting the Stage

Read the following aloud when the characters approach the library:

The library rises from a sharp, jagged outcropping of rock. It towers over the surrounding buildings, an awe-inspiring sight. Two massive

Adventure Hook

When the characters speak with Donack, he commissions the characters to find the tower of the Order of Courage and bring their memory to light once more. Vanyk will also be interested in such a quest and try and steer the characters into helping her, possibly using the destruction of the Hold on their account as leverage. The ruins of the tower now lie in the jungle as it has grown even further than its pre-Scourge boundaries in this area. Using Vanyk's map and knowledge may prove helpful in finding it.

Finally, they find the tower—as well as a tribe of savage orks, who have made themselves at home in the ruins. One of them, a muscled brute Named Grohvl, claims to be their king and the leader of the *Mujia'bah* ("People of Courage", as translated from their guttural language).

He is in possession of the tomes of which Donack speaks and is only willing to part with them if the characters help in driving off a rival band of cave trolls living in the nearby mountains.

oaken doors form the entrance to the imposing structure, which is cloaked by an almost palpable sense of mystery and wonder. A few folk are entering and leaving the place, all seemingly preoccupied with their own thoughts and discoveries and all tightly clutching small books and tablets to their chests, as if the objects were holy relics.

Read the following aloud when the characters enter the library:

As you pass through the wide doors, several heads swivel up from contemplation of books and scrolls. The owners of the heads shoot glares at you like daggers. Almost before the doors swing shut, a white-robed librarian appears at your side and motions silently for you to follow her through a small door to the left of the main entrance. From the disgusted look she gives your weapons, you can guess what's coming next.

Once you have all squeezed into the small office, the librarian closes the door behind you and lowers a thick rug over the door.

"Welcome to the library. To better aid you in your quest for knowledge, I must ask two things. First, please divest yourselves of any armor or weapons while within these walls—such things make noises most distracting to those who come here to learn in peace and quiet. Second, what subject will you be researching?"

Read the following aloud when the characters actually begin their research:

You find the proper section of the library with little difficulty and begin digging through the hundreds of tomes that might hold some part of the answer you need. It's hard going, distinguishing between genuine ancient histories and books of stories about ancient history, and harder still to find anything that relates directly to the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd. Still, you are able to sort the potentially useful from the worthless. Within a few hours, you have a sizable stack of books that just might be of some use to you.

As you gather up the books you need and put the others back on the shelves, an ork woman collides with you, almost at a run. Books thump noisily to the floor, and hisses of annoyance echo from all over the library.

Though startled, the ork swiftly regains her wits. She smiles broadly, revealing a set of tusks that would do any ork proud, and doffs her wide-brimmed velvet hat with a flourish. "Vanyk Auldsinger, at your service, gentlepersons. My apologies for my haste—let me help you."

She begins to gather up your scattered books, in the process muddling the useful and useless together. You try to stop her, but she cuts you off with an excited yelp and looks at you expectantly. "You've been looking into the legends of Cara Fahd, haven't you? Are you going there? I can lead you there, I've been researching my people's ancient kingdom for years now, I can guide you there and help you find whatever it is you're looking for. I can even help you get ready for the trip. Please, let me come with you, it would mean so much to me to be able to tell the tale of the rediscovery of my ancient homeland."

She herds you across the reading room, alternately tugging on your arms and pushing you gently from behind. "I can tell you so much—where all the best treasure probably lies, where you can find the homes of ancient heroes, everything you can want to know. It's my specialty. When do we leave?"

Themes and Images

The feel of this prelude changes abruptly with the appearance of Vanyk Auldsinger. At the beginning, emphasize the hard work that needs to be done and a sense of awe at the amount of information the library holds.

With Vanyk's arrival, the pace speeds up as the Troubadour does her best to get the characters moving with her breathless speech and hurried actions.

Behind the Scenes

Vanyk Auldsinger is an ork Troubadour who has dedicated her life to making the glories of ork history known to her people. To that end, she spends most of her time traveling from city to city, perusing the libraries and other sources of information at each location for any legends or facts she can find concerning orks in general and Cara Fahd in particular.

Weeks ago she discovered a partial map of ancient Cara Fahd, and with it some important new information regarding the ancient orks' methods of keeping history. Apparently, an order of Nethermancers in the service of the ancient kingdom discovered a blood magic ritual that effectively allowed communication with the dead through something called a soul-stone. The Nethermancers' ritual gave the greatest minds and most important heroes of Cara Fahd a sort of immortality by placing their departed spirits in these soul-stones, from which they could pass on advice and information about times past to the rulers of the kingdom or anyone else with a truly pressing need. The soul-stones were kept in a shrine known as the Hold of Courage, located somewhere in the jungles of Cara Fahd. Vanyk has discovered the approximate location of this shrine and desperately hopes to locate it. Until now, she has not found a group of adepts willing to travel to Cara Fahd with her or strong enough to bear the rigors of the journey. She believes that the characters fit the bill and is desperately anxious to accompany them.

Vanyk goes out of her way to ensure that the adventurers make ready for the journey to Cara Fahd as soon as possible. Although she does not have much silver to spend, she donates everything she has to getting the journey underway, including her time and advice. As a veteran traveler, Vanyk has also plotted a relatively short route that will carry the characters through as many villages as possible to allow for resupply and a night or two's rest in a real bed. If the characters choose to ignore Vanyk's advice and prepare their traveling gear and route themselves, she is disappointed but does not make waves. She sees this trip as her big chance to resurrect what may be the most important time in ork history and will not miss it for anything. Unless the characters make truly idiotic decisions, Vanyk goes along with what they say, offering advice but ultimately submitting to their wishes.

If the players ask to see Vanyk's map, draw some lines and cryptic symbols on a piece of paper and then crumple and uncrumple it ten or twelve times. Then tear a piece off the corner and hand the paper to the players. Vanyk's map is completely illegible to anyone who lacks her comprehensive knowledge of ork history and ancient ork writing.

Keep in mind that Vanyk is not a powerful adept. As a Third Circle Troubadour, she is considerably weaker than the characters and needs at least some protection if serious fighting breaks out along the journey. For more information about Vanyk, see **Cast of Characters** on p. 295.

Once the characters learn that the knowledge they seek can be found in the Hold of Courage, go to **Search for the Hold**, below.

Troubleshooting

Unless the characters attack Vanyk or refuse to listen to her and thereby waste a valuable source of information, few problems can occur in this encounter. Particularly paranoid characters may refuse to leave their weapons and armor with the librarians, in which case they are politely asked to leave. If the characters do cause problems at the library, guardsmen quickly arrive to take care of the trouble. Cities value information almost as much as gold, especially with the urgent need for knowledge to rebuild Barsaive and deal with the Horrors that still linger. If the characters do not meet Vanyk in the library, she may spot them as she is exiting the building and inquire about their purpose.

If the characters meet Vanyk in the library and send her away, she tries to get back into their good graces as they sift through the books at the library. The Troubadour will do her best to provide the characters with information that they may not have, perhaps even showing them her map of the route to Cara Fahd or her precious partial map of the pre-Scourge kingdom. If that does not convince the characters that Vanyk is a valuable asset in this undertaking, let them suffer through days, perhaps weeks, of further research before they learn of the Hold of Courage.

Search for the Hold

Search for the Hold begins as the characters reach the border of ancient Cara Fahd. As they search the forsaken kingdom for the Hold of Courage over the next day or so, they may experience any of several suggested encounters. The gamemaster decides which encounters, based on how much of the travel he wishes to play out.

Setting the Stage

The following text assumes the characters have come to Cara Fahd with Vanyk, as described in **In Search of Knowledge**. If this is not the case, adjust the text accordingly:

The sun is sinking toward the horizon when Vanyk suddenly reins in her horse and leaps from the saddle with an excited cry. She digs in her saddlebag and comes up with the tattered fragment of parchment you've seen her consult so often during the journey. She turns slightly and peers at the peaks of the Delaris Mountains. "There," she breathes, "the triple peak." She turns again and looks toward the Twilight Peaks. "Yes, yes! The cracked crag there, the river behind us, the jungle ahead of us." She dances around her horse, waving the map in the air and shouting. "We're here! Welcome to the ancient kingdom of Cara Fahd!"

You gaze at the wilderness around you, scratching your head in puzzlement. This wild land—the same sort of wild land you've been traveling through for the past few days—is the proud ork kingdom you have read of? You look at Vanyk, who has fallen to her knees and raised a chunk of soil in

her fist. She kisses the dirt, then laughs in delight.

Shrugging, you dismount and prepare to make camp. As an ork Troubadour, Vanyk ought to know what she's talking about; and even if she doesn't, night's coming on. Might as well settle in for a comfortable sleep.

When the characters rise the next morning, read the following aloud:

You wake refreshed from your night's sleep, ready to ferret out the location of the Hold of Courage. Your long search is apparently about to end.

Vanyk stumbles out of her tent, yawning. She walks slowly toward the morning fire, stretching the kinks out of her muscles. She clutches the tattered map in one hand, and begins babbling about it as soon as she sits down. "Well, it wasn't hard getting this far, but things might get a little tougher from here on out. My map shows the Hold's location, but many of the landmarks just aren't here. Look." She thrusts the map at one of you, pointing with one long-nailed finger at a crude set of letters above a small dot. "This town, Urkula I think it says, is gone. So is this one and this one." She rolls the map up carefully, sticks it in her pocket and reaches for a hunk of journey-bread to toast over the fire. "I know the Hold's in the jungle, though. We'll find it quickly, never you fear."

Rolling your eyes at Vanyk's naiveté, you finish your breakfast in a less confident mood. No one you know has ever found anything easily in a jungle. The end of your quest may not be as near as you had thought.

Themes and Images

The theme of this encounter is travel and discovery. The characters are traveling in a legendary land, seeking something that no one has seen in centuries. Though the distance to be traveled may seem daunting, the prospect of uncovering an ancient secret should be enough to excite any adept.

Behind the Scenes

Led by Vanyk, the characters search for the Hold of Courage. Vanyk's map is far from perfect, and much has changed since the Scourge. Without cities to use as landmarks, finding the Hold may be quite a time-consuming task, fraught with peril from creatures native to Cara Fahd's jungles and from savage ork tribes throughout the region. The gamemaster may decide to let luck favor the characters and allow them to find the Hold within a few days of arriving in Cara Fahd.

Encounters

Depending on how much real time the gamemaster wishes to spend on travel through Cara Fahd, the characters may face any or all of the following mini-encounters as they search for the Hold of Courage. Make these encounters challenging but not overwhelming, as the characters will face powerful adversaries within the Hold of Courage (see **Spirits from the Past**, p. 291).

Keep in mind that these lands contain the ruins of an ancient kingdom. The characters might stumble over the shattered remnants of cities or towns lost to the Scourge but should not become sidetracked by exploring these ruins. If the characters want to go exploring, Vanyk does everything she can to discourage them. She is anxious to find the Hold of Courage, and everything she has ever read about it places it in a secluded location in the jungle. Make it clear to the players that their characters are ill-prepared to perform any major exploring. For more information, see the **Loose Ends** section on p. 294.

Blood Monkey Assault

A group of blood monkeys drops down on the characters, who have unknowingly invaded the animals' territory.

These savage creatures can call more of their kind as reinforcements. The characters must quickly kill all the monkeys or beat a hasty retreat as hordes of the brutal little monsters arrive.

Blood Monkeys (12)

DEX: 8 **STR**: 5 **TOU**: 7
PER: 5 **WIL**: 4 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 8 (11)
Number of Actions: 3
Attack (3): 11
Damage:
Bite (5): 10
2 × Claws (3): 8

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 3

Death Rating: 42
Wound Threshold: 12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34

Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 5

Combat Movement: 38/43✦
Full Movement: 76/86✦

✦ The second value is the creature's climbing Movement rate.

Powers: Climbing S (3): 11, Enhanced Senses (Smell) (2): 7, Great Leap S (3): 11, Surprise Attack (3)

Legend Points: 135

Equipment: None

Loot: Pelts worth 100 silver pieces each. May find bits of treasure, items, weapons, and armor from the last unfortunate adventurers who passed this way.

Commentary

Blood monkeys are small simians thickly covered in fur of a deep red color. Their bodies rarely exceed 2 feet in length, but they have prehensile tales that add another 2 feet to their overall length. They appear small and harmless, but are actually quite vicious. Sharp claws grow from the ends of their five fingers, and they sport a mouthful of long, needle-sharp teeth. See the **Creatures** chapter on p.281 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on blood monkeys.

Stalked by Crojen

Four crojen stalk the characters as they hack through a particularly dense section of the jungle. These small, panther-like creatures make no secret of their presence and almost seem to taunt the characters with the ease of their movement through the thick undergrowth.

For the next several hours (or days, if the gamemaster wants to take his time with this part of the adventure), the crojen lurk at the edge of the characters' vision, lounging almost peacefully. If attacked, they sprint off into the jungle, returning minutes later to take up their watch. Once the characters relax their vigilance or go to sleep for the night, the crojen move in for the kill.

Crojen (4)

DEX: 12 **STR**: 10 **TOU**: 9
PER: 6 **WIL**: 6 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 12 **Physical Defense**: 15
Number of Actions: 2 (see text) **Spell Defense**: 8
Attack (2): 14 **Social Defense**: 6
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 0
Bite (5): 15 (see text) **Mystic Armor**: 3
2 × Claws (2): 12

Death Rating: 50 **Recovery Tests**: 4
Wound Threshold: 14 **Knockdown**: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 43 (Immune; see text)

Combat Movement: 94 **Full Movement**: 188

Powers: Astral Sight [T] (2): 8, Climbing [S] (3): 15, Great Leap [S] (3): 15, Low-Light Vision, Silent Walk [S] (2): 14

Legend Points: 245

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Crojen are deadly predators that hunt in packs. Small black tigers that resemble panther cubs, even when fully grown, crojen are roughly 2 feet long and 1 foot tall at the shoulder. Their tails add another foot to their body length. Adventurers who have come into contact with them swear that these creatures are larger. See the **Creatures** chapter on p. 292 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on crojen.

Jehuthra Attack

The characters unwittingly enter the hunting ground of a mated pair of jehuthras, which prompts these giant, spider-like beings to ambush the characters. The jehuthras use their Iron Web ability to separate the characters from one another before attacking. If the characters kill one of the pair, the remaining jehuthra goes berserk using the Aggressive Attack combat option (see p. 403 of the **Player's Compendium**). Fortunately for the adventurers, the jehuthra cannot think clearly enough to use any spells. Instead, it attacks physically in a mad rush.

Jehuthras (2)

DEX: 7 **STR**: 5 **TOU**: 7
PER: 10 **WIL**: 9 **CHA**: 5

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense**: 9
Number of Actions: 2 **Spell Defense**: 13
Attack (6): 13 **Social Defense**: 9
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 8
Claws (6): 11 **Mystic Armor**: 4

Death Rating: 42 (54) **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 12 **Knockdown**: 8
Unconsciousness Rating: 34 (44)

Combat Movement: 49/36[◆]
Full Movement: 98/72[◆]

◆ The second value is the Horror construct's climbing Movement rate.

Powers: Climbing [S] (2): 9, Durability (2), Frost Web (1): 10, Iron Web (2): 11, Lacerators, Spellcasting (2): 12

Legend Points: 245

Equipment: None

Loot: Thorax web worth D12 × 10 silver pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

Jehuthra are constructs of the Horror known as Hate, first formed during the early years of the Scourge. These 7-foot long spider-like beings have eight legs—each leg up to 10 feet in length—and their bristly bodies end in humanoid faces. Though their eyes look vacant, jehuthras possess considerable cunning and intelligence. They prefer traps and ambushes to direct confrontation; an overmatched jehuthra will flee rather than fight. Only if flight looks difficult or impossible does a jehuthra defend itself with its magical powers. See the **Horrors** chapter on p. 452 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on jehuthras.

Savage Ork Raiders (10)

At some point, preferably an inconvenient one, ten savage orks attack the characters. Savage orks are ferocious primitives who attack without mercy and eat their fallen foes. These savage orks view every stranger as a threat and attempt to destroy anyone they meet.

Many tribes of savage orks roam the jungles of Cara Fahd, but most contain fewer than 50 members. These tribes travel constantly, patrolling their individual territories and rarely meeting. When savage ork tribes encounter one another, they invariably fight to the death, ensuring that this breed of ork will probably die off within a few generations.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Perception (10): 5/D8
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (6): 3/D4

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 3
Social Defense: 4
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 34
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Combat Movement: 28
Full Movement: 56

Skills

Artisan:
Cooking (2): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Botany (1): 6/D10
Creature Lore (1): 6/D10

General:
Hunting (2): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Missile Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Throwing Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Wilderness Survival (2): 7/D12

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)
Spear (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 18–30–36)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Longbow (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 60–120–240)
Quiver (w/20 longbow arrows)
Peasant's Garb
Trail Ration (1 week)
Waterskin

Loot

None

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Notes

Ork raiders possess the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

Finding the Hold

After a few days or weeks of traveling through the lands of ancient Cara Fahd, the characters reach the spot indicated on Vanyk's map and find the Hold of Courage. Once the characters have found the Hold, go to the next section, **Into the Hold of Courage**, below.

Read the following aloud when the characters find the Hold:

You hack through the thick underbrush, glad of the heavy machetes that Vanyk suggested you purchase. Maddening swarms of insects buzz around your head, and a steady drizzle makes the footing slick. The heat tells you that the sun has risen above you, though its feeble rays can scarcely penetrate the thick canopy of the treetops. The going is slow, uncomfortable and wet.

Just when your aching arms can hardly hold up your blades any longer, you enter a patch of trees that seems all too quiet. You glance around nervously, watching for predators. Suddenly the jungle seems to part before you, giving way to a sunny clearing. At the center of the clearing lies a weathered, wooden, windowless building. Vines cover the long, low structure, but above the single door you notice a stone disk roughly five feet across, engraved with a crossed sword and axe.

Vanyk stands slack-jawed, for once almost unable to speak. "I... this..." Her voice drops as she says reverently, "We've found it. Just as it was described—the Hold of Courage."

Troubleshooting

Little can go wrong here. The characters may start off in an unexpected direction, but with Vanyk to guide them, keeping them on track should be fairly easy. Take care not to stage encounters that seriously weaken the characters. If they fare badly in any conflict, slow them down and require them to rest and regain their strength.

Into the Hold of Courage

In **Into the Hold of Courage**, the characters enter the Hold in hopes of learning the Blades' Rank Three Key Knowledge. Inside they battle the corrupted spirits of the Hold as Betrayer stirs up the spirits' resentment before the characters find what they seek.

Setting the Stage

The following text assumes the characters have come to the Hold of Courage with Vanyk, as described in **Search for the Hold**, p. 286. If this is not the case, adjust the text accordingly:

Before any of you can reach the door of the old building, Vanyk bars your way. "Wait. You can't walk into the sacred Hold of Courage as if it was a tavern or an inn. We must prepare ourselves to enter here." Having gotten your attention, she continues in tones so serious and reverent that you cannot ignore her words. "This place holds the wisdom of the ages and must be treated with respect. The lore I have read says that only the strongest can enter the Hold of Courage, and even they must first be sorely tested."

Themes and Images

The characters have finally found the Hold, which they hope contains some answers. Give them a sense of an end drawing near, as well as a certain uneasy feeling. Sacred places can be dangerous, full of tricks and traps to catch unbelievers or others who do not belong.

Behind the Scenes

If any character is wounded, Vanyk allows no one to enter the shrine until everyone is healed. If this delay means that the party spends the night in the clearing, so be it. Vanyk believes what she has learned about the Hold and grows furious if anyone tries to contradict her.

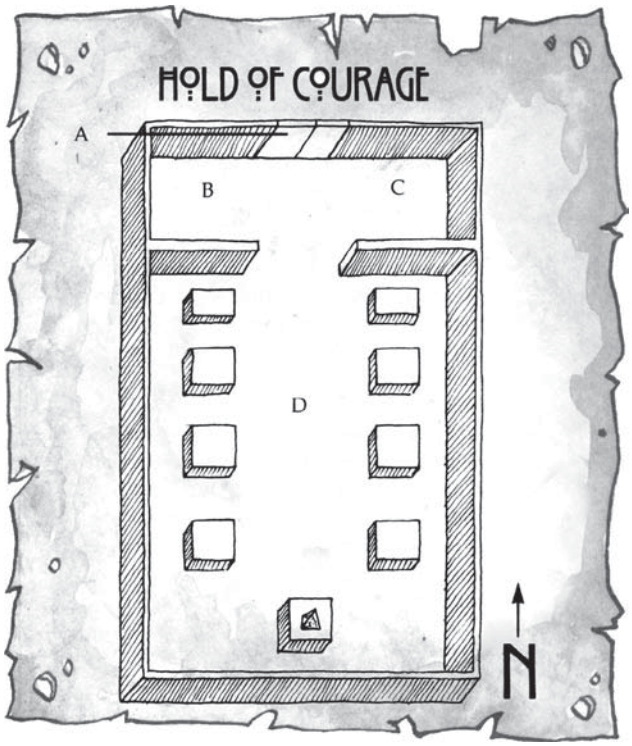
When the characters are ready to enter the Hold, read the following aloud:

With everyone rested and at full strength, Vanyk tells you how to enter the Hold. "The legends say we go in one at a time, and none of us may watch the others enter. The testing of your courage is a private matter—if you fail, no one else will witness your shame. Remember that this is a sacred place; show it the honor it is due. Take nothing from here and leave a weapon for the souls of the warriors who lie here once you have learned what you came for." Vanyk looks at each of you in turn, as if satisfying herself that you have understood. Then she sits down, leaving you to decide who will enter the Hold first.

The Hold of Courage

The Hold of Courage is roughly 16 yards long by 10 yards wide. The ceiling is low and flat, slightly less than 3 yards high. The Hold has a dirt floor, and the walls and ceiling are made of tough wood panels reinforced with iron bands. Miraculously, the vines that cover the walls on the outside have not rotted them away, and the steel bands remain clean of rust despite the pervasive moisture of the jungle climate. A set of heavy wooden doors covers the single entrance into the windowless building. Aside from the aforementioned stone disk, the building has no exterior or interior ornamentation. The soul-stones shed the only light inside; they give off a fiery red glow that provides enough light for all Name-giver races to see fairly well by.

During the Scourge, the unprotected Hold provided an easy target for the Horrors. The spirits of the dead trapped within the soul-stones gave the Horrors considerable nourishment and pleasure. Centuries of Horror-inflicted torture have made the spirits malevolent and vengeful, and they manifest and attack if awakened.



(A) The Doors of the Strong

The builders of the Hold designed the Doors of the Strong to test the strength of will of those who wished to enter. A magical ward protects the doors:

Magical Ward

Detection Difficulty: 22

Disarm Difficulty: The ward cannot be dispelled or disarmed. It is part of the Hold, and only the Hold's utter destruction will shatter the magic that prevents the weak from entering.

Spell Defense: 22

Trap Initiative: 30/D20+D10+D8+2D6

Trigger Condition: The gamemaster makes a Step 19/D20+2D6 Spellcasting Test for the ward against the Spell Defense rating of any character touching the door. If the test succeeds, the ward takes effect as described below.

Trap Effect: The target of the ward is convinced that his presence disgraces the Hold. The feeling is so strong that the character has to pass a Willpower (9) Test to ignore the sensation and enter the shrine. If the test fails, the character will turn away from the door. Ork characters may spend 1 Karma Point on this test, regardless of their Discipline. Every character may only make two attempts to open the doors and enter the Hold.

If Vanyk proves unable to enter the shrine, her failure crushes her. If she succeeds, the characters have quite a time getting her out of the Hold. Vanyk attempts to listen to stone after stone, trying to learn and remember everything

she can. If desired, use her as a catalyst for the awakening of the vengeful spirits (see **Spirits from the Past**, p. 291).

(B) and (C) Heroic Statues

These life-size statues of powerfully built male and female orks (B and C, respectively) stand in the antechamber in front of the Great Hall. The statues are clad in crystal armor and hold massive battle axes in a ready stance.

Each statue's forehead has a small niche in it, large enough for a soul-stone. Placing a stone in the niche awakens the spirit of the hero linked to the soul-stone and allows the characters to briefly communicate with the hero's spirit. Unfortunately, this act awakens the spirits in all the stones, which attack the characters in unison.

(D) The Great Hall

This long hall contains two rows of evenly spaced stone pedestals running down its length. The pedestals are roughly three feet high and firmly embedded in the ground, with carved wells spaced around their surfaces. The wells contain thumb-sized, glowing stones. These stone spheres light up the Hold well enough to see by, revealing that each pedestal also bears a pictogram. Several of the wells on each pedestal are empty, left unoccupied when Donack—the last survivor of the Nethermantic order that built the Hold—died just prior to the Scourge.

The pedestal nearest the northwestern corner is decorated with a crude picture of an ork surrounded by rays that extend away from his body in a circular pattern. This pedestal contains the oldest of the ork heroes, some of who lived more than two thousand years ago. The northeastern-most pedestal and the next two to the south of it are engraved with the same pictogram: an ork in chains. The stones on these pedestals are the heroes who liberated the orks from slavery. The soul-stone of Hrak Gron, founder of the Liberator Discipline (p. 187 of the **Name-giver's Compendium**), is among them.

The next pair of pedestals show orks shooting arrows at flying castles. These pedestals house the souls of the heroes who died fighting the Therans and their slave ships.

The southwestern-most pedestal shows an ork surrounded by nightmare shapes. The soul-stones on this pedestal are those of the orks who died fighting the Horrors at the beginning of the Scourge. There are few of them, as the bodies of orks who died battling Horrors were often unrecoverable. Without a body, the spell linking them to soul-stones could not be cast.

The southeastern-most pedestal, originally intended for the Seven Spokes, is empty. The pedestal features seven wells in a small oval, with lines connecting them to one another. An eighth well lies outside the oval but has no lines connecting it to the other seven. This well represents the eighth member, Horror-marked Kragen Overtall. The well also gives the characters a clue about the next Key Knowledge of the Blades.

At the far end of the Hold stands a slightly taller pedestal, with a stone pyramid on top of it. At the peak of the pyramid sits a single soul-stone—that of Donack, the last Nethermancer of the Order of Courage. The stone pyramid is covered with runic carvings of the order's sacred symbol.

Waking the Spirits

Once all the characters who can do so enter the Hold, Vanyk explains how the soul-stones work. The characters must now determine which stone to speak to first. Unfortunately, the mere act of placing a soul-stone in either of the statues awakens the spirits in all of the stones, which attack the characters. Go to **Spirits From the Past**, below.

Troubleshooting

The only potential problem in this encounter occurs if all of the characters fail the Strength Test required to enter the Hold. If the characters seem inclined to waste too much time searching for the right stones, Vanyk can give them a few helpful hints—or try a stone herself and precipitate the spirits' attack.

Spirits from the Past

In **Spirits From the Past**, the characters battle the awakened spirits trapped within the soul-stones. As they fight for their lives, the characters must also coerce the spirit of Donack, last Nethermancer of the Order of Courage, to reveal the Name of the Blades' original owners: the Seven Spokes.

Setting the Stage

The following passage assumes that one of the characters places the first soul-stone in the statue, thereby awakening the spirits. If this is not the case, adjust the text accordingly:

> *You pick up one of the glowing stones and carry it over to one of the statues near the Hold's entrance. As you place the stone in the statue's forehead, it begins to glow more brightly, as do the other soul-stones. Within seconds, the light pouring from them becomes as fierce as a coal's heart. You can't look at the stones without squinting.*
>
> *As the glow intensifies, wisps of astral energy begin to rise from the stones. The wisps swirl around wildly as if driven by a storm wind and gradually begin forming ork-like shapes. The spirit of the stone you placed in the statue glares at you and bellows, "Betrayers! Torturers! We will have blood for the centuries of anguish you inflicted on us! In reparation for our torment, you will join us in death!" As the angry spirit's words die away, all the astral orks move toward you, their dead eyes glowing red like flames.*

Themes and Images

Denial, frustration, and fear are the main themes of this encounter. The characters are very close to their goal, but a terrifying obstacle stands in their way. They will need all of their strength and courage to surmount it.

Behind the Scenes

By placing a soul-stone in one of the statues, the adventurers (or Vanyk) awaken all the spirits in the Hold. If Vanyk performs the deed, the specific stone she chooses is up to the gamemaster. Depending on how difficult the gamemaster wants to make this final encounter, Vanyk may choose either Donack's stone or another. Choosing Donack's stone makes the characters' lives easier, because they will not have to spend time interrogating spirit after spirit to find Donack's spirit.

The Spirits Attack

The effects of corruption during the Scourge and the influence of Betrayer (in the Blades of Cara Fahd) drives the spirits of the long-dead ork heroes into a rage. The Scourge turned these once-noble souls into malevolent beings, and Betrayer has convinced them that the characters have betrayed and dishonored the Hold of Courage. The characters cannot stop the spirits from attacking. Their only hope of learning what they need to know is to defeat all the spirits and then ask questions or to obtain the information while the battle rages—without dying in the process, of course.

The Hold contains 15 soul-stones. All of the soul-stones' associated spirits attack the characters except for the spirit(s) whose soul-stone(s) is in the statue. As there are 2 statues, 2 spirits can be interrogated in this way; such a trick might make the combat slightly easier for the characters, but let the interrogations be made that much harder as the spirits now interrupt and interact with each other as well. This spirit(s) cannot physically attack. However, it can resist or intimidate any character asking it questions.

Ork Spirits (15)

DEX: 5 **STR**: 8 **TOU**: 6
PER: 5 **WIL**: 3 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 6
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (4): 9
Damage:
Unarmed: 8

Physical Defense: 7 (12)*
Spell Defense: 9
Social Defense: 9
Physical Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 4

Death Rating: 36 (64)
Wound Threshold: 10
Unconsciousness Rating: 28 (52)

Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 8

* Physical Defense while physically manifested

Combat Movement: 22
Full Movement: 44

Karma Points: 8
Karma Step: 7

Powers:
Astral Sight [T] (4): 9
Frighten [T] (4): 7
Manifest (4): 4
Durability (7/6) (4): 4
Lifesight (4): 9

Legend Points: 215

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

These spirits are the Horror-corrupted manifestations of the spirits trapped in the soul-stones. They attack by passing their non-corporeal bodies through their targets' bodies, causing extreme physical pain and Step 13/D12+D10 damage. Mystic armor protects against this damage. A spirit can also intimidate a character by making a Frighten

Test against the character's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the character is paralyzed with fear. To overcome the effect, the character must make a successful Willpower (7) Test.

Fourteen of the fifteen spirits attack the player characters and Vanyk, usually in pairs. The spirits attack ork characters, including Vanyk, more aggressively than characters of other races because the spirits feel especially betrayed by their own people.

When any spirit takes damage equal to its Unconsciousness Rating, it retreats into its soul-stone. When any spirit takes damage equal to its Death Rating, it retreats into its soul-stone rather than be destroyed. Such spirits can no longer manifest or attack, but the player characters may place these spirits' soul-stones in one of the statues and force them to answer questions. If the soul-stone of an attacking spirit is placed in one of the statues, that spirit can only attempt to intimidate the characters—it can no longer physically attack them.

Talking With the Spirits

Though all the spirits have been awakened, the characters can attempt to speak only with the spirit of a stone placed in one of the statues. Be careful about the information the spirits provide. For example, the spirits should not be able to reveal the secrets of the **Earthdawn** universe (they don't know that much). If desired, use the spirits to drop hints about an upcoming adventure or two.

In addition to making the spirits malevolent, the corruption of the Hold of Courage has also made extracting information from them much more difficult. Under normal conditions, placing a stone in a statue's forehead causes the statue to announce the Name of the spirit speaking and its affiliation with any group. The spirit then remains connected to the statue for the next few minutes, allowing petitioners to ask up to three questions before fading away. The corruption of the soul-stones, however, means that the characters must coerce information from the spirits.

To do so, a character must achieve an Extraordinary result on an Interaction Test (p. 92 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**) against the spirit's Social Defense. If the Interaction Test equals or exceeds the spirit's Social Defense but is not an Extraordinary result, the character has gotten the spirit's attention; this makes it easier to force the spirit to answer questions on subsequent tries. Each level of success adds a +1 bonus for subsequent Interaction Tests. For example, a character who achieves a Good result on his first test gains a +2 bonus to all subsequent Interaction Tests made against the spirit. Once a character has achieved the necessary level of success, the spirit answers all three questions put to it. The character need not make a new test for each question. No spirit can speak through the statue more than once a week, and the soul-stone of a spirit that has spoken glows more dully than its counterparts until it is ready to speak again.

Finding the Right Stone

The characters may ask any questions they like of the spirits, but only Donack's spirit knows that the Seven Spokes wielded the Blades. Other spirits may be able to answer other questions, but none know this Key Knowledge.

The characters may use several methods to discover that the soul-stone atop the pyramid is the one they need. If they examine the Hold carefully before placing any of the soul-stones in the statue, they may recognize the runic carvings on the pyramid as ancient ork for "Order of Courage." Alternatively, Vanyk may suggest the right stone because of its unusual placement in the Hold. If the characters do not initially select Donack's stone, they may notice that the spirits are making a special point of targeting characters closest to the pyramid. This might tip off the characters that the stone atop the pyramid is somehow significant.

When the characters place Donack's stone in a statue, they hear his ghostly voice say:

> *"I am Donack, Nethermancer of the Order of Courage. What do you want of me?"*

At this point, the characters must coerce Donack into answering their questions. Once they have done so, they need only ask who wielded the Blades of Cara Fahd. Donack replies:

> *"The Blades were wielded by a group of two Names. They began as Cara Fahd's Protectors. After one of their number was lost to corruption, they re-Named themselves the Seven Spokes."*

Donack's answer gives the characters the Key Knowledge they seek and provides a clue to the next Key Knowledge of the Blades. If the characters ask Donack about other Key Knowledges, he does not know the answers. The Names of the traitor and the Horror that corrupted him are both beyond Donack's knowledge. Optionally, he may mention the monument he started for the Seven Spokes that remains unfinished, giving he players a help to complete the Deed that is required of them.

Just after the spirit reveals the Name of the Seven

Spokes to the characters, it realizes that they have brought the curse of the Blades of Cara Fahd into the Hold of Courage with them. Donack knows that the curse has irretrievably corrupted the Hold, and this knowledge enables him to momentarily overcome the rage brought on by Horror-taint. Donack warns the characters to flee, saying:

> *"Leave this place or you will die! The cursed Blades you carry have corrupted the Hold of Courage beyond even the ruin of the Scourge. Go now, and take the Blades with you!"*

As Donack ceases speaking, the other spirits break off their attack and begin to fly in circles around the Great Hall. The realization that the Hold has been corrupted drives the spirits to destroy it rather than let it stand as a monument to the Horrors' power. Faster and faster they fly, turning their strength against the Hold and causing the building to shake violently. Spirits defeated by the characters re-emerge from their soul-stones and join in the assault on the Hold. The characters should get out as soon as possible, before the Hold implodes.

Escaping requires a successful Dexterity (7) Test. Each character may make only one test to escape. On a Poor result, the character gets out but suffers Step 7/D12 damage from flying debris. On a Pathetic result, the character trips or falls and is still in the Hold when it implodes. Any character in the Hold when it implodes suffers Step 18/D20+D12 damage. No armor protects against this damage (from the debris or the imploding Hold).

Aftermath

After the spirits have destroyed the Hold, they are free from the soul-stones. If the characters search the ruins, they find the 15 stones. Each stone is worth 100 silver pieces and counts as treasure worth Legend Points.

The characters may also find the top of the pedestal intended for the Seven Spokes, which may become part of the monument they are to construct (see **Loose Ends**, below).

Troubleshooting

The biggest challenge the characters face in this encounter is staying alive long enough to find the right soul-stone and learn the Key Knowledge. If the characters have difficulty finding the right stone, their best strategy is to try to defeat the spirits. If they manage to force all fifteen back into their soul-stones, the characters can then check out each spirit in relative safety.

As described in **Finding the Right Stone**, p. 293, once the characters have asked Donack about the Blades, all the spirits re-emerge from their soul-stones and destroy the Hold. Also, if it is going badly for those characters that made it inside or those outside want in on the action, the gamemaster may allow characters left outside another two chances to prove their mettle and, hopefully, enter the fray.

If the gamemaster wants to emphasize Betrayer's influence, he can have the Horror use Vanyk as an unwitting tool against the characters. For example, she may become convinced that the characters intend to steal the glory of discovering the Hold of Courage. In this case, Betrayer manipulates Vanyk into attacking one of the characters at a critical point in the battle, shouting that she alone will claim the glory for finding the long-lost Hold of Courage.

Loose Ends

The information in this section wraps up the adventure's loose ends, suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Grave Wisdom** in future adventures, and provides statistics for major gamemaster characters.

After the Adventure

Grave Wisdom can end in three possible ways. First, the characters may learn the Name of the Seven Spokes and the Deed they must perform to weave the Rank Three threads to the Blades. Second, the characters may be unable to figure out how the soul-stones work and never learn the Key Knowledge. Finally, the spirits of the Hold may destroy the characters. Using Vanyk to drop a few hints may prevent the second possible ending. The characters' own abilities and the dice rolls are the sole means of preventing the last possibility.

Vanyk's reaction to the Hold's destruction can be handled in a number of ways. While she may be pleased, in a way, to see the corruption of the place put to rest, she is likely to be shocked to learn of the horrible curse her companions brought with them into such a holy place. She may become overly curious about them or leave and unwittingly stir up trouble for them by spreading word about the finding of the Blades. She also could be enraged at the characters, even blaming them, for the loss of the Hold. Betrayer could then play on these feelings to bring Vanyk to attack or otherwise mislead or sabotage the party before going her own way.

The Deed that the characters must perform is to construct a monument to the Seven Spokes at the site of the ork heroes' original home. When the characters leave the Hold, they discover that the Blades act as compasses, guiding them to the site of that home—a ruin some ten miles distant. Have the characters experience a minor encounter or two along the way, but nothing that poses too great a threat. The characters may design the monument themselves, but make sure it is worthy of the Legend Point Award that the characters receive for building it.

Awarding Legend Points

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, an adventure like **Grave Wisdom** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a Sixth Circle character receives from 900 to 2,700 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session.

In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal. The creatures presented

in this adventure have listings for Legend Points. These are the points characters earn for defeating the creatures.

The adventure goal for **Grave Wisdom** is to find the Hold of Courage, learn the Name of the Seven Spokes and construct the monument (performing this Deed earns the characters an additional 800 Legend Points).

Cast of Characters

Game statistics and a description of Vanyk Auldsinger, the sole major gamemaster character of the **Grave Wisdom** adventure, follow.

Vanyk Auldsinger

At just 19 years of age, the Third Circle Troubadour Named Vanyk Auldsinger is already one of Barsaive's foremost experts on ancient ork history. She has devoted the past five years of her life to mastering her Discipline's information-gathering talents, researching the history of her race in every major library in Barsaive and spreading stories about the exploits of great orks of the past. She is dedicated to this task, though her hurried manner and quick, breathless speech often obscure her seriousness. Vanyk always appears to be in a rush, though she rarely fails to plan her actions carefully. She wants nothing less than to restore the glory of Cara Fahd and gladly helps the adventurers because she believes that doing so will help her attain her prized goal.

Vanyk stands about 6 feet tall and weighs 160 pounds, making her unusually tall and slender for an ork. She is also physically weaker than most of her race because she has dedicated herself to learning rather than physical activity. This choice has earned her some less than kind comments from other orks, but every ork who hears her tales of Cara Fahd respects Vanyk for what she knows. Vanyk wears her long black hair in tight braids down her back. Intricate tattoos surround her brilliant green eyes and descend to her cheeks. Vanyk claims the tattoos are ancient symbols of Cara Fahd and wears them proudly. Comments disparaging Cara Fahd's historical mis-steps or besmirching the reputation of famed ork heroes provoke her *gahad*.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (9): 4/D6
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Perception (15): 6/D10
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Charisma (15): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 5
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 32 (50)
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 4/D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 24 (39)

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60

Karma Points: 15
Karma Die: 5/D8

Talents

Disguise Self [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Durability (6/5) (2): 2
Emotion Song [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
First Impression (3): 9/D8+D6
Karma Ritual (3): 3
Item History (4): 10/D10+D6
Melee Weapons (3): 9/D8+D6
Mimic Voice [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Read and Write Language [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
—Human, *Or'zat**, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*
Speak Language [D] (2): 8/2D6
—Human, *Sperethiel*

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.
* *Or'zat* is the ancient language of the orks, shorter and more guttural than the modern *Or'zet* (see p. 297 of the **Name-giver's Compendium**).

Skills

Artisan:
Storytelling (4): 10/D10+D6
Tattooing (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Cara Fahd History (7): 13/D12+D10
Legends and Heroes (3): 9/D8+D6
Ork Racial Lore (7): 13/D12+D10

General:
Climbing (2): 8/2D6
Navigation (2): 8/2D6
Read and Write Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Troll
Research (2): 8/2D6
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Equipment

Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

Dagger (Damage 6/D10; Range 9–15–18)
Short Sword (Damage 8/2D6; w/scabbard)

Adventurer's Kit
Climbing Kit
Map to Hold of Courage (in map/scroll case)
Navigation Charts (in map/scroll case)
Tattooing Tools
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
2 × Waterskins
Writing Kit

Loot

30 silver pieces

Legend Points

135 Legend Points

Notes

Vanyk possesses the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

A Traitor's Fate

Keep your friends close and your enemies closer. But not too *close…*

• King Varulus III •

The vine has grown since yesterday, thought the creature. *All the vines have grown.* Moving restlessly back and forth, back and forth, the creature glanced over every crack and crevice in its tomb. How many years had it been locked within, sinking slowly into the dank swamp that sucked eagerly at its moldering crypt? The creature had lost count, but did not care. All it cared about was vengeance.

Greenish-black fire caressed the dark thing's hand as it lightly stroked the skeleton that lay in the open stone coffin. The bones had darkened with age, just as the creature's hatred had. Some day, some day it would be free to take its revenge, and then the grotesque tortures it had imagined—nurtured as carefully as a bed of prized flowers—would become real. Someone would suffer. Several someones…

A small scratching noise drew the thing's attention away from the contemplation of its bones. A young swamp rat scuttled briskly through the mud that had seeped onto the floor of the crypt. Crouching down, the creature moved slowly toward the rat, tossing a choice piece of ancient sinew a few feet ahead of it.

Casting a furtive glance between the tidbit and the strange, dark creature crouching above, the swamp rat made a quick decision. Scuttling forward, it snatched up the bit of food and turned to run. As the rat fled, the creature reached forward and brushed the rodent's tail lightly with a craggy finger. Sickly greenish-black sparks flared along the swamp rat's tail. Within the few seconds it took the rat to cross the small tomb, the dark fire climbed across the animal's back. With a puzzled squeak, the rat collapsed, writhing and shaking in agony. Then it gave a final shudder and lay still as the eerie fire's flames flickered and faded into nothing.

The creature returned to contemplating its bones, dreaming of its revenge.

Plot Synopsis

When the adventurers once again turn their attention to the Blades of Cara Fahd, they learn that one of the Blades' original wielders had been Horror-marked, and that this individual later betrayed his fellows at a critical juncture. The adventurers also learn that they must discover the traitor's Name before they can weave Rank Five threads to the daggers.

The characters talk to a questor of Mynbruje, Jahnee Firebalm, to learn how they might discover the traitor's Name. Jahnee tells the adventurers that they must enter the southernmost portion of the Liaj Jungle, where they will find the traitor's burial place.

Jahnee also informs the characters that the daggers are still somehow connected to the dead traitor. He says this bond will enable the characters to use the daggers as lodestones to find their way to the traitor's tomb. Jahnee then places a waxen Seal of Truth on one of the daggers and demonstrates how it works.

Using the seal, the adventurers travel to the Liaj Jungle without mishap. Soon after entering the jungle, the adventurers stumble on a group of hungry lightning lizards and must fight for their lives. During the battle, several characters feel as if they are being watched, yet even the most thorough search reveals no one nearby.

As the adventurers press onward, following the telltale glow of the seal, all characters except the one actually holding the sealed dagger begin to drift eastward. They discover their directional difficulties relatively quickly, because the seal glows only when pointing north. Unknown to the characters, a small tribe of Tamers—Name-givers who have abandoned civilization for life in the jungle—are using their magic to lead the adventurers out of their jungle home.

However, the Tamers grow frustrated by their inability to confuse the characters, and they attack the party at dusk. Using blow darts and hand claws dipped in a powerful sleeping poison, the Tamers manage to subdue the adventurers. Dark-Light, the tribe's leader, informs the characters that they will be sacrificed at dawn for daring to enter the Tamers' territory. No amount of persuasion or threats will change Dark-Light's mind. The adventurers have only that night to live; in the morning they will meet their fates.

When the first rays of sunlight penetrate the canopy of leaves above, the adventurers can see around them a scene of horrible carnage. Someone or something apparently murdered every one of the Tamers during the darkest hours of the night. Once the adventurers free themselves and examine the area, they find Dark-Light propped against the trunk of a huge tree with her wrists sliced open. The characters realize that Dark-Light murdered her own people in an inexplicable fit of madness.

After leaving the scene, the adventurers travel to the makeshift tomb that houses the body of the long-dead traitor. When the adventurers enter the ancient crypt to search for signs of the traitor's Name, they learn that this ork does not rest in peace. The traitor's dark fetch (see **Cast of Characters**, p. 307) hovers over its skeleton, pleading with the adventurers to burn its bones and release it from

its endless torment. Unknown to the characters, burning the bones will actually release the fetch from its imprisonment inside the crypt. If they do not release the fetch, they must defeat it in combat before they can search the crypt. Of course, if they free the fetch, the adventurers may well have to contend with it on more than one occasion.

When the characters search the crypt, they find a large silver medallion inscribed with the words, "Kragen Overtall, Traitor." With this information, the adventurers can weave Rank Five threads to the Blades of Cara Fahd.

Lighting the Way

Use this third prelude when the characters are ready to seek out the Rank Five Key Knowledge. In this prelude the adventurers go to Jahnee Firebalm, an elven questor of Mynbruje, to learn how they might discover the Name of the Horror-marked adept who betrayed his fellows.

If desired, run a brief encounter in which the characters learn the questor's Name and where to find him from local townsfolk.

Setting the Stage

The following text assumes the characters have already found the questor. Read the following text aloud:

Horror-marked, a traitor to his fellows and his race! The knowledge that one of the eight legendary ork heroes who once wielded the Blades of Cara Fahd betrayed his friends and family still gives you nightmares. More than once you have glanced surreptitiously over the rim of your frothing mug at your laughing, chattering compatriots, trying to imagine the cold glint of betrayal in their eyes. Surely none of them would ever—none of them could possibly—such a thing could never happen! Try as you might, however, you cannot banish the unsettling thought from your mind.

There is only one way to settle your nagging suspicions. You must learn the Name of the long-ago traitor so that you can weave more threads to your daggers and move one step closer to banishing their curse. Luckily, you have found a highly reputable questor of Mynbruje who should be able to guide you on this part of your quest, for the Passion Mynbruje guides all sincere seekers of hidden truths and metes out justice to traitors and criminals.

The questor, Jahnee Firebalm, lives on the edge of town in a small, weathered wooden cottage. It nests comfortably in a copse of trees, its large windows thrown wide to welcome the morning sun. Before the sun reaches its zenith, you may well know how to find the traitor's Name and where your quest will next lead you.

Themes and Images

Jahnee's residence is clean and austere, with none of the clutter that fills most homes. Though most visitors feel safe within Jahnee's walls, the openness of the dwelling faintly disturbs some; the hut contains nowhere to hide, no trinkets or paintings to distract attention from one's true motives. Clarity reigns inside Jahnee's abode and the unvarnished truth is rarely comforting. Use Jahnee's home and this entire prelude to remind the adventurers that the search for truth is seldom painless.

Behind the Scenes

A few seconds after the characters knock on Jahnee's door or call out to indicate their presence, Jahnee Firebalm ushers the adventurers into his home. The questor is a tall, ascetic elf with high cheekbones and colorless eyes. His hair is pale red, the color of false dawn. He wears a plain brown robe tied at the waist with a thin rope, and his bare feet are tan and callused.

Jahnee's house is furnished with a low wooden table and a few reed mats for kneeling or sitting. A larger reed mat, which Jahnee sleeps on at night, lies rolled up against one wall. A fireplace with a plain mantel takes up part of another wall. Two large earthenware bowls rest on the hearth, one filled with sand, the other with water. A curtained doorway leads to the questor's simple kitchen.

Once introductions have been made and the adventurers are sitting down, Jahnee asks them to explain why they have sought him out. As the adventurers tell their tale, Jahnee listens carefully, using his Perceive Emotion questor power (p. 477 of the **Player's Compendium**) to help determine the truth of all statements the adventurers make. Jahnee raises one eyebrow and cocks his head inquiringly at any untruth he detects. He does not interrupt the characters' tale until they are finished, at which point he asks any questions he feels are necessary to determine their true intentions and how justice can best be served. As long as the characters make their request honestly and respectfully, Jahnee sees no reason to deny them his help. He offers to enter a trance to see if he can divine where the adventurers may find the truth, and he asks for the one of the Blades to help him focus.

When Jahnee prepares to enter his trance, read the following aloud:

The lanky elf rises smoothly to his feet and moves slowly over to the hearth, where he picks up the two large bowls lying by the fire. He sets the earthenware dishes on the low table, then sinks to his knees in front of them. Then he takes up the borrowed dagger and plunges its tip into the bowl of sand. He scoops some water out of the first bowl and pours it from his cupped hands over the bowl of sand. He repeats this action three times, until the sand is smooth and wet.

Sighing softly, Jahnee draws a long spiral pattern in the wet sand with one graceful finger. As his hand moves around and around, you can sense the questor slow his breathing. The elf seems to have

turned into a statue, save for the continual movement of his finger through the damp sand.

After what seems like an eternity, you realize that Jahnee has begun to whisper, his voice gradually rising in volume. A few more minutes trickle by and you begin to make out his words; he is praying to Mynbruje for guidance and justice. Another handful of minutes crawl by like hours—then Jahnee begins to speak of your quest.

"Blight draws the eye in ways beauty rarely can. The one you seek lies imprisoned within the dark confines of his final home, his Name carved deeply into it so that none shall forget his shame. You must enter the place of imprisonment from the south, the south. The Liaj is his jail, his jail is the Liaj Jungle. There will you find the spark of truth you seek. There you may light a candle, the better to see the ocean of darkness around you."

Once Jahnee finishes his speech, he draws another handful of water from the bowl and splashes it onto the spiral in the sand. As the pattern washes away, Jahnee returns to normal consciousness and returns the borrowed dagger. The characters can ask Jahnee any questions they like—however, all the questor knows is that the adventurers must journey to the southernmost part of the Liaj Jungle to find the traitor's final resting place.

If the characters ask how they may determine the exact location of the traitor's tomb, read the following aloud:

"Your daggers may lead you there, for I can still feel the traitor's touch ever so faintly upon them. His long association with these weapons left a mark that has not faded, despite all that has happened since his fall.

"By placing a Seal of Truth on one of your daggers, Mynbruje may enable me to make it work as a lodestone, to keep your feet on the path that leads to the truth you seek."

If the adventurers hand one of the daggers back to Jahnee, he brings a large bowl of white wax and a small wooden box from the kitchen over to the fireside. Allowing the wax to warm by the fire, Jahnee meditates over the dagger. Once the wax has warmed sufficiently, the questor expertly scoops out a small circle of it and presses it against the dagger's hilt. He then opens the small box and removes a golden seal bearing one of the symbols of Mynbruje: stars over an executioner's axe. After pressing the seal against the warm wax, Jahnee dips the hilt into the water bowl and seals the ritual. When he is finished, Jahnee returns the dagger to the appropriate character.

Jahnee then demonstrates how the stars on the seal glow softly when the dagger points in the direction of the traitor's tomb. He then warns the characters not to use the dagger in combat or to speak a falsehood while holding it until they have found what they are seeking. If they do either of these things, the seal will break and Mynbruje can no longer aid them.

If the adventurers ask how they can repay Jahnee for his help, read the following aloud:

"I ask only that you aid the next questor of Mynbruje you come across in whatever he asks of you, no matter how small or large the task. Mynbruje always acts with justice, and your service will no doubt equal the worth of my service to you this day."

Once Jahnee has placed the Seal of Truth on one of the Blades, the characters can begin to search for the Rank Five Key Knowledge. Go to **Into the Woods**, p. 299.

Jahnee Firebalm

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Strength (9): 4/D6
Toughness (8): 4/D6
Perception (14): 6/D10
Willpower (15): 6/D10
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 28
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 7
Knockdown: 4/D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 19

Combat Movement: 24
Full Movement: 48

Talents

Questor of Mynbruje (5): 5
—Ease Suffering, Increase Perception, Perceive Emotion (5): 11/D10+D8

Skills

Artisan:
Sculpting (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Barsaivian Law (5): 11/D10+D8

General:
Etiquette (3): 9/D8+D6
Evidence Analysis (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Knife (Damage 5/D8; Range 6–10–12)
Peasant's Garb
Sculpting Tools
Symbol to Mynbruje

Loot

None

Legend Points

65 Legend Points

Notes

Jahnee possesses the elf racial abilities of Low-Light Vision.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Trouble may occur in this prelude if the adventurers behave rudely or lie to Jahnee or refuse to let him place the Seal of Truth on one of the daggers. Jahnee is a patient elf, however, and he gives the characters several opportunities to make amends by telling the truth or apologizing. If the characters refuse the seal, they eventually realize that they cannot possibly find the traitor's tomb in the tangled depths of the Liaj Jungle without its aid.

Jahnee will still create the seal, but he requests that the adventurers do him a favor in return (aiding someone unjustly accused or wronged or helping to restore one of Mynbruje's ancient shrines). If the seal is broken before arriving at their destination, let the characters sweat a little and come up with a creative solution on their own, such as using the Direction Arrow (p. 178 of the **Player's Compendium**) or Direction Sense (p. 263 of the **Name-giver's Compendium**) talents repeatedly with the daggers as a connection, or holding one of the daggers on a string as a compass; anything that seems plausible can be allowed to work, but any of these substitutes should involve numerous twists, turns, red herrings, and opportunities for further encounters with the jungle's animal inhabitants as it is not nearly as accurate or reliable as the questor's seal.

If the adventurers already know a questor of Mynbruje, the gamemaster may use that character instead of Jahnee. However, the general feel of the encounter and the information received should remain the same.

INTO THE WOODS

This adventure begins as the characters enter the southern tip of the Liaj Jungle in search of the traitor's tomb. How long it has taken the adventurers to reach the jungle depends on how far the group has had to travel, as well as what encounters (if any) the gamemaster chooses to place between the adventuring party and their destination.

Within hours of crossing over the jungle's dark borders, the characters are attacked by a hungry pride of lightning lizards. During the battle, some of the adventurers feel as if they are being watched, but they find no evidence of watchers if they search the nearby area.

SETTING THE STAGE

The following text assumes the characters have come to the Liaj Jungle after meeting with Jahnee as described in **Lighting the Way** (p. 297). If the characters learned

that the Liaj is their destination in some other way, adjust the text accordingly:

You have taken only a few steps beneath the twisting canopy of vines and leaves, yet already you have left the Barsaive you know. Light filters down to your level, green and weak, as if you were seeing it underwater. Even the air feels different here—moist and heavy, blanketing your lungs with every breath. Fragments of an old wives' tale come to mind, something about keeping three stones wrapped in silk close to your skin to draw the jungle diseases away from you. "Into the cold stone they'll go..." someone told you that once, too many years ago to count. You laughed at it back then, but the tale seems less ridiculous in the quiet depths of the Liaj Jungle.

You walk slowly through the trees for several hours, following the dull glow of Jahnee's Seal of Truth. Your arms ache from clearing vines, and your lungs and heads hurt from breathing the heavy air. Blinking, you stumble into a small clearing made by two gigantic trees that lie fallen and rotting in front of you. Your momentary relief at the absence of dangling vines gives way to a sharp dart of fear as you see more than half a dozen giant lizards, each easily seven feet long from tip to tail, crouched all around the clearing. The great beasts stare unblinkingly at you and your friends, their eyes glittering coldly. Suddenly the closest lizard, its muscles rippling under its yellowish-green scales, leaps forward and attacks!

Themes and Images

Emphasize the disturbing combination of growth and decay throughout the Liaj Jungle. Everywhere the adventurers look in this dark wilderness, plant life grows far more abundantly than in most other places on Barsaive. Despite its riotous growth, the Liaj Jungle is a gloomy place, with giant fungi and the moldering, plant-covered corpses of animals looming out of the earth as if they might attack unwary travelers.

Behind the Scenes

The adventurers have run into eight very hungry lightning lizards. The starving creatures immediately attack the characters, using their electrical Twinbolts attack and Crackling Armor defense. If the characters kill more than half the lizards, the remaining lizards attempt to drag away one or more of their fellows' corpses to satisfy their raging appetites.

While the adventurers are fighting the lizards, make a Perception (12) Test for each of the characters. Any character whose test succeeds gets the feeling that someone is watching the battle. Any character achieving a Good or better result catches a brief glimpse of a humanoid face peering intently through nearby vines. The adventurers are being observed by the Tamers, a small tribe of Name-givers who live in this part of the Liaj.

Once the adventurers drive off or kill the lightning lizards, they may search the surrounding area. Finding evidence of the Tamers' trail requires an Excellent or better result on a Tracking (9) Test. Any character who succeeds at this test discovers that the faint traces of the Tamers' path lead in the same general direction as the party is already heading. The characters meet the Tamers in the following encounter, **Tamer Touch**, p. 301.

Lightning Lizards (8)

DEX: 6 **STR**: 5 **TOU**: 5
PER: 9 **WIL**: 12 **CHA**: 5

Initiative: 7
Number of Actions: 2
Attack (3): 9
Damage:
Claws (3): 8

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 11
Social Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 3
(6 w/Crackling Armor)
Mystic Armor: 8

Death Rating: 34
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 6

Combat Movement: 36 **Full Movement**: 72

Powers: Climbing^{S} (3): 9, Crackling Armor (3): 15, Lightning (Twinbolts) (2): 14, Spellcasting (3): 12

Legend Points: 190

Equipment: None

Loot: Eyes worth 150 silver pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

These reptiles are 4 feet long, with 3-foot-long tails, and weigh roughly 200 pounds. Lightning lizards utilize electricity, directing it through their skins for defense and through their eyes when attacking.

See the **Creatures** chapter on p. 320 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on lightning lizards.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If necessary, adjust the number of lightning lizards so that they do not prove too easy or too difficult to defeat. If the lightning lizards seem to be beating the heroes, have the lizards fall greedily on the body of a fallen comrade, thereby giving the adventurers time to retreat from the clearing and work their way slowly around the lizards. Once they have done so, they may proceed toward their destination.

TAMER TOUCH

In this encounter a tribe of Tamers attempts to lead the adventurers out of the jungle by magical means. The Seal of Truth's unwavering guidance foils these efforts, however, and so the frustrated Tamers ambush the adventurers. The tribesmen intend to capture the party and slay them ritually at sunrise for daring to enter the tribe's territory.

SETTING THE STAGE

Read the following aloud when the characters travel through the jungle:

> *The Liaj Jungle has displayed its treachery, and you can feel your nervousness rising as you forge ever deeper into the dense foliage. Concentrating on every step, you thread your way over countless vines and fallen branches, starting occasionally whenever something you thought was a vine slithers up a nearby tree trunk. Sweat drenches your skin, and tiny insects feast on your flesh. You plod onward, every step a greater effort than the last, when suddenly you notice that you are straying from your path.*

THEMES AND IMAGES

The Liaj Jungle is a place of sudden dangers and swift judgment. Describe the jungle's forbidding details: the huge spider webs glittering with dew, the dark shapes of captured insects and small birds hanging limply amid the threads. Trusting one's senses is not always wise in the Liaj, for its tangles and mists and shadows all too often lead them astray.

BEHIND THE SCENES

A small tribe of Tamers has been tracking the adventurers since they first set foot in the Liaj. The Tamers wear few clothes, use few tools, and rarely trade goods or services. Instead, they choose to live free like the animals of the jungle. A dark-haired human Beastmaster Named Dark-Light leads this tribe of humans and orks. Dark-Light ably handles most Name-giver intrusions into the Tamers' territory by using her skills to lead unwary strangers in circles until they emerge at the point where they entered the jungle.

Once the characters notice that they have begun to stray from their path, they can get back on track easily by watching the Seal of Truth on the Blade that they carry. The seal glows only when pointing north, and this directional beacon keeps the adventurers from falling prey to Dark-Light's tricks. As Dark-Light realizes that this group of Name-givers will not fall for gentle persuasions, she grows frustrated and angry. Finally, after spending an hour or so attempting to confuse the adventurers' sense of direction, Dark-Light decides that these Name-givers are a special affront to the jungle. To atone for the insult of their resistance to her magic, they must be sacrificed to the spirits of the Liaj.

Dark-Light orders the Tamers to encircle the characters and attack on her signal. The Tamers attack with reed blowguns that fire thorn needles and with sharp claws strapped to their hands. Both types of weapons are dipped in a potent sleeping poison. The Tamers intend to subdue the characters rather than kill them outright and immediately cease attacking a fallen foe. They expertly hog-tie sleeping adventurers with ropes of woven vines.

Any adventurer who takes a Wound from a weapon coated with the Tamers' sleeping poison makes a Toughness (9) Test. On an Excellent or Extraordinary result, the poison does not affect him. A Good result leaves the character groggy but still conscious; the character receives a -2 penalty to all Action Tests. An Average result means that the character falls unconscious within 4 combat rounds, at the gamemaster's discretion. On a Poor or Pathetic result, the character immediately falls unconscious.

Because the Tamers move so swiftly and silently through their jungle home, characters must achieve Good or better results on Perception (9) Tests to notice them. Otherwise, the characters are surprised by the Tamers' attack and may not attack in the combat round of the Tamers' initial strike. Surprised characters suffer standard penalties, and any Tamer who surprises his opponent receives a +2 bonus to his Attack Test. The Tamers also possess the Surprise Strike skill, which they use in their initial assault. Throughout the fight, Dark-Light exhorts her followers to bring down the trespassing "adorners."

If the Tamers subdue all of the adventurers, they take their captives back to the Tamers' current camp. If the Tamers appear to be losing the fight, they retreat into the jungle and disappear. If the Tamers lose three or fewer tribesmen in the initial encounter, they attack the adventurers off and on throughout the day, attempting to use surprise and their familiarity with the terrain to catch the harried characters off balance.

Dark-Light

Born and raised in the city of Jerris on the edge of the Wastes, Dark-Light was a pale, withdrawn and gloomy child. During her fourteenth year, Dark-Light met Arraphine, the elven Beastmaster. When Arraphine spotted Dark-Light

following her for hours through the gray streets of Jerris, mouth gaping at the three beautiful parrots perched on the elf's thin shoulders, she sent one of her birds flying to the child. Arraphine knew she had found an apprentice when Dark-Light instinctively raised her arm, offering it to the parrot as a perch. Once Dark-Light formally began her apprenticeship, she and Arraphine left the dusty city behind. After only a few days away from the squalid, dead atmosphere of Jerris, Dark-Light began to change radically. The young girl bloomed like a wilted plant finally given enough light and water. Arraphine Named her apprentice Dark-Light then, for this sudden change in personality.

After spending several years traveling with Arraphine, Dark-Light finished her apprenticeship. She soon decided to journey to the Liaj Jungle, despite its fearsome reputation, in the hope of communing with the parrots native to it. Almost immediately Dark-Light met a tribe of Tamers, who magically led her out of the jungle more than once before she realized what was happening. Fascinated by their wildness and freedom, the young Beastmaster chose to join them and leave the trappings of civilization behind. Dark-Light is a pale-skinned human of medium build with black hair and eyes. She seldom appears without at least one bird perched on her shoulder or hovering near her head. Dark-Light has led her tribe of Tamers for more than five years and is a Fourth Circle Beastmaster. She is an intense woman who has rejected Name-giver society to an even greater extent than most Tamers.

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (14): 6/D10
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Perception (12): 5/D8
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (17): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 9
Physical Armor: 2
Social Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 5

Death Rating: 39 (67)
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 31 (55)

Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Karma Points: 20
Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Animal Bond [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
Cat's Paw [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Claw Shape [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Durability (7/6) (4): 4
Karma Ritual (4): 4
Lizard Leap [D] (4): 10/D10+D6
Thread Weaving (Beast Weaving) [D] (5): 10/D10+D6
Tracking [D] (5): 10/D10+D6
Unarmed Combat (4): 10/D10+D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Wood Carving (2): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Creature Lore (3): 8/2D6
Wild Animals (7): 12/2D10

General:
Hunting (4): 10/D10+D6
Missile Weapons (4): 10/D10+D6
Speak Language (3): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Sperethiel*
Surprise Strike (4): 10/D10+D6
Wilderness Survival (4): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Fernweave (Phys 2; Myst 3)

2 × Tamer Claws (Size 1; Damage 8/2D6)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Reed Blowgun (Damage 7/D12; Range 4–8–16)
Box (w/6 thorn needles)

Thread Bracers (Rank 4; +2 PhysDef; +2 Spell Def)
Parrot (Animal Companion)

Carving Tools
Leaf Pouch
12 × Sleeping Poison Paste doses
Trail Rations (2 weeks)
Traveler's Garb
3 × Waterskins

Loot

None

Legend Award

305 Legend Points

Notes

Dark-Light possesses the human racial ability of Versatility.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

TAMERS (12)

Use these statistics for the ork and human tamers led by Dark-Light.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Toughness (14): 6/D10
Willpower (11): 5/D8
Strength (12): 5/D8
Perception (12): 5/D8
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 6
Initiative: 6/D10
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 36
Wound Threshold: 10
Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 28

Combat Movement: 28 [H] or 30 [O]
Full Movement: 56 [H] or 60 [O]

[H, O] Denotes human or ork Movement rates, respectively.

Skills

Artisan:
Wood Carving (2): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Botany (2): 7/D12
Creature Lore (2): 7/D12

General:
Climbing (3): 9/D8+D6
Hunting (3): 9/D8+D6
Missile Weapons (3): 9/D8+D6
Silent Walk (3): 9/D8+D6
Surprise Strike (3): 8/2D6
Tracking (3): 8/2D6
Unarmed Combat (3): 9/D8+D6
Wilderness Survival (3): 8/2D6

Equipment

2 × Tamer Claws (Size 1; Damage 8/2D6)
Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
Blowgun (Damage 6/D10; Range 4–8–16)
Box (w/6 thorn needles covered in sleeping poison paste)

Carving Tools
Leaf Pouch
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Waterskin

Loot

None

Legend Award

95 Legend Points

Notes

Ork tamers possess the ork racial abilities of Low-Light Vision and *Gahad*.

TAMER CLAWS

Damage Step: 2
Strength Minimum: 9
Size: 2
Cost: 5
Weight: 1
Availability: Very Rare

These sharp "claws" are made from sharpened bone fragments or actual animal claws woven together with thin rope or vines into long, open-fingered gloves. The glove is heavily padded on the forearm where the blunt end of the claws rest, to protect the wearer's arm from pressure damage when attacking with the weapon.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The adventurers are unlikely to defeat the Tamers in this encounter, especially because the Tamers are in their own territory and are using a potent poison. If the characters defeat or drive off the Tamers, skip most of **A Rude Awakening**, which describes the captured characters' plight, and have the adventurers stumble onto the horrifying scene described in **Deadly Dawn** (p. 304) after spending their first night nervously camped in the Liaj. Then go to **Dark Fetch**, p. 305.

A RUDE AWAKENING

In this encounter, the captured adventurers learn that the Tamers plan to sacrifice them at dawn to the spirits of the Liaj Jungle. At the end of a long and miserable night, the characters wake to absolute silence and a scene of horrific carnage. After freeing themselves and investigating the area, the adventurers discover that during the night the Tamers' leader apparently went mad and slaughtered her entire tribe. Once the characters recover from the shock of this scene, they continue on their quest.

SETTING THE STAGE

If the characters were captured by the Tamers in the past encounter, read the following aloud:

After spending what seems like hours trying to figure out why your tongues feel three sizes too large for your mouths, you slowly become aware of a dozen or so mud-covered humans and orks standing over you. Their stares make your head ache. You wish they would leave you alone and let you sleep; but something deep inside warns you that sleep is not a good idea right now.

Flexing your limbs, you discover that someone has tied your hands and feet expertly behind your backs. You can just feel your fingers and toes if you

concentrate very hard, but struggling only tightens your bonds.

With fluid grace, a female human steps toward you. Her long dark hair, tied back in a muddy braid, swings as she moves. Her face fills your vision, the day's last light dancing in her dark eyes as she begins to speak.

"We warned you, but you would not leave. The Liaj is not like your world. You cannot wander through it at your will, building cottages and forcing the land to give you food, as Name-givers do outside these lands. You have trespassed, and trespassers must pay for their crime.

"As leader of the Footfalls, I claim the right of judgment over all who trespass in the southern Liaj. My judgment on you is this; you shall perish at dawn, split open by my claws. Your blood shall water the earth and do honor to the spirits of the Liaj. So speaks Dark-Light of the Footfalls. As I have spoken, let it be done!"

Themes and Images

The sun's last rays cut briefly through the dense leaves and branches while this encounter takes place. Emphasize the fading light, which mirrors the adventurers' fading hopes of survival.

Behind the Scenes

Dark-Light and the rest of the Tamers believe they are completely within their rights to sacrifice the characters at dawn. Though Dark-Light feels no particular animosity toward the heroes, she believes that they have offended the jungle spirits and chosen their own fate by entering the Liaj and then doggedly sticking to their path despite the Tamers' misdirections. The characters may try to persuade Dark-Light to change her mind, but she does not budge. Even if she develops a liking for the characters, she still carries out her judgment. Dark-Light has promised the interlopers' blood to the spirits of the Liaj, and she will not disappoint them.

The Tamers disperse into the trees when the sun sets, settling in for the night. Two guards remain to watch the characters, but the jungle's impenetrable gloom makes it impossible to see the sleeping Tamers. The adventurers may attempt to free themselves, but they are still extremely groggy from the sleeping poison and will not accomplish much. If the characters talk or struggle too much, one of the guards hits them with more poisoned darts from his blowgun. The characters find it virtually impossible to keep their eyes open for long despite their best efforts to stay awake; the sleeping poison is simply too strong to resist.

Death in the Night

In the middle of the night Dark-Light is overcome by an irrational urge to slaughter her fellow Tamers. Though she does not realize it, this dreadful compulsion comes from Betrayer, the Horror within the Blades of Cara Fahd. Moving swiftly and silently, Dark-Light takes up a dagger from the pile of the adventurers' belongings (though not necessarily one of the Blades of Cara Fahd) and slits the throats of her fellows too quickly for any of them to cry out. She kills the two guards first, then murders the remaining Tamers. As the last one dies, Dark-Light comes to her senses, realizes what she has done and turns the knife on herself in horror.

The adventurers have no inkling that anything is amiss. If a character manages to remain awake, he sees Dark-Light beckon to the first guard, who disappears into the darkness with her. A minute or two later, the character sees Dark-Light whisper in the second guard's ear. As the two Tamers move a few steps away from the small clearing, the character can barely see the guard slump silently to the ground.

Deadly Dawn

As dawn begins to lighten the jungle's dark heart, the characters awaken to utter silence. Even the insects and birds have ceased their continual noise, and the unnatural quiet lies like a blanket across the clearing. Though the characters do not yet realize it, they are the only living Name-givers within miles.

Eventually, the characters should attempt to free themselves. They are still slightly groggy from the sleeping poison, but it is no longer strong enough to affect their actions. With no one around to keep the characters from talking or taking action, they should be able to come up with a plan to free themselves in relatively short order. Once they have done so, they may reclaim their discarded property and explore the area.

As soon as the adventurers move a few yards into the jungle in any direction, they discover the butchered bodies of the slain Tamers, which lie scattered in a loose circle around the clearing.

When the characters discover the first body, read the following aloud:

Though the sun has risen past the horizon, deep shadows still lie across most of the jungle. Picking your way carefully across the gnarled roots of a giant tree in the green dimness, you notice what looks like a long, dark sap stain running down the trunk and into the earth. You give the stain a closer look: it is dark red, with a faintly sweet odor.

As your eyes follow the sap trail upward, your blood freezes. A young male Tamer lies draped across a wide branch some seven feet above the ground, staring sightlessly down at you. One arm hangs limp, stretched toward you as if beseeching you for aid. His skin is unnaturally pale, and a gaping neck wound grins in mute testimony to the cause of the young Tamer's death.

If the adventurers examine the young Tamer's body, they can tell that the boy's throat was slit from behind with a dagger or knife blade. If the characters examine the rest of the surrounding area, they find the rest of the tribe lying dead in and around the trees. All died from deep throat wounds, and their faces are frozen in expressions of bewildered terror.

Finally, the characters discover the lifeless body of Dark-

Light. Unlike the rest of the corpses, Dark-Light's body sits upright against the bole of a lightning-struck tree. Her neck is untouched, but the blade of a dagger has laid her wrists open to the bone. The still-damp ground is stained with her blood. Next to her lies one of the characters' daggers, the weapon she used to commit her hideous crimes.

It should be obvious to the characters that Dark-Light murdered her tribe and then turned the dagger on herself. However, they should have no idea why she would betray her people in this way. In the short time the characters observed her, nothing about Dark-Light hinted at this sort of dementia. Only later in the adventure, after the player characters have learned more about the Blades of Cara Fahd and the Horror that lies within them, should they guess the true cause of Dark-Light's madness.

The characters can do nothing for the dead Tamers. Whenever they are ready, the adventurers may resume their interrupted journey toward the traitor's tomb.

Troubleshooting

Once captured and subdued by the Tamers, the characters can do little to free themselves. The Tamers immediately administer more sleeping poison to characters who seem in any shape to attempt escape. Intelligent characters may feign more grogginess than they feel and attempt to escape during the night. If any succeed, keep the adventure on track by having the adventurers escape just after Dark-Light slays her tribe. If the adventurers attempt to sneak away from the clearing before dawn breaks, they should stumble over one of the fresh corpses.

If desired, Dark-Light may bolt away in shock at what she has done instead of killing herself. Though Horror-marked, Dark-Light is otherwise in control of herself. At some later point in the adventure, have the player characters run into Dark-Light again. By then they should realize what prompted her horrible act, and they should feel obliged to help the haunted Beastmaster who now shuns the jungle and all its creatures.

Dark Fetch

After working their way slowly through the Liaj Jungle for another tiring day, the adventurers finally reach the traitor's tomb approximately an hour before sunset.

Entering the tomb proves relatively easy, but once inside the adventurers must confront the traitor—who has become a dark fetch—before they can search the tomb and discover the traitor's Name.

Setting the Stage

When the characters reach the tomb, read the following aloud:

For the past few hours the Seal of Truth has grown steadily brighter until it shines like a star in the jungle's shadowy depths. It leads you onward, ever closer to your destination. Ducking under the twisting, arched roots of several giant trees, you emerge into another clearing about twenty yards across. Nearly half of it is a moss-covered swamp smelling faintly of tar. On the far side of the clearing lies a small building, half-sunk in the mire. Ropy vines and dark moss lie across its darkly

mottled stone slabs like giant spider webs. Judging by its size and shape, the building appears to be a crypt. You point the dagger at the tomb, and the seal glows as bright as a small sun.

Themes and Images

Loneliness and loss permeate this encounter. Although the fetch is dangerous and evil, it is nevertheless a pitiful creature. Trapped for centuries in utter isolation, continually reminded of its betrayal, the fetch and its tomb have rotted as the jungle grew up around them.

Try to instill a sense of pity for the fetch's plight in the characters, even though the fetch may horrify them.

Behind the Scenes

Once the characters pick their way across the vine-covered clearing, they can study the tomb's entrance more closely. The door is carved from the same unusual stone as the rest of the building. A *bas*-relief in its center depicts a brawny ork with a deformed tusk growing through his upper lip. The ork holds out his hands, palms up—they are clean, with no lines or marks on them. After seeing this image, any character who achieves a Good or better result on a Knowledge/Ork Lore (12) Test realizes that the carving is an ancient ork symbol for a traitor in word and deed. The deformed tusk piercing the lip represents treacherous speech, and the unlined palm represents the worthlessness of a treacherous act.

The door of the crypt is unlocked. However, the crypt has sunk a few inches into the mire and opening the door takes some effort. After clearing away the muck and struggling with the heavy door for a few minutes, the characters should be able to swing it open. The air inside the tomb is fetid, heavy with the smell of swamp gas. Five low, broad steps lead down into the small chamber beyond the entrance. When the characters enter the tomb, read the following aloud:

The tomb is cramped, no more than 5 yards square. A large, lidless stone coffin covers most of the left wall, raised a few feet off the floor of the chamber. Several inches of muck and stagnant water blanket the floor of the tomb. Given another century or two, the entire building might sink forever under the muck.

As you stand and gaze at this dispiriting tableau, the muck begins to churn at the far end of the tomb. A shadowy creature, rimed in mud and rotting leaves, rises up from the waste and favors you with a sickly grin. It looks vaguely like an ork—an ork made of fire and shadow.

The creature hisses at you, dank water dribbling over its tusks. "Well met, fellow heroes! Free me from this rotting tomb and I will well repay your kindness!"

The strange creature is Kragen Overtall, the long-ago traitor whose tomb the adventurers have been seeking. Kragen could not rest easily in death, and his spirit has become a dark fetch. Tired of being trapped for centuries in his tomb, Kragen desperately wants to escape so that he might wander once more through Barsaive, hunting down the descendants of his former comrades. Kragen can only escape his prison by persuading a living being to burn his skeleton to ash. The bones lie moldering in the stone coffin, and Kragen is eager to show them to the adventurers.

Kragen is not stupid, and he does not tell the characters any truths about himself (including his Name, of course). Kragen may offer to tell the characters his Name if they promise to release him—however, he intends to make up a Name rather than give them the real one. If Kragen lies to the characters, the Seal of Truth senses the lie through the dagger's mystic bond to the dead ork. This bond causes the seal to crack at each lie, and the seal breaks if Kragen tells a third untruth. If the adventurer holding the dagger notices the cracking, he may realize that the fetch is lying.

Kragen tries several different tactics on the player characters in search of one that works. Among other things, Kragen contends that he is no traitor. Instead, he claims to have been betrayed by those he thought were his friends. Now, he says, all he wants is to sink into the sweet oblivion of death—but he cannot achieve this release unless some compassionate Name-giver burns his bones to ash.

Adventure Hook

The heroes' dealings with the tribe of Tamers have not gone unnoticed. An old, powerful Tamer Shaman Named Uji'vanook has found the bodies and sensed the betrayal and evil that caused such a slaughter. He feels it is his duty to cleanse the jungle of such evil and sets out to track down those who caused such foulness to occur. The Shaman finds the group a few days later and, in a patient but methodical manner, brings more and more calamity upon them from a distance.

He avoids direct confrontation, instead bringing the forces of Nature to bear on the characters to purge them from a distance. If approached, he will turn into a falcon and flee—returning the next day with a large war party of disparate Tamers intending to capture the characters. The Shaman wants to learn the origin of their dark ways before killing them. Uji'vanook may be confronted peacefully at first and, if convinced of their quest to rid themselves and Barsaive from their curse, he may concede allowing them to cleanse the jungle of their taint by properly disposing of the bodies and leaving quickly.

Kragen promises anything to the characters if they agree to first burn his bones. He will not tell the characters his Name before they burn the bones, as he does not trust anyone to keep a bargain. If the adventurers burn Kragen's bones, he cackles at them gleefully as he leaves the crypt to search for his comrades' descendants. He leaves behind a faint trail of fetch-fire as he goes. If this occurs, the adventurers should realize they have let a dangerous being loose upon Barsaive's ork population and should try to stop the fetch if possible.

If the adventurers do not fall for any of Kragen's promises or pleas, the fetch grows increasingly angry until he begins to threaten the characters. If the adventurers still do not yield, Kragen attacks them in a fit of rage. Kragen will fight until he wins, the adventurers retreat from the tomb or until he is "killed." For Kragen's game statistics and descriptions of his abilities, see **Cast of Characters**, p. 307. If the heroes manage to dispatch Kragen, they may search the crypt. The information they seek lies under a thin layer of muck beside the coffin's base, on a large silver medallion that once lay atop the coffin. Once cleaned off, the medallion clearly reads: "Kragen Overtall, Traitor." Once the characters have read the Name of the traitor, they can weave Rank Five threads to the daggers.

Except for the information the adventurers seek, the tomb contains little of value. Because of its age and size, the medallion is worth roughly 300 silver pieces and counts as Treasure worth Legend Points (see the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 96 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

Troubleshooting

The biggest problem in this encounter occurs if the characters cannot defeat Kragen. However, the adventurers have one major advantage: the fetch cannot follow them outside the tomb. Unless the characters refuse to retreat when pressed, they are unlikely to find themselves in a life-threatening position.

If the characters agree to burn Kragen's bones, let them. Once Kragen has swept off on his mission of destruction, the adventurers should be able to find the medallion. However, they have loosed a dangerous creature on the world—not an act they should be proud of, and one they should eventually take responsibility for.

Loose Ends

This section wraps up the adventure's loose ends and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **A Traitor's Fate** in future **Earthdawn** adventures.

After the Adventure

If the characters successfully reach Kragen's tomb, defeat the dark fetch and find the medallion with his Name on it, they learn the Rank Five Key Knowledge of the Blades (the Name of the Seven Spokes' betrayer—Kragen Overtall). If Dark-Light is kept alive (**A Rude Awakening**, p. 303), the adventurers may run into the unfortunate woman some time in the future. If so, they find Dark-Light a shadow of her former self, living on the streets of one of Barsaive's larger cities or otherwise clinging to life by her fingernails. If the adventurers want to help Dark-Light, they must convince her that the slaughter was not entirely her fault, a task that involves taking her to an ancient shrine of healing and purification.

If the adventurers promised Jahnee Firebalm to aid the next questor of Mynbruje who asks them (**Lighting the Way**, p. 297), the gamemaster may use this promise to send the players off on an adventure whenever such an encounter best suits his campaign.

If the characters freed Kragen Overtall's fetch, within a few months they hear tales of a creature fitting Kragen's description terrorizing numerous ork settlements and murdering several innocent orks. These reports continue until the adventurers hunt Kragen down and stop him once and for all.

Awarding Legend Points

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, an adventure like **A Traitor's Fate**, p. 296, awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a Seventh Circle character receives from 1,650 to 4,900 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session. In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal. The creatures presented in this adventure have listings for Legend Points. These are the points characters earn for defeating the creatures. The adventure goal for **A Traitor's Fate** is to learn Kragen's Name and find out that he betrayed the Seven Spokes.

Cast of Characters

This section provides information and game statistics for Kragen Overtall in his dark fetch form.

Kragen Overtall (Dark Fetch)

DEX: 11 **STR**: 12 **TOU**: 14
PER: 11 **WIL**: 10 **CHA**: 6

Initiative: 12 **Physical Defense**: 19
Number of Actions: 2 **Spell Defense**: 14
Attack (4): 15 **Social Defense**: 12
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 2
2 × Claws (1): 13 **Mystic Armor**: 6

Death Rating: 70 (82) **Recovery Tests**: 7
Wound Threshold: 20 **Knockdown**: Immune
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 64 **Full Movement**: 128

Karma Points: 10
Karma Step: 5

Powers: Durability (2), Fetch-Fire (see **Rules**, below), Manifest Limb (see **Rules**, below), Spellcasting (9): 20

Legend Points: 530

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

The dark fetch is a particularly vicious undead creature, created when a Name-giver dies while committing a grievous act of betrayal or before completing an important act of revenge. Under such circumstances, the Name-giver's burning hatred makes his spirit cling to the physical world, trapping the individual's consciousness in his dead body.

Once the dark fetch's body decomposes, the monstrosity arises in a new, semi-incorporeal body. However, until its bones are burned to ash or otherwise completely destroyed, the dark fetch cannot leave its burial chamber (or stray more than thirty feet from its body, if outside). If a fetch's bones are destroyed, it may roam the land freely.

All dark fetches burn with the desire for revenge against those they hate. The extent of such hatred varies, and the object of hatred may range from a single individual to an entire race of Name-givers. Once dark fetches have exacted their revenge, they often dissipate and truly die. However, some fetches re-focus their hatred on other objects rather than dying.

Rules

When a dark fetch has taken damage equal to its Death Rating, it does not die. Instead, it temporarily dissipates, and its essence returns to its bones for 1 to 4 days. To kill a dark fetch, one must force it to dissipate and then bury its bones separately. The burial pattern must form a mystic sigil of closure, and all the buried bones must be separated by a distance of a human arm's length or greater.

Fetch-Fire: Dark fetches most often attack by striking at their opponents with fetch-fire, a half-incorporeal substance that fetches are made of. The fetch infects an opponent with fetch-fire by making a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the baleful green-black flame—which sometimes surrounds the fetch in a hideous nimbus—crawls onto the character and begins to eat away his flesh, inflicting 2 Damage Points per combat round. No armor protects against this damage.

Fetch-fire lasts for 10 rounds (the dark fetch's Willpower step) before dissipating, unless the fetch is driven back to its bones, in which case the fetch-fire dissipates immediately. Fetch-fire can only be put out by touching it with True water—even a single kernel of True water will extinguish a single manifestation of fetch-fire, although the elemental water evaporates in the process.

Manifest Limb: In addition to Fetch-Fire, the dark fetch may attack by willing its arm to become temporarily corporeal. A fetch attacking an opponent in this manner can rend the target with its long nails, doing Step 13/D12+D10 damage.

WITH AN AXE IN HAND

I once came across a village that survived the Scourge. All the people living there were just—wrong. Gave me the creeps. Still does.

• Jango Jebble, Human Warrior of Throal •

Asmersious felt colder than the rock that surrounded him. *The Dreaming should not be like this,* he thought. *Something is not right.*

An evil laugh rolled through the Liferock. More tactile than audible, the presence Asmersious felt was not that of the Brotherhood. The obsidiman's unease deepened into dread. Something was terribly wrong, and he did not know what to do. An impulse to Dream more deeply crossed his mind, filled it as a shout fills the air. Such individual thought should be almost impossible at this point in the Dreaming, yet Asmersious's mind rang with echoes: Deeper. Must Dream deeper. He reached forward through his Liferock, grasping at the weak, wispy spirits of the Brotherhood whose presence felt so strangely dim. As he cast his spirit toward them, they slipped away like smoke in the wind.

Suddenly Asmersious felt a crushing weight pressing on him from all directions. The Brotherhood vanished; nothing remained but the hard, cold presence of the Horror. Even as Asmersious recoiled, the Horror surrounded him, opening his mind like a delicacy. The tortured cries of his devoured brothers filled his being, and his own screams echoed through the Liferock.

High in the Tylon Mountains, a cold wind blew. It sounded like crying.

Asmersious roused himself from his troubled Dreaming, his mind cloudy and full of holes. Something was happening deep within his Liferock—something dark, foreboding, calling him to action.

Snow draped the ground like a heavy, wet cloak, and the icy air carried muffled sounds too distant to identify. Then he saw the nearby footprints. Five or six pairs of boot-shod feet at least, leading around the Liferock to a fissure into which the walkers had doubtless descended. Asmersious drew closer and heard cries echoing up from the heart of the Liferock. For an instant, the thought "When?" emerged from one of the holes in his memory, but a wave of disorientation washed it away. Asmersious fought to stay conscious. As his vision cleared, he began picking his way carefully into the crevasse.

Deep within the fissure, Asmersious heard harsh shouts and the clash of blades. He hurried forward and saw a band of ork warriors standing in a ring, their backs together as they battled six obsidimen. The obsidimen glowed, as darkly luminous as the Liferock they had sprung from. His brothers, yet Asmersious did not recognize them.

"Defilers!" Asmersious cried, leaping toward the glowing obsidimen and swinging his bare fists in all directions. He felt a burning pain in his flank, and his vision blurred again. He reached toward the brother nearest to him and grasped the shiny barb of a Horror-spawned creature. It stood where his brothers had been, black and sleek and grinning. "By the Passions, forgive me," he cried as he fell, succumbing to the darkness that collapsed on him like a boulder.

Plot Synopsis

The characters have discovered that they can learn the Name of the Horror at the site of a Liferock that Betrayer allegedly corrupted. This Liferock sits near the top of a peak in the Tylon Mountains.

Shortly after Cara Fahd's Protectors caught and killed Kragen Overtall, the remaining members of the group created a new group pattern and re-Named themselves the Seven Spokes. Once they had destroyed the eighth Blade that had belonged to Overtall, the Spokes believed themselves safe from the Horror. Betrayer allowed them to believe in the illusion of their success. The Horror plotted to plague the Seven Spokes again at a later time and focused its attentions elsewhere.

For its new target, Betrayer chose a Liferock near its lair, deep beneath the Tylon Mountains near the Great Dome of House Ch'elann. The Horror found it easy to mark one of the Brotherhood, who eventually returned to his Liferock. The marked obsidiman's return allowed Betrayer to extend its influence throughout the obsidimen in the Liferock. As the Horror's corruption spread, the Liferock called out to its Brotherhood in a desperate search for salvation from the Horror's power. For many years the obsidimen of the tainted Liferock returned to merge with it, only to become corrupted themselves.

After some time, Betrayer turned its attention once again to the Seven Spokes. Slowly and subtly, it influenced events around the orks. Using its connection to them through the Blades of the Cara Fahd, the Horror caused suffering and death to others while leaving the orks to witness the effects of their presence. The Seven Spokes soon recognized the handiwork of the Horror that had marked their companion Kragen Overtall, and they decided to take action.

Using the Horror's magical ties to the Blades, the Spokes eventually located Betrayer in the Tylon Mountains. As they made their way closer to the Horror, Betrayer's powerful influence drew them toward the tainted Liferock. The

Seven Spokes reached the Liferock, where they encountered and fought obsidiman-based Horror constructs. During the battle, an obsidiman Named Asmersious emerged from the Liferock to find his corrupted brethren fighting the orks. Asmersious summoned all his strength to fight alongside the orks and save his Liferock, but the Horror's taint had touched him too. He swiftly succumbed to injuries and then fell into a blind, delusional fury fueled by the Horror. The Seven Spokes managed to trap the raging obsidiman beneath a boulder in a crevasse, where he eventually lapsed into hibernation and has lingered on the verge of death ever since.

Then the Horror revived its constructs and sent them again into battle. The Seven Spokes retreated, realizing that the Horror they sought was elsewhere. Much later, when the ork heroes destroyed Betrayer's body and split its spirit into the pattern of the Blades, the Horror's power waned. Its obsidiman constructs merged with the tainted Liferock in a corrupted mockery of the Dreaming, where they remain until the player characters arrive.

During their journey toward the corrupted Liferock, the characters have the chance to stop in several small villages. If the characters do so, they meet normal people going about their daily business, seemingly tranquil and undisturbed. Every night that the characters spend in these villages, however, the residents suffer through gruesome nightmares. Some begin sleepwalking and even acting out their nightmares, which often involve bladed weapons. These dreams come from Betrayer, who is using the conduit of the Blades to prey on the hidden desires and fears of the village residents. As long as the characters remain in a town, the problems intensify. They can help the tormented villagers only by leaving.

The characters eventually find the Liferock, adorned with traditional obsidiman ornamentation. They also find the crevasse the Seven Spokes forced Asmersious into, although snow obscures the fissure. On discovering the hibernating Asmersious, the adventurers free him and carry him to the surface. After five days he awakens. Though his mind is nearly gone and he is close to death, he remembers his encounter with the Seven Spokes and mistakes the characters for them. The characters should be able to tell from the obsidiman's ramblings that something has driven him mad. Before they can learn anything from the obsidiman, however, the characters must deal with the remnants of the Liferock's corrupted Brotherhood. The presence of the Blades wakens them, and they attack in mindless rage. After the battle, Asmersious divulges the Name of the Horror, providing the characters with the Blades' Rank Five Key Knowledge.

When the heroes make their triumphant descent down the mountain, they once again pass through the villages they encountered along the way. This time the scene is not so benign. Buildings have been burned, fresh graves dug, and bladed weapons stolen or broken. The once-friendly villagers have turned suspicious and hostile. The characters should realize that their presence triggered this terrible destruction.

With a Tale to Tell

Use the prelude when the characters begin seeking the Blades' Rank Seven Key Knowledge: the Name of the Horror that plagued the Seven Spokes—"Betrayer."

As the characters begin searching for this Key Knowledge, they hear tales of a corrupted Liferock rumored to lie somewhere in the Tylon Mountains. These tales speak of a Horror that corrupted an obsidiman and then used him to corrupt his entire Liferock and Brotherhood. The characters should recognize that this account sounds typical of the Horror that corrupted the Seven Spokes. When

the characters make inquiries about this Liferock, they are told of a wandering Troubadour, Senog, who may be able to help them. As this prelude begins, the characters have just caught up with Senog at a small tavern near the city of Kratas.

Setting the Stage

Read the following aloud when the characters arrive at the tavern:

Why is it always a traveling Troubadour who knows the one thing a Name-giver must find out? You seem to have been trying forever to catch up with the knowledgeable—and fleet-footed—Troubadour who can tell you the full story of the corrupted Liferock. In the last town they told you he was headed toward Kratas, and the folk you've passed on the road all remember seeing him (or at least, the few willing to give away free information remember him).

Less than a mile from Kratas, you stand in front of a solidly built inn. A sign in front reads "The Axe in Hand." Shaking the dust from your boots, you push open the heavy, iron-bound doors and walk in. You look around the main room. The place is about a third full of weary adventurers like yourselves, who barely look up as you enter.

You find a seat at a solid wooden table and order the first decently cooked meal and cool draught of ale you've had in several days. The choices are few, but the smells are appetizing: ham hocks with boiled potatoes or roasted pheasant with onions. The service is quick, the tables are clean, and the patrons well-behaved. A pretty human serving girl brings your meals, saying, "Will you be staying the night, masters—perhaps to use the bath house or hear the entertainment? We are fortunate to have a Troubadour with us this evening." It seems you have finally caught up with Senog.

Themes and Images

The theme of this encounter is questions and answers. Emphasize the time and trouble that the characters have spent tracking down the Troubadour who can finally give them answers—answers that only raise more questions, questions that the characters can only answer by making another, more arduous trip to a dangerous place. In addition, the tale of the Liferock's corruption should give the adventurers chills.

Behind the Scenes

The Axe in Hand is a hospitable tavern with ten small single-occupancy rooms, as well as a luxurious bath house built around a hot spring. Because of the inn's proximity to Kratas and the number of scoundrels who stop here along the way, the Axe in Hand accepts no responsibility for the security of its patrons.

The proprietor charges a fair price but not so high that the patrons might feel entitled to particular protection against thieves or footpads. A private room costs 5 silver pieces and includes access to the bath house. Each additional occupant of a room who wishes to use the bath house must pay 3 silver pieces extra. A meal with ale costs 4 silver pieces—ale alone costs 1 silver piece.

The innkeeper is a young, rough-looking human Named Nandra. She is pleasant, but not especially friendly toward her customers. Her motto is "The last one standing deserves to be right," and she does not intervene in the business of her patrons. If the characters speak with her, she might tell them a legend or two that may lead to future adventures.

Nandra

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (10): 5/D8
Toughness (10): 5/D8
Perception (12): 5/D8
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 31
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 22

Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Skills

Artisan:
Storytelling (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Legends and Heroes (3): 8/2D6
Local Lore (3): 8/2D6

General:
Conversation (3): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (1): 7/D12
Speak Language (5): 10/D10+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Troll
Streetwise (3): 8/2D6
Unarmed Combat (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Club (Damage 8/2D6)
Knife (Damage 6/D10; Range 6–10–12)
Sap (Damage 6/D10)

Belt Pouch
Traveler's Garb

Loot

30 silver pieces

Legend Award

50 Legend Points

Meeting Senog

If the characters wait around until the evening performance, they can watch the obsidiman Troubadour Senog recite stories and sing in the tavern. The large performer sits on a short stool while he tells his tales, but his animated face is still visible to most of his audience. He wears a decorative robe over his brown-gray skin. He is happy to talk with the characters, especially if they agree to tell him some stories in return. The story of the corrupted Liferock makes Senog very sad but he does not hesitate to tell the tale because he believes it is an important one. As he frequently says, "The world contains many unhappy things, but they should not be forgotten simply because they are painful."

When the characters ask Senog the story of the Liferock, he recites the following:

My brothers tell the tale of the Corrupted with great sadness, for no greater tragedy can befall an obsidiman.

The lives of countless obsidimen not yet Emerged, the souls of the Returned, the Spirit-That-Pervades-All—in the Tylon Mountains, a Liferock once held all these things for a Brotherhood of obsidimen. Alas, this Liferock drew the foul attentions of a powerful Horror—the same Horror, it is said, that corrupted the famed heroes known as Cara Fahd's Protectors.

The Horror first tainted one of the Brotherhood—how, we do not know. The soul of the corrupted one merged with the Liferock, and one by one the rest of the Brotherhood succumbed. The Liferock sensed its peril and called out to its children, but each one who came fell under the Horror's sway as soon as he entered the Dreaming. Soon, all were destroyed and the Liferock turned to a thing of death. None are left to bear witness, none go there but to mourn; and even that we do from a distance, lest the corruption touch us.

My friends, have you ever thought about an old friend for the first time in many months only to bump into that friend as you round the corner? Or thought fondly of your family far away and received a note or gift from them the next day? Such occurrences pale in comparison to the knowledge an obsidiman has of his Liferock. Now imagine that your old friend has become an embittered cripple with a twisted soul or your family has perished. Imagine your feelings if such a thing should happen, and you will begin to understand a little the feelings of an obsidiman who knows that some ill has befallen his Liferock. How the members of that Brotherhood must have streamed home from all corners of Barsaive when they felt the death of their Elders!

Afterward, other Brotherhoods sometimes found surviving brothers wandering like those who have Emerged but not Awakened. Some went mad, others faded away. Now nothing exists of the Liferock save dead stone and these tales.

If the characters ask Senog where they might find the Liferock, he gives them directions. Senog also describes a number of landmarks along the way. The village of Smallstream lies three days' walk from Kratas. If the characters follow the creek for which Smallstream is Named, two days' walk brings them to the village of Cliffstone. Two days' walk from Cliffstone, following the slope of the Tylons, brings the characters to the village of Ridge. The Liferock lies three days' walk from Ridge.

Once the characters learn that the answer they seek lies at the Liferock, go to **Prosperous to a Degree**, p. 313.

Senog

Senog is a Third Circle obsidiman Troubadour

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Strength (21): 8/2D6
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6
Initiative: 3/D4
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 8
Social Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 38 (54)*
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 13
Knockdown: 8/2D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 30 (43)*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 14
Full Movement: 28

Karma Points: 10
Karma Step: 3/D4

Talents

Disguise Self [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Durability (6/5) (3): 3
Emotion Song [D] (4): 11/D10+D8
First Impression (3): 10/D10+D6
Karma Ritual (3): 3

Item History (3): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (4): 9/D8+D6
Mimic Voice [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
Read and Write Language [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
—Human, Obsidiman, *Or'zet*
Speak Language [D] (3): 9/D8+D6
—Human, *Or'zet, Sperethiel*

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:
Music (Harp) (2): 9/D8+D6
Storytelling (2): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Horror Lore (3): 9/D8+D6
Obsidiman Racial Lore (5): 11/D10+D8

General:
Conversation (2): 9/D8+D6
Etiquette (2): 9/D8+D6
Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Obsidiman
Streetwise (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Body Shield (Phys 5; Init 2; ST 21)

Troll Sword (Damage 14/D20+D4; w/scabbard)
Dwarf Sword (Damage 11/D10+D8; w/scabbard)
Spear (Damage 12/2D10; Range 18–30–36)

Astral-Sensitive Eye (2 Damage Points)
Adventurer's Kit
Cloaksense Brooch
Large Harp
Trail Ration (1 week)
Waterskin
Wealthy Traveler's Garb (w/embroidered robe)

Loot

30 silver pieces

Legend Award

165 Legend Points

Notes

Senog possesses the obsidiman racial abilities of Natural Armor and Increased Wound Threshold.

Troubleshooting

The main challenge in this prelude is to ensure the characters believe that the Horror responsible for corrupting the Liferock is the same Horror they seek. If necessary, stage an encounter prior to this prelude in which the characters obtain some hint that the Liferock's corrupter is the same Horror that twisted Kragen Overtall. Senog's story confirms this, but the characters may nonetheless have their doubts.

Prosperous to a Degree

The adventure begins when the characters arrive at the foothills of the Tylon Mountains. On their way to the corrupted Liferock, the characters encounter the three villages mentioned by the Troubadour in **With a Tale to Tell** (p. 310). As the characters interact with the villagers, Betrayer instigates acts of betrayal among the people.

Setting the Stage

The following text assumes that the characters have come to the Tylon Mountains after meeting with Senog. If this is not the case, adjust the text accordingly:

> *From the Axe in Hand, you head for the open road toward the Tylon Mountains. According to the tales Senog told you, the Horror that plagued the Seven Spokes amused its infernal self for a time sowing betrayal among the Brotherhood of a Liferock on one of the Tylon peaks. The Liferock may hold the key to the Name of the Horror, the knowledge you must have to bring alive the power in the Blades of Cara Fahd.*

Themes and Images

The prosperity of Smallstream and its sister villages provides a welcome contrast to the days on the trail and the den-of-thieves atmosphere around Kratas (see p. 31 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). The characters see renewal and rebuilding, all the more precious in the wake of the Scourge. The pregnant woman nearly ready to give birth and the fertile, well-tended fields are appropriate symbols of the potential this village and the others hold.

Behind the Scenes

It is a three-day walk from the Axe in Hand to the village of Smallstream. Along the way the gamemaster may arrange minor encounters with brigands, ork scorchers, slavers, or any other plausible opponents. Keep in mind, however, that the characters' objective is the corrupted Liferock, so one or two encounters should be sufficient.

During their journey up into the Tylon Mountain range, the characters also encounter the villages of Smallstream, Cliffstone, and Ridge. Senog named these villages as landmarks on the way to the corrupted Liferock, so give the adventurers opportunities to stop in them to rest along the way. As they spend a night in each village, Betrayer takes its chance to use the residents as pawns in its growing struggle for power. Betrayer begins by playing on the locals' hidden desires and jealousies, causing the village folk to act them out in nightmares.

Smallstream

The characters reach Smallstream first, sometime in the late afternoon. The villagers are surprisingly trusting of strangers and welcome the characters. When the characters approach the village of Smallstream, read the following aloud:

You have spent the better part of three days on this dusty path—too small and ill-kept to be called a road—but you seem no closer to the Tylon peaks. The mountains' eerie spires loom far beyond you, and the small village Named by Senog as your landmark has yet to appear on the horizon. A village by a stream, he told you—find the village of Smallstream and then follow the waterway deeper into the mountains. Thus far, however, you have seen no settlements and no streams—not even anything large enough to be called a brook.

Just as you begin to wonder if something has turned you in the wrong direction, you clear the top of a hill and see before you a peaceful settlement stretched along the bank of a creek. Smallstream at last, if Senog's directions were correct. As you draw nearer to the settlement, you marvel at how few houses it contains—a mere six, surrounded by well-tended fields. A woman pulling weeds looks up from her work, sees you, and stares in wonder. As she stands up, you see that she is pregnant. She gives you a timid smile and nod of greeting, then picks up her trowel and heads back toward the cluster of huts, beckoning you to follow.

Meeting the Villagers of Smallstream

Smallstream is scarcely a village, but its few inhabitants are making a life for themselves. They do not receive many visitors, and so they are eager for news of the outside world. Hopeful curiosity, tempered with caution, prompts them to welcome the adventurers with minimal suspicion. In exchange for news, they share what they have with the characters.

The six families of Smallstream each include several children ranging from two to fifteen years old. The family of Pon and Mara commands the position of highest respect in the community. Any town resident tells the characters that they were the first to coax the surrounding land to bear crops. Pon and Mara are expecting another child soon, which will bring their brood to eight.

Once the characters have met the villagers, they are treated to a modest meal and offered shelter by the elderly village healer, known to one and all as Grandma. Out of respect, her fellow villagers built Grandma her own hut. She offers the characters a place to sleep in the dwelling.

After the characters turn in for the evening, read the following aloud:

You open your eyes to blackness and the sounds of frantic sobbing. Pon's low voice, strained and tense, carries softly from the doorway: "Grandma, come quick—Mara's before her time! Something's wrong!" Lantern light flashes briefly. Grandma grabs a walking stick and bundle propped by the door, then slips out into the night. As the door of the hut swings slowly closed, you hear Mara's panicked cry: 'Pon, hurry!"

Grandma rushes across the trampled yard between her hut and Pon and Mara's with surprising agility. "Pon," she calls over her shoulder, "take these children out of here." She gently herds their children out of their hut. Before they can do more than blink and rub their sleepy eyes, the neighbors gather them up and take them inside for the night.

Pon creeps toward his front door, trying to catch a glimpse of his wife. He jumps back as Grandma's stick pokes out of the doorway just about where his belly would have been. "Out, I say! I'm busy in here," snaps Grandma, and Pon hangs his head like a shamed child. He sits down a little way from the door and wraps his arms around his knees. You almost want to laugh, but the lost look on Pon's face and Mara's frightened cries are enough to sober everyone.

When the characters awake in the night to Mara's cries, they may at first assume that she has simply gone into labor. If they look in on her, they immediately learn otherwise. Across her abdomen is a shallow, ugly slash, apparently made by a knife or dagger. The wound is bleeding and obviously painful, but not fatal. The trauma of the apparent stabbing sends Mara into premature labor, and Grandma keeps everyone out of the hut so she can work. This gives the characters time to question Pon about what happened. He says he heard Mara cry out and fetched Grandma thinking that the baby had arrived a bit early. On his return, he discovered that his wife had been cut. Pon is very frightened and mutters about evil omens.

If the characters search the area around the hut, they find a freshly blooded knife thrown or carelessly dropped in a patch of tall grass. The knife belongs to Pon. Though he does not realize it, Pon has fallen victim to Betrayer's influence. The Horror tapped into his anxiety about the upcoming birth and the pressure of providing for the child, and Betrayer used Pon's anxiety to create a vicious nightmare in which the villager slashed his own wife with his hunting knife. Pon is terrified by the dream but does not believe that he actually committed the act. If pressured by the characters, he might tell them that he dreamed "a man" came into the hut and cut Mara. He is too ashamed of his own secret feelings to admit that "the man" was himself.

As dawn breaks, a baby girl is born to Pon and Mara. They Name the baby after any adventurer who showed interest in or kindness to the family, in hope of giving the child a bit of good luck (even if doing so results in the girl having a male Name).

Mara is very weak and cannot tell the characters anything if they ask her about the attack. Pon keeps himself very busy tending the new baby, the other children, and the fields. Grandma believes the event is an evil omen and doesn't want to talk about it. She gently suggests that the characters stop by to see the family on their return journey, when Mara and the baby are a bit stronger. If the characters stay in the village, the nightmares get worse for all the families and more, similar incidents occur. If the characters ask about the village of Cliffstone—the next landmark on their route—no one knows anything. The folk of Smallstream don't have time to go exploring, and the people of Cliffstone prefer to have no contact with others.

Pon

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8
Strength (15): 6/D10
Toughness (15): 6/D10
Perception (7): 4/D6
Willpower (9): 4/D6
Charisma (7): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 5
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 5
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 38
Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 10
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Combat Movement: 22
Full Movement: 44

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Blacksmithing (2): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Farming (2): 6/D10

General:
Melee Weapons (2): 7/D12

Equipment

Knife (Damage 7/D12; Range 6–10–12)
Craftsman Tools
Farming Tools
Peasant's Garb

Loot

None

Legend Award

45 Legend Points

Mara

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Strength (10): 5/D8
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Perception (9): 4/D6
Willpower (5): 3/D4
Charisma (9): 4/D6

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 0
Social Defense: 6
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 35
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 27

Combat Movement: 20
Full Movement: 40

Skills

Artisan:
Cooking (2): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Farming (2): 6/D10

General:
Wilderness Survival (2): 6/D10

Equipment

Farming Tools
Peasant's Garb

Loot

None

Legend Award

40 Legend Points

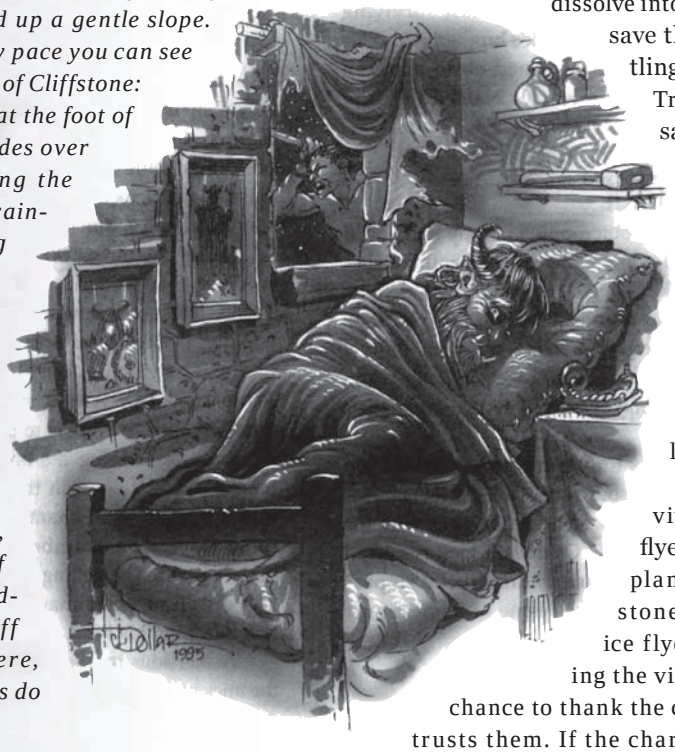
Cliffstone

Two days' walk from Smallstream lies the village of Cliffstone, a place less welcoming to strangers than Smallstream.

When the characters arrive at Cliffstone, read the following aloud:

The walk from Smallstream leads you through the foothills along the creek, through rocky, lightly forested land and up a gentle slope. After two days at an easy pace you can see what must be the village of Cliffstone: a little grouping of huts at the foot of a cliff. A waterfall cascades over the cliff edge, showering the surrounding land with rainbow-hued mist and filling the air with its music.

The village looks empty; perhaps the inhabitants are out doing their daily chores. You see no fields, though someone has set a fish trap of sorts across the river. As you walk closer, you feel the hot burn of unseen eyes on you. Suddenly a voice echoes off the cliff wall: "Stop there, strangers! What business do you have here?"



Meeting the Villagers of Cliffstone

The isolated village of Cliffstone is all that remains of an old kaer site. The inhabitants fear the outside world and the corruption it might bring, and so they keep to themselves. Unable to farm the rocky soil nearby, they hunt, fish, and gather wild plants. Most of Cliffstone's residents care little about treasure or the world outside the mountains, but a few townsfolk are keenly interested in sharing stories and legends with anyone who can swap tales.

Trawet is the town elder, a thin troll with a reedy voice that makes him sound as if the life has been squeezed out of him. Most of the villagers are humans and trolls. Trawet greets the adventurers suspiciously and from a distance, asking them where they are going, what business they have with Cliffstone, and so on. A charismatic adventurer or a Troubadour who can swap old stories with Trawet might win him over, but the troll is not impressed with talk of saving Barsaive or anything else so outside his familiar world. Talk of Horrors makes him visibly uncomfortable. Before inviting the adventurers within the circle of huts to meet the other villagers, Trawet looks each of them in the eye and makes them promise to bring no harm to the village.

If the characters spend the night in Cliffstone, its people suffer restless sleep and nightmares. Their nervousness about outsiders is ripe for exploitation, and Betrayer uses their feelings to its advantage. Before the night advances far enough for the villagers to begin acting out their Horror-influenced nightmares, a young human man who has been guarding the fish trap comes screaming into the center of the village, wielding a fillet knife. He says that a group of five ice flyers, including a leader, is raiding the fish trap. The entire village appeals to the heroes to save their food supply, especially if the characters have spent the evening telling stories about their courageous exploits. The villagers then dissolve into bickering about who should save the fish trap rather than battling the ice flyers together. Only Trawet joins the characters in saving the fish trap, which the ice flyers are destroying.

If the characters defeat the ice flyers, the townsfolk thank them profusely. Trawet expresses his thanks and apologizes for his initial distrust. No one sleeps well after all this, but nothing else happens for the last few hours of night.

Make sure Trawet survives the battle with the ice flyers. If the characters do not plan to stay the night in Cliffstone, the encounter with the ice flyers occurs as they are leaving the village so that Trawet has the chance to thank the characters and show that he trusts them. If the characters defeat the ice flyers under these circumstances, Trawet and the other villagers insist that they remain for the evening, despite their earlier hesitation.

Ice Flyers (4+Leader)

DEX: 6 **STR**: 5 **TOU**: 5
PER: 5 **WIL**: 7 **CHA**: 5

Initiative: 10
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (3): 9
Damage:
Bite (9): 14

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 6
Physical Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 3

Death Rating: 34 (40)
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 26 (31)

Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 5

Combat Movement: 26/30✦
Full Movement: 52/60✦

✦ The second value is the creature's flying Movement rate.

Powers: Durability (1), Enhanced Senses (Smell) (2): 7, Ice Shackles (6): 13, Howling Challenge (1): 6

Legend Points: 105 (155 Leader)

Equipment: None

Loot: Ice feathers worth D6 × 10 silver pieces (count as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

Ice flyers resemble white, winged baboons, standing roughly 6 feet tall and weighing up to 700 pounds. See the **Creatures** chapter on p. 314 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information and special rules on ice flyers.

Ridge

Three days' walk from Cliffstone, situated along the ridge of the mountain, lies the tiny town of Ridge. The greeting the characters receive when they reach this village depends on whether or not one of them is an obsidiman.

When the characters approach the village of Ridge, read the following aloud:

The village of Ridge certainly lives up to its Name. You have seen it, perched on a rise above the slope you've been climbing, for most of the day. Reaching the village has taken much longer than you expected, because you have had to pick your way up the steep, rocky trail and avoid occasional patches of ice.

The village has floated above you throughout your long climb, like a beacon never quite within reach. At least one villager has undoubtedly observed your progress, and for a moment you wonder why no one has hailed you.

This site would make a fine stronghold for a city, if anyone wanted to build one in the middle of the Tylon Mountains. Weary and footsore, you fantasize about the cool drink of fresh water you'll have when you finally reach the top.

As the characters reach the crest of the ridge, read the following if they do not have an obsidiman with them:

The sun is beginning to dip below the towering peaks as you climb atop the crest of the ridge. The light plays tricks with your eyes, tinting the patches of snow orange and rose. The cold air feels refreshing after the long climb.

Twenty villagers are gathered in front of a circle of huts. A merry fire leaps and dances in the center of the huts, and the smell of something roasting sets your stomach grumbling. A female elf standing one step in front of the others calls out, "Welcome to Ridge! I am Dolrettea. Please join us and tell us of your journey thus far!" The villagers give you wide, welcoming grins as you step forward to introduce yourselves. Taking this as acceptance of the elf's invitation, the villagers cheer and begin to make ready for a feast.

As the characters reach the crest of the ridge, read the following if they have an obsidiman with them:

The sun is beginning to dip below the towering peaks as you climb atop the crest of the ridge. The light plays tricks with your eyes, tinting the patches of snow orange and rose. The cold air feels refreshing after the long climb.

Twenty villagers are gathered in front of a circle of huts. Most of them hold hoes, axes, or hunting knives; five of them have arrows readied and aimed at your obsidiman comrade. A female elf standing one step in front of the others shouts, "Your kind is not welcome here. You may pass, but stay away from our village."

Adventure Hook

After the characters' departure, a number of obsidiman constructs attacked the village of Ridge. Now the villagers have come to blame the characters for it. They hired a band of Grim Legionnaires to find and deal with the taint-bearing adepts and rid them of their most recent troubles. This band of legionnaires should be powerful enough to pose a real threat to the characters. It should take a lot of persuasion to talk them out of their "hack 'em to bits" strategy (see **Infected**, p. 148, for more information on the Grim Legion).

Several people from Ridge insisted on accompanying them to see this wrong righted and will be likely to be remembered by any who spent the night in Ridge on their journey.

Meeting the Villagers of Ridge

Ridge is the last village the characters pass before reaching the corrupted Liferock. The Liferock lies three days' walk from Ridge, but the villagers shun the site out of fear of the Horror taint. If none of the adventurers is an obsidiman, the villagers welcome them. Few travelers make it up this way, and the folk of Ridge are curious about events in the rest of Barsaive. But an adventuring party with obsidiman members gets a much less friendly reception, unless the obsidiman agrees to swear a blood oath of peace to the village.

The villagers tell the characters stories of attacks on the village by deranged obsidimen, but anyone listening closely realizes that these stories are all variations on the same tale. In truth, only one such attack by a delirious obsidiman occurred, but the villagers cling to their apocryphal tales as a unifying belief.

Dolrettea Ryse is the council leader and the only elf in the village. Humans, orks, dwarfs, trolls, and even a few windlings live in Ridge, scraping out a living from the inhospitable surroundings. Despite their many hardships, the villagers clearly relish the peace and breath-taking beauty of their mountain eyrie. And they are remarkably well-read. If the characters ask, they discover that most of the villagers traveled for a few years before choosing to return to Ridge.

If the characters spend the night in Ridge, they have a chance to trade gossip with the residents of the town.

Before the characters retire for the evening, read the following:

The embers of the fire have died to a warm orange glow, and your stomachs are comfortably full of fresh roasted meat. Yawning and stretching, the villagers of Ridge head off to bed. After your strenuous hike, sleep is calling you as well. As you make ready for bed, a small group of villagers comes forward, each carrying a small parcel in their hands.

"If you please, we've family and friends in other parts of Barsaive," says a stout middle-aged dwarf whom you recognize from the evening as a boisterous storyteller.

"Would you mind very much taking these small items with you, in case you happen to run across our loved ones? It's been a long time since we've seen them. You needn't go out of your way for us, just carry these things with you."

One by one the group hands over various small items: a letter to the dwarf's mother in Throal, a jar of pine salve for the windling's brother who runs a shop in Bartertown, a request to a friend working in Travar to send up some new boots for the ork hunter. Gratitude and nostalgia mix in the expressions of this small group as they hand over their parcels.

The people of Ridge are content with their lives, but visitors remind them of all that lies beyond their little town. The townsfolk experience an uneasy night if the characters stay with them, but their relative contentment leaves Betrayer few resentments to work with. The true effect of the Horror's influence on the residents reveals itself after the characters leave and the villagers return to their daily lives without the luxuries the characters' visit has reminded them of.

If the characters refuse to carry the messages and small gifts from Ridge, the villagers making the requests look ashamed and apologize for troubling the characters. In any further interactions, they act withdrawn and sullen; the incident has reminded them of how cut off they are from the rest of Barsaive. Such feelings enable the Horror to influence the villagers more easily, so take them into account when describing any return trip through the village.

If an obsidiman is with the adventurers and the villagers ask them to bypass Ridge, the villagers follow the characters until they are a safe distance away from town and then watch them until they move out of sight. The townsfolk stand watch for the next week in case the adventurers plan to return and cause harm to the village.

Troubleshooting

Play things subtly when dealing with Betrayer's influence during the adventurers' initial visits to these villages. The Horror has some impact as the characters stop in each village, but the full extent of Betrayer's malign influence should become apparent to the characters only when they return to each settlement. For more information regarding the specific effects of the Horror's presence in these three small communities, see **Return Journey** in **Lingering Troubles**, p. 321.

During their encounters in Smallstream and Cliffstone, the characters may suspect that Betrayer is somehow responsible for the unusual events that occur. If the characters tell the residents of any of the villages that the Blades have essentially Horror-marked their group, the villagers drive them out.

Speaking of their connection with the Horror is not the wisest decision, but the characters may feel morally obligated to share this knowledge with anyone they meet. If they choose this course of action, the characters are met with fear and suspicion throughout Barsaive.

The Liferock

In this encounter, the characters reach the Liferock that Betrayer corrupted. There they find the body of the last surviving member of the Liferock's Brotherhood. This wounded and weakened obsidiman can tell them that a Horror Named Betrayer corrupted the Liferock.

Setting the Stage

Read the following aloud when the characters arrive at the Liferock:

Before you sits a huge outcropping of gray rock, lined with veins of black and white and spattered with patches of snow. It looks just like Senog described it, with definite markings and ornaments around its edges. As you look around, breathing in the crisp, clean air, you think of how much life the world has regained since the days when Horrors roamed the land and destroyed everything in their paths.

Your hopeful thoughts turn grim as you gaze on the rock that was once the source of life itself for generations of obsidimen. Does it lack some luster, gone with the mystical life force it once held? Or does it look scrubbed clean and renewed like the surrounding rocky slopes? Where within its depths does the Name of its destroyer hide?

Behind the Scenes

The characters have found the corrupted Liferock, but the only evidence of the Horror's Name is in the mind of Asmersious, the sole survivor of the tainted Brotherhood. They find nothing etched in the stone or carved in runes, no matter how hard they look. Asmersious lies trapped in a crevasse near the Liferock, where he has slept ever since his long-ago battle with his corrupted brothers (see the introductory fiction and **Plot Synopsis** sections of this adventure, p. 309, for a description of this confrontation).

Once the characters arrive at the Liferock, they discover the crevasse after a brief search of the area. When the characters find the crevasse, read the following aloud:

On the westernmost edge of the rock you find a crack, running like a wound deep underground. The opening is big enough for an obsidiman to fall into, and you can make out foot- and hand-holds carved into the sides of the crevasse. A word has been carved into the rock just above the jagged opening; it is partly obscured by a dusting of snow. You brush the snow away and read the rough Throalic letters: BEWARE.

Examining the Crevasse

A character using any astral sensing ability while gazing into the crevasse detects the faint glow of the trapped obsidiman's life force. Any character with astral sensing abilities can detect the obsidiman's life force by making a successful Perception (8) Test.

When the Seven Spokes trapped Asmersious in the crevasse, they wedged a boulder into the lower part of it. To reach the obsidiman, the characters must remove the boulder. Doing so is next to impossible using raw strength only, since the boulder was wedged in place tightly. Removing it requires the use of tools—such as ropes and draft horses, a lever, or an improvised pulley system.

If the characters have the patience, they may also try and break the boulder into smaller rocks and move it bit by bit. The gamemaster should reward clever ideas, but should ask for tests where appropriate. Beneath the boulder, the crevasse opens into a roughly oval chamber with an uneven, stone-littered floor. The chamber is about 8 yards wide at its widest point. The ceiling is uneven and so low in places that a troll or obsidiman must proceed with caution or risk bumping his head.

Asmersious has been in hibernation since shortly after the ancient ork heroes trapped him here all those years ago. Assuming the characters do not presume the obsidiman is Horror-tainted and kill him outright, they can learn from him the Name of the Horror. First, however, they must bring him to the surface and tend to him while he recovers. Asmersious is terribly weak and still injured. He has not been able to recover from the wounds he suffered, but his suspended metabolic state and proximity to his Liferock—damaged though it is—have kept him from death.

Since the obsidiman is quite heavy, up to four characters may combine their efforts to get Asmersious out of the crevasse. When the adventurers have brought Asmersious to the surface, read the following aloud:

You lay the body of the obsidiman on the ground near the outcropping, marveling that any life remains in him at all. He must be from this Liferock, but how long has he been trapped in the abyss? You cannot tell by looking if the Liferock is empty, as Senog said—but some flicker of life must remain in it, or how could this obsidiman still live? The answer to this riddle lies at your feet, in this obsidiman's mind. If he wakes, maybe he will tell you.

Asmersious remains unconscious for roughly five days. During this time the characters may set up camp and get comfortable, as they can do nothing to rouse Asmersious from hibernation. While they wait, the characters might search the area around the Liferock for some clue to the Horror's Name or to Asmersious's condition. If they search thoroughly, they can find some clues.

In a hole in the far side of the Liferock they find a small chest, battered by the Scourge and centuries of harsh weather. The chest is locked but can be opened by a character who makes a successful Lock Picking (5) Test. The characters may also smash the chest open. It has Physical Armor 7 and a Death Rating of 20 (see **Barriers and Structures** in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 106 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

The chest contains a small, bone scroll-case sealed with dried wax. The case contains a small piece of parchment, inscribed in the *Or'zet* language. Reading the scroll requires a character who knows *Or'zet* to make a successful Read and Write Language (6) Test. Any character who makes a successful test may read the scroll to the group.

The scroll is signed with the symbol of the Seven Spokes—the seven Blades of Cara Fahd arranged as the spokes of a wheel. This is the same symbol the characters see when they confront Betrayer in the final adventure, **Pure Liquids** (p. 326).

To whoever may come after us,

It is with much regret that we share this tale. We, the Seven Spokes of Cara Fahd, having come to this Liferock in search of the Horror that betrayed us and our brother, were met by obsidimen that had become monstrosities—surely the creations of the Horror we seek. These creatures came from the Liferock as might true obsidimen, but stank of corruption. How the Horror tainted this Liferock we do not know, but none of the Brotherhood who once called this place home remain.

We continue our search for the Horror, that we may one day rid Cara Fahd and all of Barsaive of its influence. We are near it now, we can feel it. We believe it can feel us as well; if we do not survive, we ask the reader of this scroll to tell our tale to the world.

Betrayer's Return

Betrayer corrupted the Liferock by first corrupting one of its Brotherhood, who allowed the Horror to enter the Liferock and corrupt the rock's spirit. Once Betrayer had thoroughly corrupted the Liferock, it fashioned the rock's

luckless Brotherhood into Horror constructs similar in form to invae (see p. 373 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**). All the members of the Brotherhood, save for Asmersious, fell victim to the Horror's power.

Though beyond salvation, these constructs retained much of their obsidiman nature, including their ability to merge with their Liferock. When the Seven Spokes split Betrayer's spirit and confined it in the pattern of the Blades, the constructs merged with the Liferock. They have since remained dormant, until the characters arrived carrying the Blades. The characters have brought Betrayer back to the Liferock and the constructs, and the Horror's proximity causes them to awaken. They are fully awake and ready for battle about the time that Asmersious revives (see **Lingering Troubles**, below).

Troubleshooting

If the characters cannot come up with the necessary Strength to move the boulder but devise some other method of performing the task, such as using a lever, allow them to move the rock. If they have the patience, the characters may also break the boulder into smaller rocks and move it bit by bit. They need to investigate the chamber beneath the boulder, so allow them every fair chance to do so.

If the characters decide to dispatch the pitiful obsidiman before they get information from him, they may still learn the Name of the Horror at the gamemaster's discretion. In this case, Asmersious has carved out a rambling message on the underside of the boulder. The message contains the Horror's Name.

Killing Asmersious is a definite betrayal of a self-respecting adventurer's nobler ideals, however, and it feeds Betrayer's power. The Horror's added strength, in turn, enables the constructs within the Liferock to awaken early. In fact, the constructs emerge from the Liferock and attack just after the characters kill Asmersious. For the constructs' game statistics, see **Lingering Troubles**, below.

If the characters take Asmersious away from the Liferock, the obsidiman awakens in a few days as normal. Alternatively, the constructs may track down the characters and arrive just as Asmersious awakens. In this case, run **Lingering Troubles** as written but change the location.

Finally, at the gamemaster's discretion, characters with Knowledge skills appropriate to obsidiman lore or history may make Skill (6) Tests. Any successful test reveals that removing the obsidiman from the Liferock may prevent him from awakening. (This is not true, but the characters don't know that.)

Lingering Troubles

Just as Asmersious awakens from his centuries-long sleep, several obsidiman Horror constructs emerge from the Liferock and attack the characters.

The adventurers must win the battle against these monstrosities and keep Asmersious safe from harm or they may never learn what Asmersious knows.

Setting the Stage

When Asmersious begins to awaken, read the following aloud:

Day after day you have watched this Namegiver lying like a huge stone, showing no more life than the towering pillar of rock under which you found him. He does not move and barely breathes. For a moment you think you see a flicker, so slight it hardly counts as movement. You stare intently at the sleeping giant, but nothing more happens. Perhaps the flicker was only your imagination. Then it happens again, a shuddering of the skin like a ripple across water. Slowly, the obsidiman is reviving. His eyes open, so slowly that you can scarcely bear the suspense. They seem to linger halfway open for most of the day. As the shadows grow longer they open, full and wide but still unseeing.

You hear a feeble mumbling and draw closer to the obsidiman so that you can hear him more clearly. "By the Passions, the Passions..." he breathes. Suddenly, he lurches upright with startling strength. "My brothers!" he screams, "Beware the defilers!"

You step back from this wild obsidiman as his eyes grow wide with horror. "I... hurting... forgive..." He collapses again and lies motionless. A sudden noise behind you draws your attention away from him. You look toward the Liferock and see seven figures emerging from it. They look like obsidimen, but as they come closer you can see their chitinous hands and mandibles. Whatever these terrible things are, they are moving toward you with malevolent purpose.

Themes and Images

The characters are facing the same corruption that led to the fall of the Liferock years before the Scourge. The corrupted Liferock and its one-time Brotherhood, a manifestation of the Horror's malignant power, should instill feelings of dread in the adventurers.

Behind the Scenes

The Horror constructs resemble and behave like invae (see p. 373 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**), but are subject to all talents and spells that affect Horrors and Horror constructs.

The Horror constructs ignore Asmersious during the battle. Betrayer still controls them and much prefers to slay the characters than an old, insane, dying obsidiman.

Betrayer knows that the closer the characters get to learning the last Key Knowledge, the closer they come to separating the Horror from the pattern of the Blades into some form that might be vulnerable to physical attack. As a result, Betrayer does everything in its power to destroy the adventurers.

Obsidiman Horror Constructs (7)

DEX: 7 **STR**: 11 **TOU**: 14
PER: 6 **WIL**: 8 **CHA**: 9

Initiative: 8 **Physical Defense**: 9
Number of Actions: 2 **Spell Defense**: 12
Attack (5): 12 **Social Defense**: 16
Damage: **Physical Armor**: 17
Bite, Claws (3): 14 **Mystic Armor**: 5

Death Rating: 68 (80) **Recovery Tests**: 7
Wound Threshold: 23 **Knockdown Step**: 16
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 32 **Full Movement**: 64

Powers: Durability (2), Poison [SD 10; Paralysis]

Legend Points: 740

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Rules

Like invae, the constructs attack by striking and biting. A construct's bite exudes a paralyzing venom.

Poison: Unlike many paralytic poisons, the construct's venom reduces the victim's Dexterity until he cannot move any longer, making him an easy target. Subtract –1 step from the victim's Dexterity step each round until it reaches zero, at which point the victim is completely paralyzed.

After the Battle

Once the battle is over, the characters can return their attention to Asmersious. Read the following aloud:

"The holes... why have you come back? Why bring it with you? How long... hurts. So cold, so hard... why? Take it away! Take the defilers... oh, my brothers... Asmersious weeps." He draws a ragged breath and looks at you, as if seeing you for the first time.

"I return soon. Defeated... you have defeated me." He reaches a trembling hand toward you. "Can you defeat it, too? You know its Name. Betrayer."

Slowly, painfully, the obsidiman struggles toward the Liferock, until he lies with his whole body against it. "Death to Betrayer!" he breathes, and begins to merge with the rock. Within seconds he is gone... whether Dreaming or dead, you do not know.

Unless the characters take some drastic action to heal the obsidiman, Asmersious dies. His injuries are so severe that only a last chance salve or a powerful healing potion will help him. If the characters manage to heal Asmersious, he eventually recovers completely from his ordeal and may even choose to join the characters in their search for the final Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd.

Return Journey

The characters may believe that their quest is over, but they must still get back down the mountain. Ten days or so have passed if the characters walked to the Liferock, stayed with Asmersious while he regained consciousness, then walked back to Ridge. They might have made somewhat better time if they are riding, but horses are not particularly useful in the steep and rocky terrain of the higher elevations. Ever since the characters passed through the villages of Smallstream, Cliffstone and Ridge, the people of these villages have suffered from the influence of Betrayer, and so the characters are in for some unpleasant surprises on their return trip.

Ridge

When the characters reach Ridge (assuming none of them is an obsidiman, and Asmersious did not recover and join them), the townspeople respond with apathy and even sullenness. Name-givers who once pushed food and drink into the adventurers' hands now barely turn to give them the time of day. Dolrettea greets them with a cold look and a terse demand that they leave at once. If an obsidiman is among them, the villagers greet them with weapons at the ready, just as they did before. But this time they fire their arrows and throw stones to drive the characters off, shouting curses all the while.

If the characters don't take the hint, Dolrettea says, "Your presence here threatens everything we have tried to build. We do not need reminders of the things we left behind. You are making my people unhappy, and I won't tolerate it!" Dolrettea has adopted a possessive attitude about the people of Ridge and she accepts no further insubordination from the characters or villagers.

If the characters think this change in attitude is Dolrettea's problem and try to talk with the villagers individually, the people who gave the characters messages for

their distant friends in Prosperous To a Degree take them back, saying things like, "We don't need this kind of trouble," and "Everything was fine until you came barging into our lives!"

Cliffstone

When the characters reach Cliffstone, read the following aloud:

You pick your way down the slippery path that skirts the waterfall, stepping carefully around frozen patches of moss and heading down toward Cliffstone. The village should come into sight any moment now, through the mist that hovers near the base of the falls.

You walk onward but don't see or hear any sign of Cliffstone. As the base of the falls comes into view, you can see the pieces of the broken fish trap churning in the water. The huts look abandoned. You see Trawet slouched against the wall of his hut. It occurs to you that he's picked an odd time and place to snooze. But no sooner do you finish this thought than you realize he is not sleeping at all.

The characters might assume that ice flyers attacked the village again. If they look around carefully, they discover otherwise. An examination of Trawet shows that he has been stabbed in the chest multiple times by an assailant or assailants using hunting knives. All around his body, someone has drawn runes matching the ones on the Blades of Cara Fahd. Trawet's hut has been ransacked, and broken knife blades litter the floor.

The characters may decide to track the apparently departed villagers to find out what happened. But the villagers' tracks are several days old, and the characters lose them almost immediately. If they persist in trying to find the rest of the villagers, have them stumble across another two or three mutilated bodies. The living villagers, however, are long gone.

Smallstream

As the characters approach Smallstream, read the following:

The air begins to warm as you descend from the mountain slopes into the foothills of the Tylons. The walk along the rushing waters of Small Stream has been pleasant, in spite of the troubling events in Ridge and Cliffstone.

As you stop to stretch and have a drink of cool water, something catches your attention. Patches of soil have been churned up across the creek, just where you remember seeing a green field. You look more carefully, and suddenly feel cold as you recognize a row of fresh graves. One is much smaller than the rest. You cross the creek for a closer look, hoping against hope that your suspicions are wrong. The tiny wooden marker reads, "Here Lies [Baby's Character Name]". Beside it are markers for Pon, Mara, and several others.

As you dash up the hill toward the little town, your bellies clench in knots as you catch the scent of stale smoke. Topping the rise, you stop dead in your tracks. The huts are smoking hulks and the fields lie in ruins. A small child sits in the dirt, his hair matted and his body covered in mud and soot. He sees you running out of the trees and covers his eyes, weeping in terror. "Mamma! Papa! Gran'ma..." You barely recognize him as one of Pon and Mara's children.

The residents of Smallstream have suffered the most from Betrayer's manipulations. The Horror twisted the secret desires and resentments of the villagers, setting husband against wife, mother against son, and neighbor against neighbor. At least twenty people lie buried on all sides of the village, including many children.

When the characters come into view, the few surviving villagers cower in fear. Three adults, seven small children and Grandma, who looks ill and grief-stricken, are all that remain of the village. Grandma begs the characters to leave them alone, saying, "Don't bring this evil to others."

Troubleshooting

The Horror constructs are tough opponents, and one or more of the characters may die fighting them. Let the dice roll as they may. At this point, the characters are probably Eighth Circle or better and should be prepared for nasty battles. And they are facing an enemy that wiped out an entire Brotherhood of obsidimen—no mean feat. If the characters survive, they will have quite a tale to tell.

Loose Ends

The information in this section wraps up the adventure's loose ends and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **With an Axe in Hand** in future **Earthdawn** adventures.

After the Adventure

The characters have learned the Name of Betrayer, but at a cost that will stay with them for a long time to come. They may wish to make amends to the settlements that suffered in the wake of their visits. The villagers won't appreciate the characters' direct intervention, but the characters may be able to finance the rebuilding of Smallstream through indirect sources. The characters can also make sure to deliver any messages left with them in Ridge to their intended recipients. If they want to provide for Pon and Mara's surviving child, the boy they found just outside Smallstream, they must do so indirectly; Grandma refuses to let them take the boy away.

As the characters travel across Barsaive, they may run into refugees from Cliffstone or Smallstream who do not view them as heroes. This could hurt the legendary status of the characters who do not make amends, not to mention bringing up recurring feelings of guilt.

Awarding Legend Points

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, an adventure like **With an Axe in Hand** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, an Eighth Circle character receives from 2,350 to 7,000 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session.

In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal. The creatures presented in this adventure have listings for Legend Points. These are the points characters earn for defeating the creatures.

The adventure goal for **With an Axe in Hand** is to learn the Horror's Name.

Cast of Characters

This section contains game statistics for major gamemaster characters in this asventure.

Grandma

Attributes

Dexterity (12): 5/D8
Toughness (7): 4/D6
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Strength (8): 4/D6
Perception (13): 6/D10
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 8
Initiative: 5/D8
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 27
Wound Threshold: 6
Unconsciousness Rating: 18
Recovery Tests: 1
Knockdown: 4/D6

Combat Movement: 24
Full Movement: 48

Skills

Artisan:
Storytelling (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Botany (2): 8/2D6
Farming (2): 8/2D6

General:
Arcane Mutterings (2): 8/2D6
Physician (5): 11/D10+D8

Equipment

Quarterstaff (Damage 6/D10)

Farming Tools
Medicine Pouch
Peasant's Garb
3 × Physician Kits

Loot

None

Legend Award

45 Legend Points

Trawet

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Toughness (16): 7/D12
Willpower (13): 6/D10
Strength (19): 8/2D6
Perception (10): 5/D8
Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 6
Social Defense: 7
Initiative: 5/D8
Physical Armor: 5
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 39
Wound Threshold: 11
Unconsciousness Rating: 31
Recovery Tests: 3
Knockdown: 8/2D6

Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Leatherworking (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:
Cliffstone Lore (2): 7/D12
Kaer Lore (2): 7/D12

General:
Climbing (2): 8/2D6
Fishing (4): 9/D8+D6

Hunting (4): 10/D10+D6
Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Wilderness Survival (4): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

Trispear (Damage 13/D12+D10)
Troll Sling (Damage 12/2D10; Range 60–120–240)
Belt Pouch (w/15 sling stones)

Climbing Kit
Craftsman Tools
Fishing Kit
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Waterskin

Loot

10 silver pieces

Legend Points

100 Legend Points

Notes

Trawet possesses the troll racial ability of Heat Sight.

Dolrettea

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Toughness (7): 4/D6
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Strength (10): 5/D8
Perception (11): 5/D8
Charisma (12): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Spell Defense: 7
Social Defense: 7
Initiative: 6/D10
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: 0

Death Rating: 27
Wound Threshold: 6
Recovery Tests: 1
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 18

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60

Skills

Artisan:
Robe Embroidery (2): 7/D12

Knowledge:
Ridge Lore (2): 7/D12

General:
Etiquette (2): 7/D12
Speak Language (3): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), Human, *Sperethiel*
Wilderness Survival (4): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Bola (Damage 8/2D6; Range 12–20–24)
Knife (Damage 6/D10; Range 6–10–12)

Elfweave Robe
Embroidery Tools
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Loot

10 silver pieces

Legend Award

45 Legend Points

Notes

Dolretta possesses the elf racial ability of Low-Light Vision.

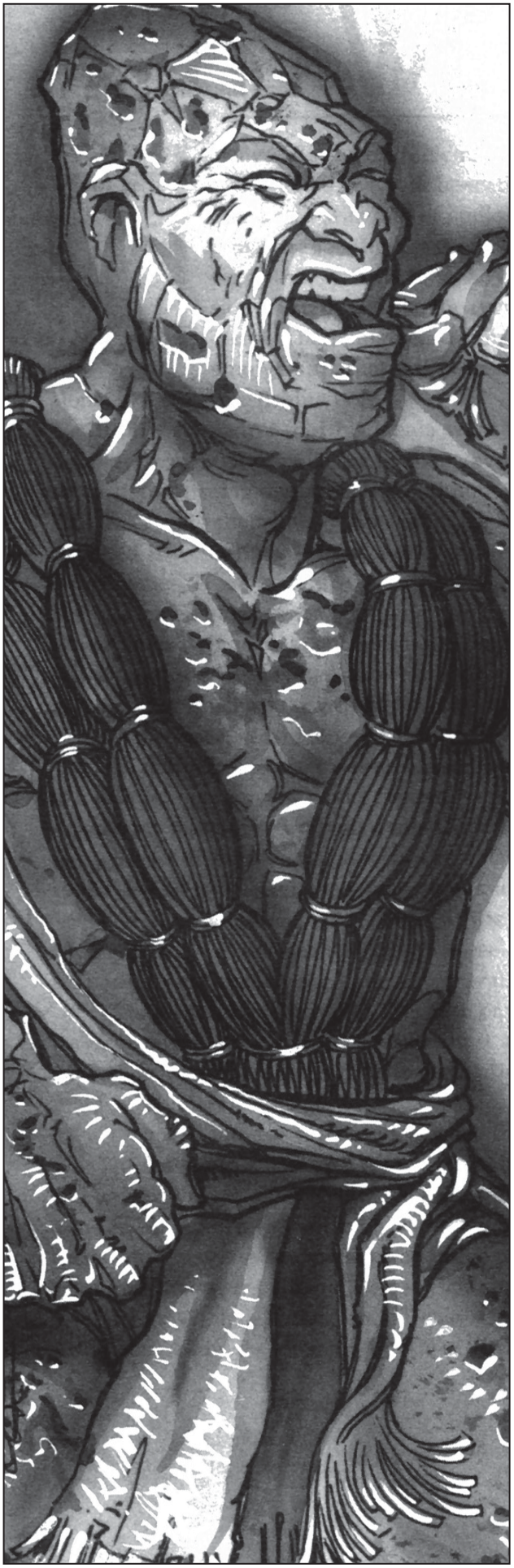
Asmersious

Asmersious is a Third Circle Warrior and the sole surviving obsidiman of the Liferock corrupted by Betrayer. While deep in the Dreaming, Asmersious became aware of Betrayer within the Liferock and emerged to find the Seven Spokes in combat with what he first thought were his obsidiman brothers. He soon realized that they had become Horror constructs and tried to fight them, but he succumbed to lingering traces of Betrayer's taint and turned on the ork heroes in a delusional rage.

The Seven Spokes drove the maddened obsidiman into the crevasse near the Liferock and imprisoned him. Asmersious drifted into hibernation, in which he has remained until the characters arrive and awaken him.

Attributes

Dexterity (10): 5/D8
Toughness (19): 8/2D6
Willpower (10): 5/D8
Strength (21): 8/2D6
Perception (9): 4/D6
Charisma (9): 4/D6



Characteristics

Physical Defense: 6 **Initiative**: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 6 **Physical Armor**: 3
Social Defense: 6 **Mystic Armor**: 0

Death Rating: 43 (70) **Recovery Tests**: 3
Wound Threshold: 15 **Knockdown**: 8/2D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 35 (56)

Combat Movement: 14 **Full Movement**: 28

Karma Points: 10 **Karma Step**: 3/D4

Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike (3): 8/2D6
Air Dance (3): 8/2D6
Avoid Blow [D] (1): 6/D10
Durability (9/7) (3): 3
Karma Ritual (3): 3
Melee Weapons [D] (3): 8/2D6
Unarmed Combat [D] (5): 10/D10+D6 (Head Butt)
Wood Skin [D] (3): 11/D10+D8

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:
Sculpture (1): 5/D8

Knowledge:
Obsidiman Lore (2): 6/D10
Obsidiman Weapons (2): 6/D10

General:
Arcane Mutterings (2): 6/D10
Wilderness Survival (2): 6/D10

Equipment

Peasant's Garb

Loot

None

Legend Award

170 Legend Points

Notes

Asmersious possesses the obsidiman racial abilities of Increased Wound Threshold and Natural Armor.

Pure Liquids

Take the True elements—fire, earth, water, air, and wood. Here is purity of form, distilled into something tangible that we can mold into new works!

• Chandalee Everil, Elven Elementalist •

T'chava V'ardegon K'elemin shuddered, and not from the chill of the underground cavern. T'chava had lived far beneath the Tylon Mountains all his life. He had never seen daylight. His world was one of sunless rivers; of cool, embracing darkness. But he had seen something strange the last time he had paddled his raft through these caverns, down this winding tributary. This time, he had a passenger with him who did little to calm his apprehension: the *shivalahala*, the revered leader of the pale t'skrang of the Tylon Mountains. Young T'chava had only heard rumors about her until yesterday, most of them concerning various strange supernatural powers she was reputed to possess. And now he was ferrying her, alone, to his private fishing hole.

If only he hadn't told his lahala what he had seen! T'chava had always believed that problems left untended eventually vanished of their own accord. His experience had been a mere curiosity to him; a somewhat alarming one, true, but nothing of significance. He told the tale of it only to please the folk of his niall, to cater to their love of diversion. He had not expected the reaction of the old ones: furrowed brows, clenched jaws, wrinkled crests. Before he knew it, they had bundled him onto a raft and taken him to the Great Dome. There he had repeated his tale for the *shivalahala*, his knees knocking together as he spoke. She had gazed at him with terrifying grandeur and power, dull green light pulsing through her skin. When she ordered T'chava to take her to his fishing hole, he had nearly fainted.

During the journey he had made a few attempts at conversation with his lofty charge, but she paid him no heed. For much of the trip he had paddled in silence. Now, as he reached the final bend, he said softly, 'This is the place, Most Honored One."

The thing he had seen was still there. In fact, it seemed to have grown bigger. The water was discolored in a way that only magic could explain: a pattern of deep red lines had appeared on its surface. It looked as if someone had poured pigment into the water, except that the pigment had found a shape it liked and did not wish to disperse. The pattern was circular, resembling a wheel with seven spokes. Where an eighth spoke should have been, there was a break in the pattern.

The Most Honored One looked at the water, shuddered, and addressed T'chava for the first time. "Take me back. I have seen all I need to see. It is true. The time our tales warn us of has returned. We must prepare, young one, for the Time of Betrayal."

T'chava scampered to the other side of the raft and began to paddle. He was far from displeased to be leaving immediately, but the mystery of it all frustrated him. He wanted to ask the Most Honored One to explain, but he knew better than to seem idly curious. He thought for a while, phrasing a proper and legitimate question.

"I reached into the water and touched the pattern, Most Honored One. Am I in danger?" The *shivalahala* sighed. "We are all in danger, young one. We deal with Horrors, and therefore nothing can be said for certain. I shall have the Nethermancer T'simon V'astamil Chandas examine you for signs of taint on our return to the Great Dome. But I do not think you have been tainted. The gravest danger is to those who carry the Blades reflected in the pattern—and to any unlucky enough to cross their path. It is our poor luck that their path and ours will doubtless intersect, and soon."

The *shivalahala* looked into T'chava's face, the light cast by her skin warming slightly. "I have confused you. Allow me to begin the tale at its proper place, at the beginning."

Plot Synopsis

The characters have learned that they must travel to the place where the Seven Spokes defeated Betrayer and learn the manner the ancient heroes used to defeat the Horror. The characters learn that their destination lies deep beneath the Tylon Mountains, somewhere in an underground river system inhabited by Pale Ones. The Pale Ones are t'skrang who live underground in a more primitive way of life than their better-known cousins of the Serpent River. The adventurers stumble across an old account that suggests they must find the community of Pale Ones known as Great House Ch'elann.

In their search for House Ch'elann, the characters hook up with the Vodanicus family, a group of disreputable dwarfs. These scavengers know the underground rivers of the Tylon range well, because they often venture down them to search for deposits of True water. The family claims to know the location of the Great Dome of Ch'elann and agrees to take the adventurers there for a sizable fee.

The characters face many dangers during this underground journey, natural and otherwise. Among other things, the Blades' influence prompts some of the dwarfs to try to kill them. When the characters finally arrive at the Great Dome of Ch'elann, they meet Shivalahala Ch'elasmo, the Pale Ones' leader. She tells them the legend of the battle between Betrayer and the Seven Spokes. She also supplies

them with the Key Knowledge they need to weave the Rank Eight threads to the Blades, as well as the ritual means to cast the Horror's spirit into a new body composed of blood and elemental water. Once the adventurers have accomplished this feat, they can try to kill Betrayer and rid Barsaive of the Horror's baleful influence once and for all.

Having acquired the necessary information from the *shivalahala*, the adventurers travel to the place of Betrayer's defeat. There they meet, learn from, and ultimately battle the ghosts of the Seven Spokes. The adventurers then perform the blood magic ritual and re-form the Horror, which they must try to destroy in a truly titanic battle.

Betrayer's Influence

In this adventure Betrayer causes quite a few problems for the adventurers. First, the Horror causes their guides along the subterranean river to attempt to kill them. Later in the adventure, when the characters arrive at the Great Dome, the Horror works its way through the t'skrang population, resulting in an attack against Shivalahala Ch'elasmo.

In addition to these incidents, the gamemaster may have the Horror attempt to make one of the player characters betray the others at some inopportune moment.

Last Words

Use this prelude when the characters begin seeking the Blades' Rank Eight Key Knowledge. That knowledge is the specific method the Seven Spokes used to defeat the Horror called Betrayer. The characters should know that this thread rank also requires a Deed: to travel to the place where the ancient heroes defeated Betrayer.

The information the characters need to start on the final adventure is contained in a document (**Setting the Stage**, below). The gamemaster determines exactly how the adventurers find the document and may flesh out the prelude as he pleases. For example, the characters may find it in the Great Library of Throal or in the ruins of some city in Cara Fahd. Alternatively, they may hear it as a tale told by a drunken Troubadour in Barsaivian Vivane or some such place. Whatever the gamemaster's choice, however, any investigative measure that makes half a lick of sense should yield the document.

Because this prelude is the gamemaster's to design, no **Troubleshooting** section is included.

Setting the Stage

When the adventurers obtain the document, read the following aloud:

For a time after the defeat of Betrayer, the Seven Spokes prospered. When acting in concert, the Blades magnified their abilities. The magical weapons gave them strength against the fell powers of the Horrors, against whom they struck many telling blows.

But within the Blades, Betrayer's spirit lurked and plotted, and discord and bloodshed began to follow the Seven Spokes wherever they went. The scholar Skonag Skonak has traced all of the events that led to the destruction of the kingdom of Cara Fahd in the Orichalcum Wars. He found that the Seven Spokes and their Blades were near every crucial event of double-dealing and treachery that prompted the ork kingdom's involvement in that conflict.

On his deathbed, Pobov Gaarz—the last of the Seven Spokes—had terrible visions of the Horror they had slain and of the river of blood that had flowed in their wake since their legendary deed. He divulged his earnest hope that one day a company of heroes would arise to right the wrongs he and his fellows had done. He said such heroes would have to awaken the power of the Blades again to purify them and make them fit weapons for heroes to wield. He said they could do this by journeying to the Great Dome of the House of Ch'elann, miles beneath the Tylon Mountains. There they could seek

the help of the Pale Ones who had aided the Seven Spokes in their misguided battle with Betrayer. The heroes would have to learn of the dread secret the t'skrang could wield against the Horror. And they would have to undo what the Seven Spokes had done, truly destroying Betrayer for all eternity. For this deed, the people of Barsaive would sing their praises down all the generations to come.

Having voiced his heart's desire , Pobov Gaarz died. Observers at his deathbed say his eyes held a look of terror, as if he were being irresistibly pulled toward some unimaginable torment. The last words Pobov Gaarz spoke were: "Free me! Free Barsaive!"

Themes and Images

Finding the document should fill the characters with relief and dread—relief because the quest for the Key Knowledges of the Blades is nearly over, and dread because the prophecy says that the heroes must face the Horror, Betrayer. Betrayer has plagued the characters since the first adventure of this chapter, whether they know it or not. The possibility of confronting this Horror should make the characters more than a little afraid.

Behind the Scenes

As noted above, the gamemaster determines the circumstances in which the characters discover the document (or the information it contains). This prelude is the gamemaster's chance to personalize a part of Blades to suit his campaign. If the players have just finished **With an Axe in Hand** and wish to push on, the characters might find this document in one of the small villages from that adventure.

If the characters have moved on since completing **With an Axe in Hand**, they may come across the document just about anywhere else that the gamemaster deems plausible and interesting (the Great Library of Throal, for example). The characters must learn the last bit of information they need to weave the Rank Eight thread to the Blades. This allows them to rid themselves of Betrayer's curse.

Once the characters have read the document and are ready to move on to the last adventure, go to **Getting Soaked**, below.

Getting Soaked

Getting Soaked describes the dangerous journey to the Great Dome, including the first meeting with the Vodanicus family. Along the way, the characters must fight numerous enemies and surmount various natural hazards.

Setting the Stage

The following text assumes that the characters have found the document described in **Last Words**, and that the document has led them to the Tylon Mountains. If this is not the case, adjust the text accordingly:

The Tylon Mountains loom up before you, dark and cold and threatening. Somewhere beneath these massive peaks lies the Great Dome of the House of Ch'elann, home to a foundation of Pale Ones. In the House of Ch'elann, you will find the final Key Knowledge of the Blades of Cara Fahd. The long and arduous road you have traveled since you first claimed the Blades has taken you across Barsaive and back, to the ultimate destination of your quest: the site of the final battle between the Seven Spokes and the Horror called Betrayer. In this place, the final secrets of the Blades and Betrayer await discovery.

Themes and Images

Emphasize the discomfort and danger of the arduous journey to the Great Dome. Make the players feel the dampness soaking into their characters' clothes, the chill in their bones, and the restless movement of the underground river beneath their rafts.

Behind the Scenes

The adventure begins with the characters traveling to one of the settlements at the base of the Tylon Mountains and seeking help in getting to the Great Dome. The gamemaster may make this as difficult a trek as he wishes. Add encounters with slavers, raiders, and assorted wild creatures if desired. Eventually the characters should hook up with the Vodanicus family, a thoroughly unscrupulous band of non-adept adventurers who make a living scrounging for True water. Place the family in whichever town the characters end up in, raising a ruckus at the town's seediest tavern. The family found some True water several months ago and they are carousing their way through the last of the generous payment they received for it.

About the Vodanicus Family

Game statistics for the Vodanicus family appear on p. 341. The family has many members, all of whom are Named Vodanicus. To tell each other apart, they address one another by family relationship. The leader and spokeswoman for the group is Mother Vodanicus. The other family members are Grandmother Vodanicus, Father Vodanicus, First Brother Vodanicus, Second Brother Vodanicus, Junior Vodanicus (a male), Sister Vodanicus, Cousin Vodanicus (a female), Second Cousin Vodanicus (a male), Uncle Vodanicus, Aunt Vodanicus, Great-Aunt Vodanicus, and Wife Vodanicus (the last is married to First Brother Vodanicus) for a total of thirteen of them. Do not worry about creating individual characterizations for all of these dwarfs, because they all possess the same character traits. They're greedy, crude, and a little sadistic. The males are all afraid of the females, especially of Mother Vodanicus. Grandmother Vodanicus has gone a little crazy and drools a lot. All of the dwarfs speak in rough, growly voices.

The Vodanicus family so enjoys having money to squander that the family members are willing to risk their skins again and again by going deep into the underground river system beneath the Tylon Mountains in search of their chosen loot. They are the only living surface-dwellers to repeat this feat, a feat they remind the adventurers of at every available opportunity. They gladly confess that several Vodanicus family members have shuffled off this mortal coil as a result of their exploits, but follow up this admission with the boast, "There's always more of us where the dead ones came from!" If the characters ask around about the Vodanicus family, they discover that the dwarfs are well-known and heartily disliked.

If paid handsomely for their services, the Vodanicuses are more than willing to escort the adventurers to the Great Dome. The dwarfs neglect to mention, however, that the Pale Ones of House Ch'elann consider them deadly enemies. The dwarfs' base fee is 1,500 silver pieces per character. They negotiate with only one of the characters, and so the adventurers may only make one Haggle Test to try to lower this cost. Each result level achieved in a Haggle Test against the Vodanicus family lowers the cost per character by 100 silver pieces.

The Vodanicus family tends to be a close-mouthed bunch, rarely volunteering information. If asked about the dangers of the trip, the dwarfs exaggerate wildly (no mean feat, considering that the journey is plenty dangerous). The dwarfs claim that the river system is crawling with Horrors, aquatic blood monkeys, and cadaver men who are half trout. But the Vodanicuses do not mention any of the real hazards the adventurers are about to face.

Mountain Trek

The first stage of the journey is a four-day trek up one of the Tylon Mountains, Mount Jhacsaan. For the first three-and-a-half days, the trip is a moderately steep hike. The Vodanicuses haul two massive rafts up with them, insisting that the adventurers do their share of the lugging. (If they can convince the adventurers to do more than their share, so much the better.) Each raft is 5 yards long by 3 yards wide , large enough to carry 10 human-sized Namegivers on board each raft. The rafts are sturdy enough to survive the punishment they take throughout the trip (The canal boat is adequate if stats are required; see p. 159 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**).

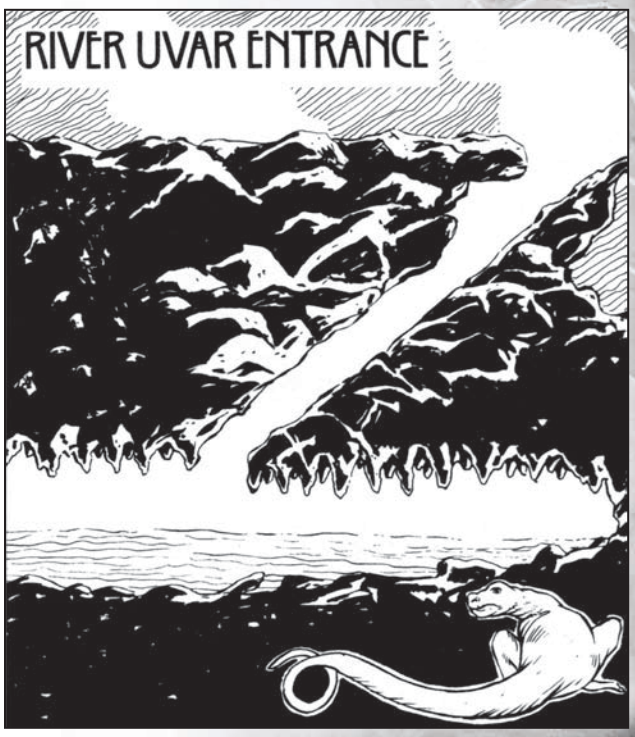
Late on the third day of the mountain trek, when the group has camped for the night, a gang of 10 mountain scorchers accosts them (use the ork scorcher statistics provided on p. 282 of **Bond Breaker**). The Vodanicuses promised the scorchers a cut of their last haul in exchange for safe passage and then double-crossed them. The orks, led by a big bruiser Named Buunpak, insist on being paid double. And they growl and rattle their swords to emphasize that they mean business. The Vodanicuses attempt to get the adventurers to pay them off. The total is 500 silvers. If the adventurers refuse to pay, a fight ensues. Play out engagements involving player characters. Use simple sketches to describe skirmishes between the scorchers and Vodanicuses. If the dwarfs take part in the fighting, the orks decapitate Second Brother Vodanicus. His family seems little affected by this tragedy. Unless the adventurers insist, they do not even bother to bury his corpse.

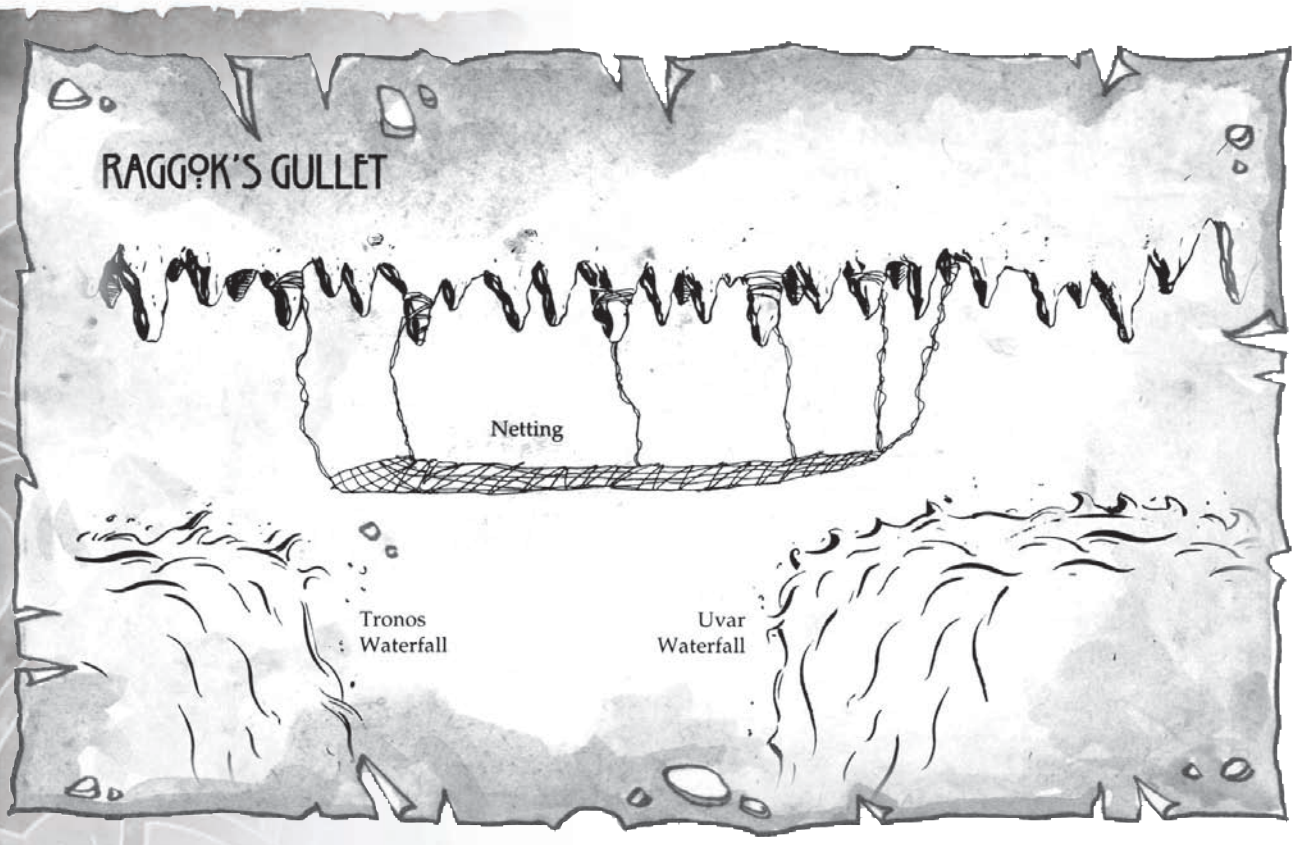
The final leg of the mountain trek involves a climb up a 70-yard high rocky cliff (see p. 106 of the **Player's Compendium** for climbing rules). The Difficulty Number for climbing this cliff without the aid of ropes is 12. The Vodanicuses scale the mountain like spiders, hauling the rafts up after them with ropes and pulleys. If a character uses these ropes and pulleys, he gains a +6 bonus to his Climbing Tests. After the climb, the Vodanicus family leads the adventurers to a cave mouth in the side of Mount Jhacsaan. To enter the cave, the characters must make an additional climbing roll to scale the jutting lip of rock that forms the cave floor.

This cave opens onto one of the several tributaries that feed the underground River Uvar. As rain-bearing clouds hit the Tylon Mountains and burst, the water floods down the mountainside, then gets caught by the rock lip and channeled into the mountain. The cave is a bad place to be in a rainstorm or when the snowcaps melt, as flash flooding can easily sweep someone away.

To the River Uvar

The cave leads to a vent that slopes downward to a huge underground pool. To carry their heavy rafts through this passage without slipping, the characters must make successful Climbing (5) Tests. If a character's test fails, the character plunges into the frigid river water below. Any character who hits the water risks catching cold or pneumonia and must make a Toughness (6) Test to resist getting sick. Characters who become ill suffer a cumulative penalty of –1 per day to all Action Tests until they are cured. Characters may be cured by magical means (a questor of Garlen's healing ability will do the trick) or through a week's rest in a warm, dry environment. (Unfortunately for sick characters, the Great Dome does not fit the bill.)





Characters enjoying the benefits of protective spells such as Weather Cloak do not catch cold or pneumonia if dunked.

Needless to say, the Vodanicuses all make their nimble way down the vent with no problems, drop the rafts into the water and jump onto them. Each character must make a Dexterity (or appropriate Talent) Test against a Difficulty Number of 6 to jump onto a raft without tumbling into the drink. The Vodanicus family openly ridicules anyone who gets soaked.

The dwarfs paddle the rafts from the pool down the tributary, which soon feeds into the River Uvar. The Uvar is a fast-moving river that courses down through the mountain at a steep angle. The rafts drift at an average speed of thirty miles an hour. This speed varies with the slope of the river; sometimes it slows to a crawl, and sometimes it speeds up.

Rapids

At one point the raft begins to accelerate rapidly. Aunt Vodanicus shouts, "Hold onto your loincloths! Raggok's Gullet ahead!"

Give the adventurers just enough time to get nervous at this Name, and then describe the wash of whirling white foam the rafts are speeding toward at a breakneck pace. The adventurers are about to hit the worst rapids in this underground thrill ride. The Vodanicuses grab for leather straps fasted to the rafts, and the adventurers should do the same. Even windling characters have to hold on for dear life, as the roof of the passageway is lined with sharp stalactites that make flying above the rafts hazardous.

To stay on their rafts, each character must make a successful Strength Test (or appropriate other Talent Test, at the gamemaster's discretion) against a Difficulty Number of 8. Any character who fails this test is thrown from a raft and hits either the stalactites or a wall. Characters thrown from a raft take Step 12/2D10 damage. No armor protects against this damage. The character is then thrown across the rapids (included in the above damage) and tossed into the deeper river water past the rocks. At this point, the character is in danger of drowning (see p. 248 of the **Player's Compendium**). The Vodanicuses throw a rope to any character ending up in the water, if possible.

Only one member of the Vodanicus family—Uncle Vodanicus—is thrown from his raft. The impact kills him instantly. Aunt Vodanicus looks a trifle upset, but the others brush off his death. They want to get on with the journey and collect their fat fee.

Raggok's Gullet

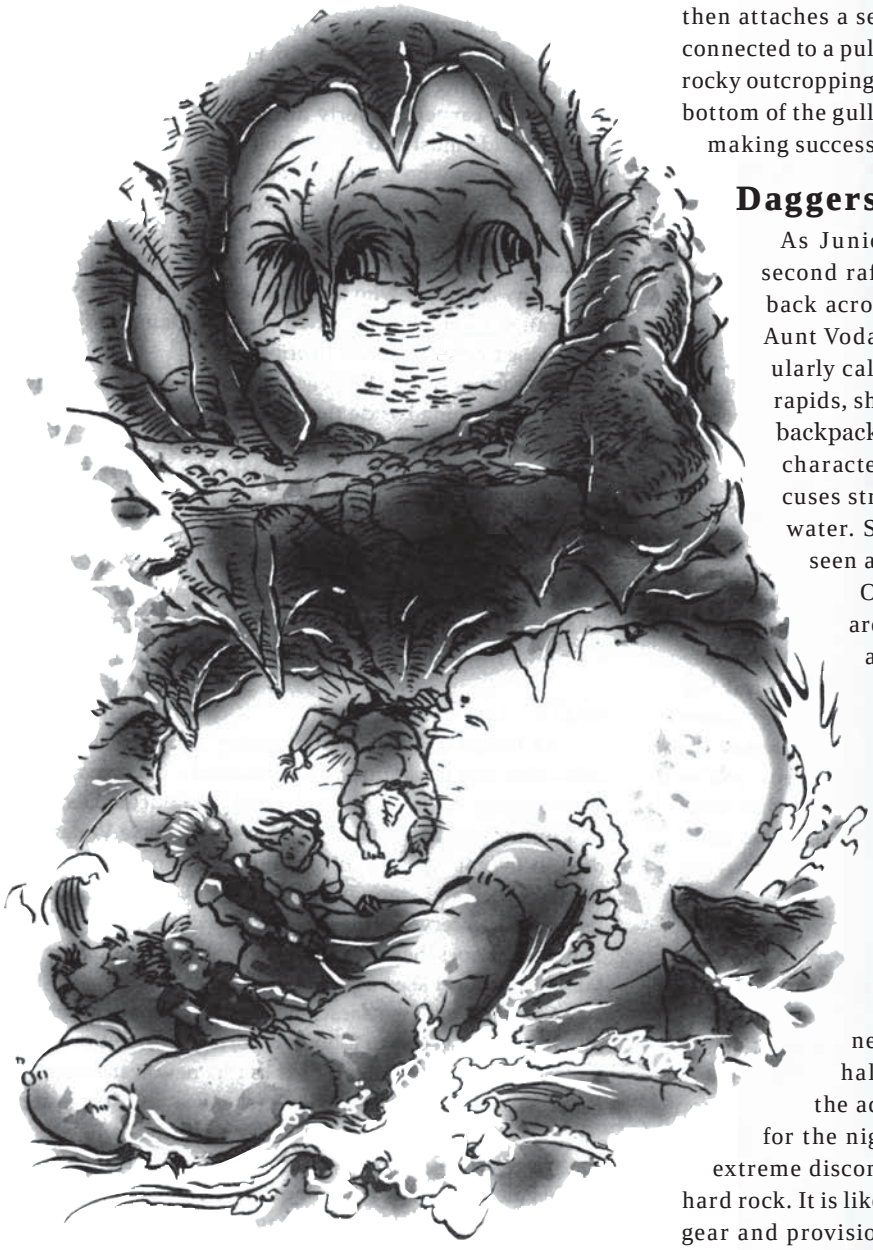
After the rapids, the rafts briefly slow down. Suddenly, Mother Vodanicus shouts to the adventurers, "Hope you're good jumpers—Raggok's Gullet is coming up!"

If the adventurers ask for more information, Mother Vodanicus continues. Read the following aloud:

> *"This river ends in about ten minutes. We've got another two minutes or so in level water, then we hit a steep slope. The river gets faster than an ork on his wedding night and shoots us over a waterfall. Two rivers converge there, with a waterfall on either side. We call this place Raggok's Gullet because the Passions only know where all the water goes. We've hung a net between the two waterfalls—when the raft shoots over the falls, you've got to grab the net and scuttle over to the other side. There's just enough rock to stand on there so's you don't go plunging over the other waterfall. Get to them rocks and we'll tell you what to do next."*

The adventurers have one chance to leap up and grab onto the netting strung over the tops of the two waterfalls. Each character must make a Dexterity Test (or Lizard Leap, Great Leap, or other similar Talent or Skill Test) against a Difficulty Number of 9. Any character who fails this test misses the netting and goes over the Uvar Falls. The drop is about 15 yards; anyone going over suffers appropriate Falling damage and is pounded by the plummeting water after hitting bottom. Such characters must make three Damage Tests to see how badly they are injured. The first two Damage Tests are at Step 20/D20+D8+D6, the result of the fall; the third Damage Test is at Step 10/D10+D6, the result of the water pounding them at the bottom. No armor protects against this damage.

Windling characters can attempt to fly across the falls, but the mist from the churning water may well get their wings wet and prevent them from flying (see p. 49 of the **Player's Compendium**). To avoid plummeting into Raggok's Gullet while flying across, windlings must make successful Toughness (8) Tests.



Non-windling characters attempting to fly or levitate across by some means must contend with a powerful downdraft between the two waterfalls. To navigate through this, such characters must make appropriate tests against a Difficulty Number of 15. For example, an Illusionist using a Flying Carpet spell must make a Spellcasting (15) Test to keep the carpet properly airborne. A character using Gliding Stride must make a Gliding Stride (15) Test, and so on.

Characters who grab the netting must make it across the net while hanging upside down over Raggok's Gullet. This feat requires a successful Dexterity (6) Test. Boatmen, Air Sailors, and Sky Raiders may make Dexterity-based Half-Magic (6) Tests instead. Any character who fails this test falls into the pounding water and must make a Step 10/D8+D6 and two Step 20/D20+D8+D6 Damage Tests to determine the extent of his injuries, as described above.

Characters who make it across the net can jump onto a rocky outcropping beside the Tronos Falls. Those who end up in Raggok's Gullet must be rescued. Junior Vodanicus rescues the rafts and any adventurers who fail to get across. He rappels down a long rope attached to the netting and then attaches a set of ropes to each raft. These ropes are connected to a pulley system; the Vodanicuses stand on the rocky outcropping and heave the rafts up. Characters at the bottom of the gullet can rappel up the rope after Junior by making successful Climbing (7) Tests.

Daggers in the Soul

As Junior is attaching the pulley rope to the second raft—after any adventurers have scuttled back across to the outcropping—Betrayer seizes Aunt Vodanicus. Deciding that Junior was particularly callous when Uncle Vodanicus died in the rapids, she pulls a sling and some stones from her backpack and starts firing at Junior. Unless the characters quickly intervene, the other Vodanicuses struggle with Aunt and knock her into the water. She plunges over the falls and is never seen again.

Once Junior, the characters and the rafts are all on the outcropping, the group follows a portage beside the raging waterfall. The outcropping next to this new waterway, the River Tronos, continues for several miles until the waters grow calm. At that point, the dwarfs put the rafts back in the water and paddle upstream to the Great Dome, home of the Pale Ones' Great House of Ch'elann.

Partway through the portage, someone notices that Wife Vodanicus is missing. The other family members assume that she must have missed the netting on the way over the falls. About halfway through this part of the journey, the adventurers and their guides make camp for the night on the outcropping. Emphasize the extreme discomfort of sleeping, soaked to the skin, on hard rock. It is likely the characters have lost some of their gear and provisions while going through the rapids and

over the falls, but make sure they still have the Blades.

During the night, the influence of the Blades inspires Grandmother Vodanicus to creep up to the character who has suffered the least damage and attack using Surprise Strike. Grandmother Vodanicus makes this attack at Step 16/D20+D8 and does Step 18/D20+D12 damage. If the characters restrain Grandmother Vodanicus, they soon realize that she is completely insane. If they kill her, the other Vodanicuses angrily insist on an additional payment of 2,000 silvers to defray the costs of replacing their grandmother. Characters can use appropriate social skills or good roleplaying to calm the dwarfs down, pointing out that Grandmother Vodanicus did attack one of them without warning.

The journey to the territory of the Pale Ones takes one more day after Grandmother's psychotic episode. Sometime during this final day, Father Vodanicus makes a Surprise Strike against an unsuspecting adventurer. If the characters kill him, the Vodanicus family again demands a reparation payment.

Arrival

Eventually the raft reaches an area of progressively calmer water, as the underground passageways widen into huge and beautiful caverns elaborately decorated by centuries of dripping limestone. If the adventurers are using a light source (the dwarfs don't need one, as they have heat sight), it casts flickering shadows on these baroque shapes, making the pillars and columns look like mocking, hideous faces.

After a few minutes, another raft appears in the distance. As it approaches, the characters can see that it is full of spear-wielding Pale Ones. When the Pale Ones draw closer, they demand the immediate surrender of the adventuring party in the Name of Ch'elasmo, Shivalahala of the Great House of Ch'elann.

The surviving Vodanicuses shift from foot to foot nervously, confessing to the adventurers that the Ch'elann wants them dead for a list of offenses too long to detail. The dwarfs suggest surrender but first extract from the adventurers a promise of protection.

Troubleshooting

Once the adventurers start the journey, they have little opportunity to change course. If anything disastrous happens, let it happen. Don't fudge or save anyone at this point. This journey is one of the Deeds associated with the Blades and is worth 8,900 Legend Points—it should be extremely dangerous.

If the adventurers are having too easy a time of it, have other members of the Vodanicus family make Surprise Strike attacks. Adding more natural hazards, and even an attack or two from deepwater-espagra increases the challenge as well. Other creatures, such as alligators, gargoyles, cavern-dwelling sea snakes, or jub jubs, may also be used if more combat is desired.

Deepwater-Espagra (4)

DEX: 8 **STR**: 8 **TOU**: 8
PER: 5 **WIL**: 10 **CHA**: 4

Initiative: 9
Number of Actions: 3
Attack (3): 11
Damage:
Bite, Claws, Tail (3): 11

Physical Defense: 10
Spell Defense: 8
Social Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 6
Mystic Armor: 6

Death Rating: 44 (56)
Wound Threshold: 13
Unconsciousness Rating: 36 (46)

Recovery Tests: 4
Knockdown: 9

Combat Movement: 40/46✦/64#
Full Movement: 80/92✦/128#

✦ The second value is the creature's flying Movement rate.
The third value is the creature's swimming Movement rate.

Powers: Durability (2), Swimming S (3): 11

Legend Points: 205

Equipment: None

Loot: Scales worth D20 × 10 silver pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

At first glance, deepwater-espagra resemble their above-ground cousins. These flying and swimming predators are colored a lustrous shade of emerald-green rather than blue, and look much more like iguanas than small dragons, having large spiny projections from head to tail. Their strong tails are used for directing propulsion and these spiny projections act as fins streamlining their movement while in the water. Deepwater-espagras have a reduced wingspan of 10 feet or less, as they rely more on swimming than flying to capture prey, and the large spiny projections allow less room for wings to grow on their backs. Their smaller wings make deepwater-espagra slower fliers and less agile than other espagra.

These predators live beneath the ground near underwater lakes and rivers. They feed on underwater creatures, cave-dwelling creatures, and humanoids using the river for transportation. Some deepwater-espagra scales exude elemental water magic. These scales add luster and brilliance to the other scales, making the creature glisten in a way that other deepwater-espagra—and many Name-giver races—find appealing. Master clothiers can tailor garments using deepwater-espagra scales; such clothes look richer than other fine garments, even those decorated with precious jewels (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 459 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Rules

An agile beast, the deepwater-espagra can strike at three different targets simultaneously without penalties, one with each attack, as long as the targets stand or swim within 3 yards of each other.

Swooping Attack: A deepwater-espagra's Swooping attack gains a +6 bonus to the Damage Test if the creature hits the target character, but the espagra sacrifices its remaining two attacks that round. A deepwater-espagra

may make a Swooping attack after it has used its Full (flying) Movement, and may follow up with three non-Swooping attacks, starting in the following round. As weak fliers, deepwater-espagra cannot make Swooping attacks in consecutive rounds. Deepwater-espagra often make this attack against prey on the edge of riverboats to knock them into the water, then swim after them, clawing and biting them while they are helpless.

Rain of Betrayal

The adventurers reach the Great Dome, a vast cavern inhabited by Pale Ones. There they gain an audience with Shivalahala Ch'elasmo, who recounts her peoples' legends of the battle between Betrayer and the Seven Spokes. She then supplies the adventurers with a blood magic ritual concocted by the Pale Ones' ancestors to remove the Horror from the Blades. Meanwhile, the presence of the Blades is tearing the once-peaceful t'skrang community apart.

Setting the Stage

As the characters enter the Great Dome, read the following aloud:

You have heard the term "great dome" used before to describe the fantastic underwater structures of the Serpent River t'skrang. Among the Pale Ones, the term refers to a gigantic underground cavern, at least thirty yards high and possibly a hundred yards deep.

A few light crystals glimmer here and there; evidently the Pale Ones, like dwarfs, can see by means other than bright light. In the lit areas, t'skrang of all ages practice various Artisan skills, read books or perform other tasks that require extra illumination. Elsewhere, the t'skrang move through the gloom like walking lanterns. Many of them have luminescent skin that gives off a soft glow of white, green, and blue.

Enormous limestone columns run from ceiling to floor, disappearing into dark water. Centuries of dripping lime have produced a number of natural platforms in the water. Each platform contains one of the t'skrangs' leather tents. Some are small dwellings, others must serve purposes you can't even guess at.

Your t'skrang escorts, their spears at the ready, signal for you to stop. One of them scuttles nimbly up several wet limestone platforms, then disappears into the largest of the leather tents. Several minutes later, a glowing t'skrang clad in robes of silver brushes through the tent doors and peers down at you.

"I am Ch'elasmo Iffion H'uinmar Ch'elann, Shivalahala of the House of Ch'elann," she says, her age-brittle voice echoing from the surrounding rock. "I am the one you have journeyed so far to petition. You may approach."

If any members of the Vodanicus family are left alive, the shivalahala *adds: "As for those dwarfs, take them out and kill them."*

Themes and Images

Emphasize the strangeness of the atmosphere. The dark and wet underworld of the Pale Ones should seem exotic and unnatural to any surface-dweller. Portray the Pale Ones, especially Ch'elasmo, as grim and aloof. They help the adventurers out of a sense of duty, not friendship.

The theme of this section is betrayal, as the supernatural power of the Blades turns this tightly knit community into a spawning ground of discord.

Behind the Scenes

Ch'elasmo is very worried about her people. About a week ago, a youngster saw the pattern of the Seven Spokes manifest itself in the grotto where the ancient heroes forced the Horror Betrayer from its body hundreds of years ago. This event has long been prophesied in the chronicles of House Ch'elann.

In their fateful confrontation with Betrayer, the Seven Spokes received aid from R'ashani, the *shivalahala* at that time. The Horror had taken up residence in the labyrinth of underground caves that surrounded the Great Dome and had Horror-marked many of R'ashani's people. When the ork heroes came to destroy Betrayer, R'ashani used her vast knowledge of sorcery to develop the blood magic ritual that the orks used to separate Betrayer from its material form and imprison its spirit in their magical daggers.

After the orks departed, seemingly in triumph, R'ashani had a series of visions about the Blades. The visions showed her that imprisoning the Horror in the Blades had merely provided a means for it to spread its influence and threaten later generations. Her visions also showed her that the fates of House Ch'elann and the Horror were intertwined. R'ashani prophesied that one day a new group of heroes would come to the Great Dome, bearing the Blades. A great battle would ensue. The harbinger of this dread period, which R'ashani dubbed the Time of Betrayal, would be the appearance of the sign of the Blades in the grotto where the original bearers of the Blades fought and defeated Betrayer.

Appalled by her visions, R'ashani spent the next several years creating a new blood magic ritual. This ritual enables heroes who have woven Rank Eight threads to the Blades of Cara Fahd to create a new form for the Horror—a corrupt mingling of Horror spirit, Name-giver blood, and True water. Once recreated in this form, the Horror can be truly killed, though doing so is extremely difficult. R'ashani knew it was possible that the Horror wanted to be recreated in this manner, but her visions told her that allowing it to live would place her people in even graver danger.

The Fate of the Vodanicus Family

If the characters object to the t'skrang hauling the Vodanicus family away, Ch'elasmo huffily dismisses their concerns. She tells them that the effect of the Blades guar-

antees that the dwarfs will attempt to betray them. By now, the adventurers have seen enough evidence of such betrayal to confirm this statement. If they press the issue, the *shivalahala* tells them that she is the only Name-giver alive who has the Key Knowledge they seek. She then gives them a choice: they can save these base and vulgar dwarfs or they can save Barsaive from Betrayer.

If the adventurers seem inclined to fight for the dwarfs, the remaining members of the Vodanicus family immediately hurt their own cause by bitterly cursing Ch'elasmo and all t'skrang, as well as the characters for not immediately leaping to their defense.

If the characters decide to fight for the dwarfs despite this provocation, Ch'elasmo warns them that they are making a terrible mistake for which all of Barsaive will pay the price. If they persist, the t'skrang attack without mercy. Ch'elasmo casts Silver Shadow spells on characters attacking with metal weapons and then fires Dragon's Breath at them (for the spell description, see p. 318 of the **Player's Compendium**). With this spell, she can hammer up to eleven characters per strike with an average of 30 Damage Points each.

Each victim catches fire after the first hit, suffering Step 7/D12 damage each round until the fire is extinguished by a successful Willpower Test against the spell's Effect Step. Ch'elasmo has her Dragon's Breath spell in an Armored Matrix, so one of the threads is already woven.

Dealing with Ch'elasmo

If the adventurers cause no trouble over the Vodanicus family, Ch'elasmo invites them into her tent, a huge affair decorated with stark and primitive-looking artifacts of the House of Ch'elann. As always, the *shivalahala* is attended by a group of spear-carrying t'skrang who watch the adventurers closely.

Ch'elasmo asks the characters to introduce themselves and to recount their legends. She then quizzes them carefully about the Blades, especially the manner in which the adventurers acquired them and gained their various Key Knowledges.

Having heard what she needs to hear, she tells the adventurers that she will give them the final Key Knowledge they seek if they promise slay the Horror once and for all. She acknowledges that killing the Horror involves a blood magic ritual but reassures them that the great good of slaying Betrayer would far outweigh any taint from this desperate measure. Finally, she assures the adventurers that they will never rest easily until Betrayer is slain; until they kill the Horror, they will spread betrayal and bloodshed wherever they go.

If the adventurers impress Ch'elasmo as honest and capable and they agree to her demands, she freely gives them the Key Knowledge and teaches them the ritual. If the adventurers do not impress her, she demands that they swear a blood oath to slay the Horror. This special oath, also designed by R'ashani, causes each adventurer to suffer a Blood Wound with a number of Damage Points equal to the character's Wound Threshold, which becomes permanent and leaves runic scars if they have not done their best to accomplish the sworn deed after a month and a day have passed (see **Blood Wounds** on p. 259 of the **Player's Compendium**). This Wound cannot be healed until the deed is accomplished. In either case, paraphrase the information provided above in Ch'elasmo's formal speaking style.

Grim Preparations

The characters spend a week learning R'ashani's blood ritual, and during this time they see the effects of the Blades on the Pale One community. Numerous brawls break out between families and even within families. On the second-to-last day of the training, all 17 occupants of one family tent are found murdered. Ch'elasmo's guards track down a suspect and beat him to death instead of bringing him before the *shivalahala* as the law decrees. Ch'elasmo, clearly grieving over these events, tells the adventurers that this rain of betrayal will fall on all Barsaive if they do not slay Betrayer. She confesses that even she has been tempted to betray them by teaching them the wrong ritual, even though such an act would be senseless and suicidal.

The ritual takes 15 minutes to perform. As it unfolds, each adventurer takes his blade and cuts one-eighth of the wheel pattern into the back of his hand. This action causes each character 3 permanent Damage Points, and the injury does not heal for a year and a day (see **Blood Magic** in the **Workings of Magic** chapter on p. 259 of the **Player's Compendium**). If Betrayer is still alive after a year and a day, the damage remains until the Horror is slain. The characters then mix the blood from these wounds with a ball of True water supplied by Ch'elasmo. They must then throw the bloody True water into the middle of the pattern that floats at the site of Betrayer's first defeat.

By reaching the Great Dome and learning the ritual from Ch'elasmo, the adventurers have fulfilled the Rank Eight Key Knowledge and Deed requirements for the Blades. (Getting to the Great Dome is close enough to "the place where the Seven Spokes defeated the Horror" for magical purposes.) This means the characters receive 8,900 Legend points each, sufficient to weave threads to the Blades. If the characters choose to weave these threads, they gain abilities that will help them against the Horror, including a +6 Spell Defense bonus. If they do not think to increase the thread ranks, Ch'elasmo suggests doing so.

The Final Treachery

Just as the adventurers have gone through a final dry run for the ritual and Ch'elasmo pronounces their training over, the *shivalahala*'s tent is invaded by crazed t'skrang guards, as well as any members of the Vodanicus family who were taken off to be killed. (The devious dwarfs, aided by the effect of the Blades, have convinced their captors to help them take vengeance against Ch'elasmo.) The marauding band includes three assailants for each adventurer. Ch'elasmo cannot bear to harm her own people, and uses her magic against them only if the adventurers are having a hard time handling them.

Statistics for the dwarfs and t'skrang guards appear in the **Cast of Characters** section on p. 340.

Setting Off

When the adventurers are ready to depart, Ch'elasmo introduces them to T'chava, an adolescent t'skrang. She reminds the t'skrang that he is risking his life and says he can still refuse this mission if he wants to. The brave young t'skrang takes a deep breath, then replies that he is the only one aside from her who can lead the adventurers to the right place, and that the *shivalahala* is too valuable to the House to risk losing her.

Giving in, Ch'elasmo hands the adventurers the True water they need to complete the ritual. T'chava then leads the adventurers to a raft, bids them board it and begins poling down the River Tronos.

T'CHAVA

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10
Strength (12): 5/D8
Toughness (12): 5/D8
Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (15): 6/D10
Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 3
Social Defense: 8
Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 34
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 9
Knockdown: 5/D8
Unconsciousness Rating: 26

Combat Movement: 26
Full Movement: 52

Skills

Artisan:
Mapmaking (3): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:
Subterranean River Lore (3): 9/D8+D6

General:
Fishing (2): 8/2D6
Melee Weapons (2): 8/2D6
Navigation (3): 9/D8+D6
Read River (2): 8/2D6
Sailing (2): 8/2D6
Swimming (2): 7/D12
Throwing Weapons (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Leather (Phys 3)

Dagger (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)
2 × Spears (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 18–30–36)

Adventurer's Kit
Fishing Kit
Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case
Painting Tools
Trail Ration (1 week)
Traveler's Garb
Writing Kit

Loot

3 silver pieces

Legend Award

55 Legend Points

Notes

T'chava possesses the t'skrang racial ability of Tail Attack.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The adventurers are unlikely to feel honor-bound to save any surviving Vodanicuses from execution, considering that several of the dwarfs have already tried to kill them. If the characters decide to ignore Ch'elasmo's warnings and attack the t'skrang guards anyway, they have made a disastrous error and must pay for it.

If they do not die in the ensuing battle and somehow manage to escape from the Great Dome, they never learn the Key Knowledge they need, never destroy Betrayer and are forever after shackled with cursed weapons that bring chaos to any community they enter.

DREAD REBIRTH

T'chava leads the adventurers to the grotto where the Seven Spokes destroyed Betrayer's body and imprisoned its spirit in the Blades. They encounter and fight the ghosts of the Seven Spokes, then conduct the blood magic ritual to force Betrayer into a new physical form so that they can kill it once and for all. (Or so they hope.)

SETTING THE STAGE

When the adventurers have embarked, read the following aloud:

Tense and quiet, T'chava paddles the raft down what seems like endless winding passageways. Then you pass under an overhanging arch and onto a wide, swift-running stretch of river. T'chava speaks for the first time, identifying the waterway as the River Tronos. Almost immediately, he lapses back into his shy silence.

After poling for fifteen minutes or so down the Tronos, T'chava expertly shifts the raft from the fast mid-river undercurrent and turns a corner into another passageway where the water runs much slower. This passage is about ten yards wide at its mouth but soon narrows until the raft almost brushes its sides. "It is not far now to the grotto," T'chava whispers, turning one last corner. You've not found it easy to keep track of all of the twists and turns, but you think you may be headed east.

The passageway widens into a cavern, and you see T'chava's jaw drop in surprise. You follow his gaze and see why—another party of rafters has beaten you here. A pair of dim lanterns shines on seven orks, all girded for battle.

Themes and Images

This encounter is the climax of several adventures. Make every scene in it as dramatic and horrific as you possibly can.

Behind the Scenes

The adventurers are face to face with the shades of the original Seven Spokes, the legendary heroes for whom the Blades were first forged. The ghosts are under the control of Betrayer, their spirits shackled forever to this plane by their blood link to the Blades, this place, and the monstrosity that dwells in the daggers. Because betrayal feeds Betrayer, the Horror wants the Seven Spokes to befriend the adventurers and get them to let their guards down, then attack them.

The ghosts must carry out the Horror's wishes, but want to do as much as they can to subvert the Horror. They want Betrayer dead so that their spirits will be freed. These desires prompt them to honestly answer any questions the adventurers pose to them. Betrayer will not permit them to state directly that they are the ghosts of the slain heroes; the adventurers must arrive at this point by asking the right questions.

Once identified, the ghosts can tell the adventurers any part of the background of the Blades that they do not yet know. They can also give the adventurers details on what Betrayer looked like when they fought it: the Horror was a seething wall of flesh from which massive tentacles and clawed legs formed to strangle and tear at them. It regenerated as quickly as they could damage it, so they decided that the only way to slay it was to separate its twisted soul from its obscene body. The adventurers may not realize that this description is of little use, as the blood ritual will create a new physical form for the Horror.

As soon as the adventurers seem to be running out of questions, the ghosts abruptly attack, screaming that they are controlled by the Horror and are sorry for what they are doing. The ghosts attack by touching their opponents, causing the living matter they touch to decay. Any Wounds they inflict look and smell like decomposing flesh. They do not attack T'chava, as Betrayer considers the young t'skrang inconsequential.

The ghosts can only be damaged by the Blades of Cara Fahd. However, any character with a normally low rank in Melee Weapons can use his thread rank to the Blades as his Melee Weapons rank for attacks against these ghosts. If the adventurers are losing badly, one of the remorseful ghosts suggests this to them.

The ghosts are not destroyed when they take damage equal to their Death Ratings. Instead, they dissipate and return later if the adventurers slay Betrayer.

Ghosts (7)

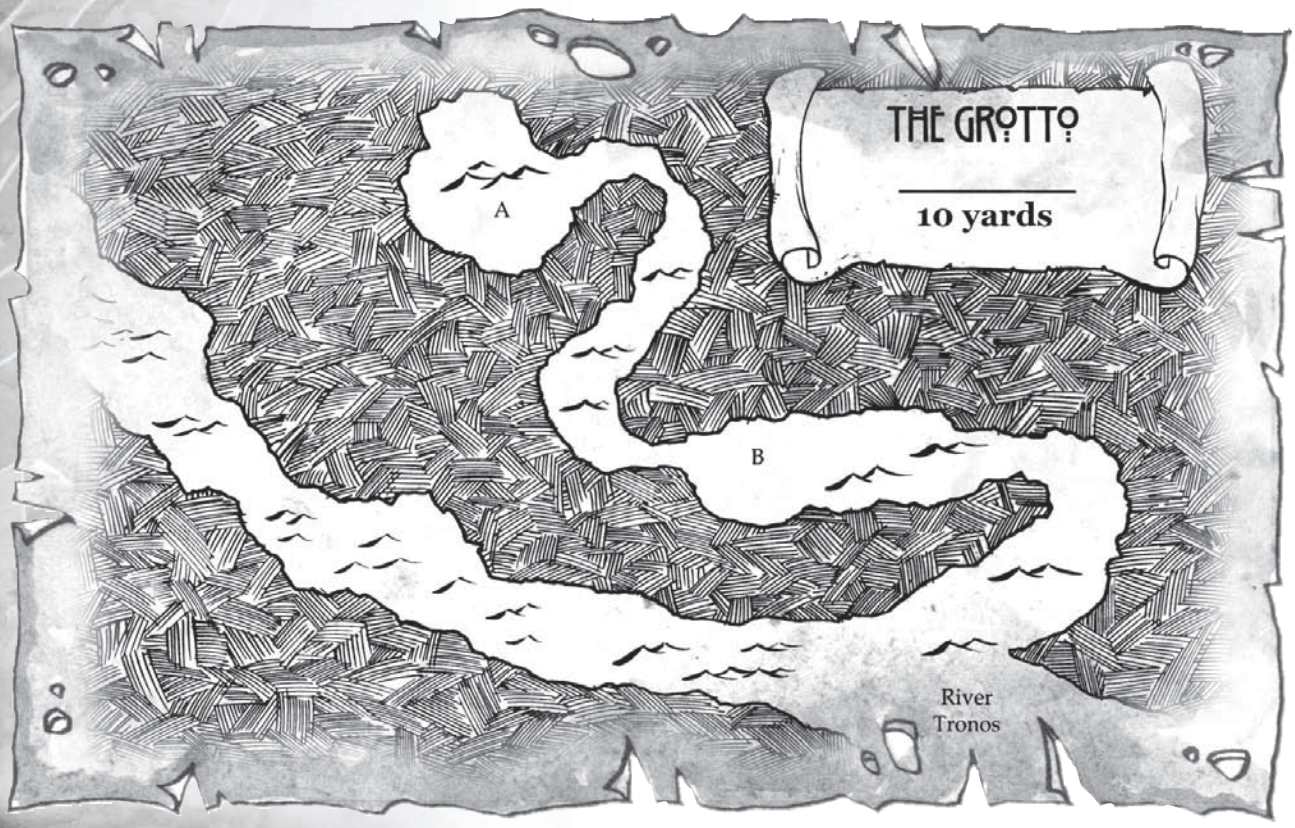
DEX: 8 **STR**: 8 **TOU**: 4
PER: 8 **WIL**: 2 **CHA**: 8

Initiative: 8
Number of Actions: 1
Attack (8): 16
Damage:
Claws (4): 12

Physical Defense: 15
Spell Defense: NA
Social Defense: 15
Physical Armor: 0
Mystic Armor: NA

Death Rating: 28
Wound Threshold: NA
Recovery Tests: 1
Knockdown: Immune
Unconsciousness Rating: Immune

Combat Movement: 38
Full Movement: 76



Powers: Decaying Touch (10): 12

Legend Points (2): 880

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Rules

Decaying Touch: The ghost touches its victim and makes a Decaying Touch Test against the target's Spell Defense. Decaying Touch causes living matter to decay and rot. The victim takes 2 Damage Points per round until he makes a successful Toughness Test against the result of the Decaying Touch Test, or the ghost is slain. No armor protects against this damage.

Battle in the Grotto

When the adventurers finally reach the grotto (marked on the map on p. 336), T'chava points out the pattern he discovered several days ago. It has grown to fill the grotto's entire 10-yard diameter and is bubbling and foaming. If the players do not immediately recognize it as the wheel symbol on the backs of the Blades, secretly roll a Perception (7) or Evidence Analysis (7) Test for each character. A successful test enables a character to realize this.

The adventurers can now commence the blood magic ritual to coax Betrayer out of the Blades. They may search the grotto first if they wish but they find nothing of interest aside from the pattern in the water. The grotto is just an ordinary underground cavern with no other exits. There are a number of ledges and shallows around its perimeter for the characters to stand on.

When the ritual begins, a terrible howling sound echoes throughout the grotto. Once the ritual is completed, the pattern stops bubbling and abruptly disappears. The howling stops, replaced by an eerie silence.

Then, suddenly, a tendril of red water erupts through the bottom of the raft and hurtles towards T'chava. It smashes through his jaw and down his throat, then back out again, literally tearing him apart. The tendril rips back below the surface of the water, leaving T'chava's mutilated corpse lying on the raft.

The chamber echoes with a disembodied, burbling voice. Read the following dialogue aloud:

"Glorious, glorious to be physical again! I have missed the pleasure of killing for myself. I thank you, my deliverers! I owe this new shape to you, and I promise that I shall wreak much havoc in it. Pardon my ingratitude in slaying you—fools!"

The showdown begins; statistics for Betrayer appear on p. 338. Betrayer intends to kill all the characters, savoring each death like fine wine. Exulting in its new incarnation, it lashes out physically at first, trying to kill as many of the characters as possible with its razor-sharp tendrils. During this initial phase, the submerged Betrayer is somewhat reckless, leaving its limbs above water as readily available targets after making attacks.

At the same time, its voice rings out in the adventurers' minds (Betrayer's tie to them through the Blades works as an effective Horror mark). The Horror offers "mighty power" to any adventurers who betray their fellows by striking against them. (In game terms, the Horror will provide the "mighty power" by using its Karma Tap ability to substitute its Karma step for a character's and allow that Karma to be applied to any Attack Test made against another adventurer.) Betrayer also offers to spare any traitorous character's life and to grant him immortality. This last offer is a blatant lie, and the Horror greedily devours any such converts at the first convenient opportunity.

If the Horror has trouble damaging one or more of the characters, it changes tactics and attempts to grapple its targets (see p. 411 of the **Player's Compendium**) and pull them underwater to drown. For drowning rules, see **Drowning** on p. 248 of the **Player's Compendium**. At the gamemaster' s discretion, such a drowning character may be allowed to attack the limb holding him, or others may damage it sufficiently, such as Wounding it, causing Betrayer to release the drowning character from his grasp. Destroying the raft can also cause all the characters in it to tread water and seek solid footing before resuming their attacks. In addition, as combat proceeds, Betrayer keeps his limbs below the water between strikes necessitating the use of delayed or reserved attacks, spells, or ranged attacks able to penetrate under the water to hit Betrayer at all.

In its new form, Betrayer can be truly damaged only by characters using talents that have been enhanced by their ties to the Blades of Cara Fahd. The Damage step of any other attack ability incurs a penalty of -10, and so only the adventurers have a fighting chance of killing Betrayer. If Betrayer takes damage to within 40 points of its Unconsciousness Rating, it retreats completely to the bottom of the grotto and casts Skin Shift at the adventurers who have been most effective in damaging it. If it takes damage to within 20 points of its Unconsciousness Rating, it uses its Terror power and flees down the River Tronos and out into Barsaive. Characters who resist the Terror spell might be allowed to take a parting shot at Betrayer at the gamemaster's discretion. The fleeing Horror howls an oath of eternal vengeance against the adventurers as it goes.

If the characters manage to slay Betrayer before it tries to escape, they immediately feel as if an immense weight has been lifted from their spirits. The ghosts of the Seven Spokes reappear before them, this time surrounded by light. The ghosts tell the adventurers that the curse has been lifted from the Blades of Cara Fahd, and the spirits thank their benefactors for freeing them to go on to the afterlife (whatever that might be). They remind the adventurers to use the Blades as they were originally intended—as a force for good—and then they vanish. If Betrayer flees, the gamemaster may wish to have the Horror heal itself some and then ambush the characters as they work their way back to the Great Dome, to give them another chance to finish off Betrayer or die trying. Otherwise, the **Loose Ends** section describes a number of ways Betrayer can be used as a recurring nemesis.

Troubleshooting

By this point in the adventure, the characters are unlikely to make many surprising choices. If they decide to back out at the last minute, so be it.

This final confrontation is meant to be tough, and so some or all of the adventurers may die in this battle. They are facing a legendary Horror—tackling it is a genuine risk that may bring a heavy price.

Loose Ends

This section wraps up the adventure's loose ends and suggests ways to use story elements and characters from **Pure Liquids** in future **Earthdawn** adventures.

After the Adventure

If Betrayer escapes, the Horror regards the adventurers as its most dangerous foes, because only those wielding the Blades of Cara Fahd can seriously damage it. The Horror will corrupt other adepts and Name-givers and send them to threaten the adventurers, either through direct attacks or by more devious means such as framing them for crimes, causing problems for them with local authorities, spreading false rumors about them to tarnish their legends, and so on. Some of Betrayer's corrupted allies will spy on the adventurers, and when they are weakened by other struggles, the Horror will send its minions to finish them off.

If Betrayer is near the adventurers when an opportunity to harm them presents itself, the Horror will attack them personally. Whenever they encounter it, they will discover that it has grown stronger because it is constantly feeding on the discord it sows. To reflect this, increase the Horror's abilities and attributes and raise Betrayer's Defense Ratings each time the player characters run into it (see p. 440 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for guidelines).

If the adventurers kill Betrayer, all the people that it touched through the Blades will instantly sense the Horror's death and know that the adventurers did the great deed. As a result, the adventurers' fame will spread instantly throughout Barsaive. Whatever happens in the grotto, any surviving adventurers may return to the Great Dome. Ch'elasmo will arrange for an escort to take them back to the surface through a secret and much safer route than the one by which they came.

Awarding Legend Points

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter on p. 94 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, an adventure like **Pure Liquids** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a Ninth Circle character receives from 4,800 to 14,200 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session.

In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal. The creatures presented in this adventure have listings for Legend Points. These are the points characters earn for defeating the creatures.

The adventure goal for **Pure Liquids** is to confront and defeat Betrayer.

Cast of Characters

This section contains information and game statistics for Betrayer (in the physical form provided by the blood magic ritual), Ch'elasmo, members of the Vodanicus family and the rebellious t'skrang.

Feel free to modify statistics or create additional characters to better suit your players and campaign.

Betrayer

Betrayer is hard to see, because its new body is made of water and blood and it is attacking from underwater. If the characters manage to get a clear look at the Horror, the new form appears as a series of wheels within wheels, a complex and twisted three-dimensional version of the wheel design on the Blades. The center of this wheel contains a grotesque, ever-changing face, surrounded by seven tendrils. Betrayer uses the elastic tendrils to make physical attacks. The Horror can sharpen the ends of the tendrils to spear-like points at will.

Betrayer has spent centuries imprisoned in the Blades, and for the moment wants to physically destroy as many victims as possible. If it escapes from the final encounter, it gradually returns to its usual modus operandi: psychologically tormenting and destroying its victims from afar. It can feed on any negative emotion, but especially enjoys jealousy, the shock of betrayal, and the remorse of traitors.

Game Information

DEX: 15 **STR**: 15 **TOU**: 15
PER: 18 **WIL**: 15 **CHA**: 18

Initiative: 15
Number of Actions: 5
Attack (5): 20
Damage:
5 × Tentacles (10): 25

Physical Defense: 19
Spell Defense: 23
Social Defense: 23
Physical Armor: 10
Mystic Armor: 11

Death Rating: 72 (180)
Wound Threshold: 21
Unconsciousness Rating: 65 (161)

Recovery Tests: 7
Knockdown: Immune

Combat Movement: 110
Full Movement: 220

Karma Points: 30
Karma Step: 13

Powers: Astral Sight (5): 23, Damage Shift (5): 20, Durability (12), Forge Horror Construct (5): 23, Horror Mark (5): 23, Karma Tap (5): 23, Skin Shift (5): 20, Spellcasting (5): 23, Terror (5): 23

Legend Points (5): 27,975

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Ch'elasmo

Ch'elasmo is a Twelfth Circle t'skrang Elementalist, polite without being warm or friendly. Portray Ch'elasmo as a distant and forbidding figure; she should seem a little menacing when the adventurers first meet her.

As they learn what is going on, they gradually realize that she is genuinely interested in the greater good of her people and all of Barsaive.

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10
Toughness (13): 6/D10
Willpower (17): 7/D12
Strength (12): 5/D8
Perception (18): 7/D12
Charisma (16): 7/D12

Characteristics

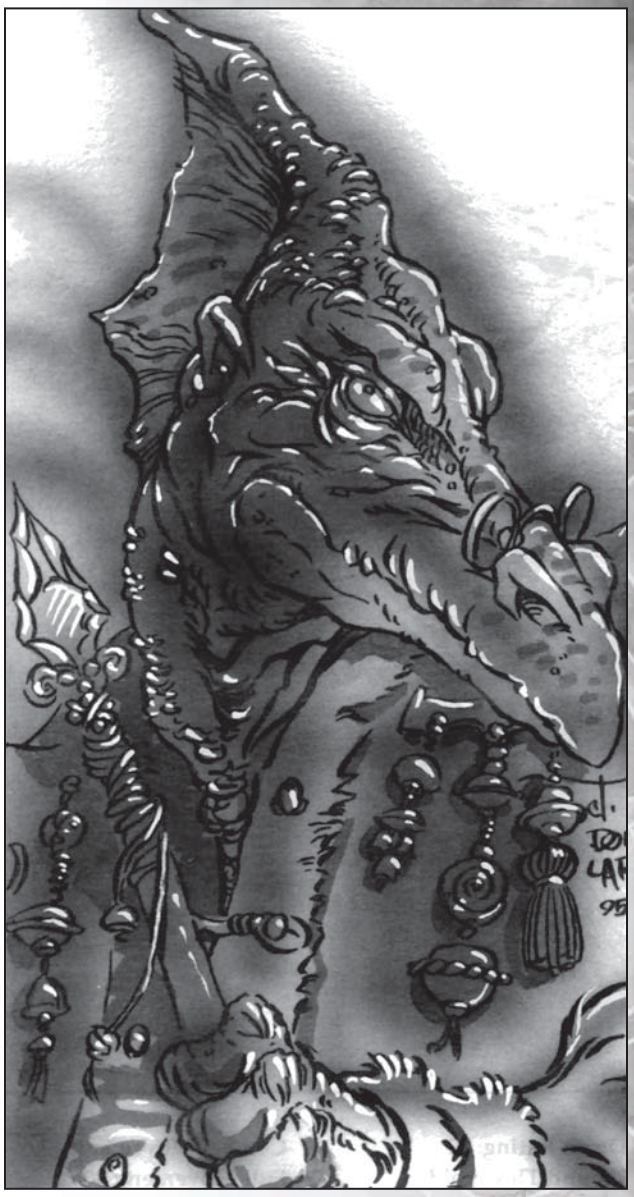
Physical Defense: 9
Spell Defense: 12
Social Defense: 10
Initiative: 6/D10
Physical Armor: 3
Mystic Armor: 3

Death Rating: 35 (80)*
Wound Threshold: 9
Unconsciousness Rating: 27 (60)*
Recovery Tests: 2
Knockdown: 5/D8

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 30
Full Movement: 60

Karma Points: 25
Karma Die: 4/D6



Talents (Knacks)

Animate Object (12): 19/D20+2D6
Armored Matrix (12): 12
Armored Matrix (12): 12
Astral Sight (12): 19/D20+2D6
Bargain with Summoned Creature [D] (12): 19/D20+2D6
Durability (4/3) (12): 12
Enhanced Matrix (12): 12
Enhanced Matrix (12): 12
Elemental Hold [D] (12): 19/D20+2D6
Elemental Tongues [D] (12): 19
Karma Ritual (12): 12
Read and Write Magic [D] (12): 19/D20+2D6
Read and Write Language (12): 19/D20+2D6
—Human, Obsidiman, *Or'zat**, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Theran, Troll, T'skrang, Windling
Reshape Object [D] (12): 19/D20+2D6
Spellcasting [D] (12): 19/D20+2D6
Spell Matrix (12): 12
Spell Matrix (12): 12
Spell Matrix (12): 12

Spell Matrix (12): 12
Summon (Elemental Spirits) [D] (12): 19/D20+2D6
Summoning Circle [D] (12): 19/D20+2D6
Temperature [D] (12): 19/D20+2D6
Thread Weaving (Elementalism) [D] (13): 20/D20+D8+D6 (Talent Linking, Weave Element)
Willforce (12): 19/D20+2D6

[D] Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.
* *Or'zat* is the ancient language of the orks, shorter and more guttural than the modern *Or'zet* (see p. 297 of the **Name-giver's Compendium**).

Skills

Artisan:
Juggling (3): 10/D10+D6

Knowledge:
Ancient Weapons (4): 11/D10+D8
Blood Magic (6): 13/D12+D10
Horror Lore (5): 12/2D10
Pale Ones History (7): 14/D20+D4
Ritual Magic (6): 13/D12+D10

General:
First Impression (3): 10/D10+D6
Read and Write Language (1): 8/2D6
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 9/D8+D6
—Dwarf (Throalic), T'skrang
Streetwise (3): 10/D10+D6
Tactics (3): 10/D10+D6

Equipment

Leather Armor (Phys 3)

Spear (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 18–30–36)
3 × Daggers (Damage 7/D12; Range 9–15–18)

Belt Pouch
Grimoire
Spectacles
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Spells

Elementalism (Any up to Twelfth Circle): Blade Fury [M], Dragon's Breath [A], Earth Darts [E], Ice Mace and Chain [M], Perimeter Alarm [M], Silver Shadow [A], Water Wall [M], Winds of Deflection [E]

[M] Denotes a spell currently attuned to a Spell Matrix.
[E] Denotes a spell currently attuned to an Enhanced Matrix.
[A] Denotes a spell currently attuned to an Armored Matrix.

Loot

Elemental Water Coin, Orichalcum Box (w/5 True water kernels)

Legend Award

38,725 Legend Points

Notes

Ch'elasmo possesses the t'skrang racial ability of Tail Attack.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests
Sixth Circle: Fire and Ice (1 Damage Point)
Seventh Circle: +1 Spell Defense
Eighth Circle: Karma on spell Effect Tests
Ninth Circle: Karma on Recovery Tests
Tenth Circle: +1 Social Defense
Eleventh Circle: +1 Physical and Spell Defense
Twelfth Circle: Earth and Wind (2 Damage Points)

T'SKRANG GUARDS

Use the following statistics for all Pale Ones other than Ch'elasmo or T'chava.

Attributes

Dexterity (17): 7/D12
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (11): 5/D8
Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (11): 5/D8
Charisma (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9
Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7
Physical Armor: 6
Social Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 32
Recovery Tests: 2
Wound Threshold: 8
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 24

Combat Movement: 34
Full Movement: 68

Skills

Artisan:
Weapon Rune Carving (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:
Pale Ones Racial Lore (2): 7/D12

General:
Avoid Blow (2): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (5): 12/2D10
Missile Weapons (5): 12/2D10

Streetwise (2): 7/D12
Throwing Weapons (5): 12/2D10
Tactics (2): 7/D12

Equipment

Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; ST 19; cannot be used with short bow)
Leather (Phys 3)

2 × Spears (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 18–30–36)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Shortbow (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 30–60–120)
Quiver (w/20 shortbow arrows)

Belt Pouch
Carving Tools
Traveler's Garb

Loot

None

Legend Award

80 Legend Points

Notes

T'skrang guards possess the t'skrang racial ability of Tail Attack.

Vodanicus Family Members

The Vodanicuses have long made their living through sheer grit and a total lack of scruples. They all bear a strong resemblance to one another, with unusually small and narrow noses, thick eyebrows and recessed lower jaws. (One might suspect inbreeding in the Vodanicus family tree.) All of them wear dirty, smelly clothing and never get clean no matter how many times they plunge into water.

They eternally compete with one another to see who is the loudest eater and the teller of the rudest puns. Possessed one and all by greed, they will do anything for the silver that True water can bring them.

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10
Strength (13): 6/D10
Toughness (20): 8/2D6
Perception (7): 4/D6
Willpower (14): 6/D10
Charisma (4): 3/D4

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8
Initiative: 5/D8
Spell Defense: 5
Physical Armor: 6
Social Defense: 4
Mystic Armor: 5

Death Rating: 44 (40)*
Recovery Tests: 4
Wound Threshold: 13
Knockdown: 6/D10
Unconsciousness Rating: 36 (32)*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 24
Full Movement: 48

Skills

Artisan:
Craftsman; Woodworker (6): 12/2D10

Knowledge:
Subterranean River Lore (6): 10/D10+D6

General:
Climbing (6): 12/2D10
Great Leap (6): 12/2D10
Haggle (6): 9/D8+D6
Melee Weapons (9): 15/D20+D6
Missile Weapons (9): 15/D20+D6
Read River (6): 10/D10+D6
Sailing (6): 12/2D10
Surprise Strike (10): 16/D20+D8
Swimming (6): 12/2D10

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; ST 17; cannot be used with trispear)
Blood Pebble (Phys 5; Myst 3; Init 1; 4 Damage Points)

Trispear (Damage 11/D10+D8)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Sling (Damage 8/2D6; Range 20–40–80)
Belt Pouch (w/15 sling stones)

Adventurer's Kit
Climbing Kit
Craftsman Tools
Peasant's Garb
Trail Rations (1 week)

Loot

Small gems (worth 150 silver pieces)

Legend Award

265 Legend Points

Notes

Vodanicus family members possess the dwarf racial ability of Heat Sight.

New Magical Treasures

What? That rusty old sword? No, no. You don't want that piece of junk. Now, here's a magical sword for you. Nice and shiny too!

• Razlak Twincheeks, Merchant •

The characters may find several magical treasures during the course of the adventures presented in this book. Because the owners of these items use them regularly and may have woven active threads to them, the players will find it extremely difficult to get their hands on these treasures.

See **Magical Treasures** on p. 161 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for guidelines on how to use magical treasures in a campaign.

Treasure Game Information

The magical treasures below are listed in the same format as presented in the **Magical Treasures** chapter on p. 161 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

The **Location** listing given in each entry below indicates the place where the characters can find that magical treasure during the adventure.

Amulet of Dirac

Maximum Threads: 2
Spell Defense: 14

Location: The giant spiders' lair near Tureem. See **Going Hunting** in the **Mists of Betrayal** chapter on p. 20.

The Amulet of Dirac is a finely crafted silver starburst, stained crimson, on a silver neck chain. The stain on the starburst does not wash off. The hero Dirac Tol Amarra waged unceasing war on the Horrors many centuries ago, just before the final sealing of the kaers.

In Dirac's final battle, a Horror Named Adugank mortally wounded the hero, splashing Dirac's lifeblood across the amulet he wore. The dying Dirac begged the Passions to let him live long enough to slay the Horror; they assented, and kept him alive long enough to strike down Adugank.

Thread Rank One

Cost: 200

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the amulet.

Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Physical Armor.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 300

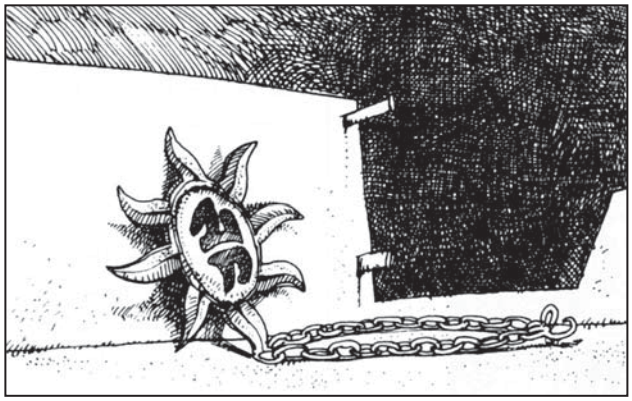
Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Mystic Armor.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 500

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn Dirac's full Name.

Effect: Once per day, the amulet heals its wearer in the manner of a healing potion (see **Healing Aids** in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 450 of the **Player's Compendium**).



Thread Rank Four

Cost: 800

Effect: Once per day, the amulet acts like a last chance salve on the wearer should he suffer damage equal to or greater than his Death Rating. The amulet's effect is instantaneous (see p. 451 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Thread Rank Five

Cost: 1,300

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the Horror that Dirac slew in his final battle.

Effect: The wearer can attach the amulet to his skin, as if it were a desperate blow charm (see p. 445 of the **Player's Compendium**). The amulet may be recharged after use, which requires the character to wait for 24 hours. Unlike a regular blood magic charm, the amulet causes no permanent damage and has a Depatterning Rating of 0.

Headband of Kedar the Dark

Maximum Threads: 1
Spell Defense: 15

Location: The lair of Duaga the Horror. See **Caravan of Death**, p. 40, and **Loose Ends**, p. 73, in the **Mists of Betrayal** chapter.

This black leather headband has a black pearl set in it, making the wearer look as if he has a third eye where the pearl rests against his head. This headband belonged to the Swordmaster Kedar, who burned to death at the hands of the Horror Duaga. Kedar's lover, the Wizard Leea Amberdust, made the headband to safeguard him.

Thread Rank One

Cost: 200

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the man who wore the headband.

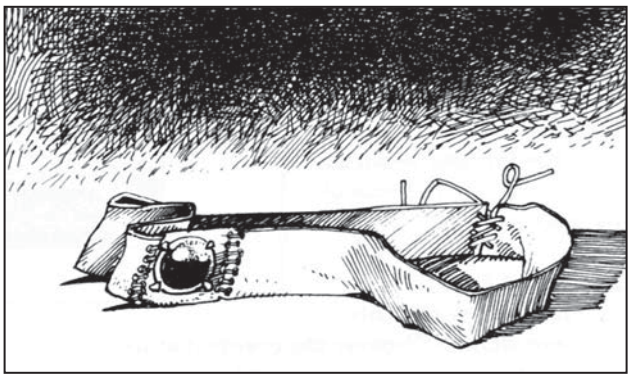
Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Social Defense.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 300

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the person who created the headband.

Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Mystic Armor.



Thread Rank Three

Cost: 500

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the nature of the relationship between the headband's creator and its owner.

Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Physical Armor.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 800

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the Horror that slew Kedar.

Effect: The wearer gains a +1 rank bonus to his Detect Influence talent. As outlined on p. 164 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, a character who does not know the talent uses it at an equivalent rank to the bonus.

Staff of Akarem the Mage-Builder

Maximum Threads: 1
Spell Defense: 16

Location: The lair of the Mist. See **Kaer Akarem** in the **Mists of Betrayal** chapter on p. 59.

This five-foot staff is made of polished oak, its head a wrought-iron gargoyle face with an orichalcum piece in its mouth. Without a thread attached, the staff has the same characteristics as a normal quarterstaff (see p. 436 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Akarem the Mage-Builder was an Elementalist who designed and helped to build the kaer for the village that bears his Name. The staff, his prized possession, aided him in many undertakings. He even bound an earth elemental Named Orichalus to it. When the villagers of Akarem sealed up the kaer in the face of the oncoming Horrors, they discovered that their Wizard had disappeared, leaving his staff behind. The occupants of the kaer placed the staff in the kaer's catacombs, burying the staff in lieu of the man. For many years, the villagers believed that Akarem would return to fight the Horrors, but he never appeared.

Thread Rank One

Cost: 300

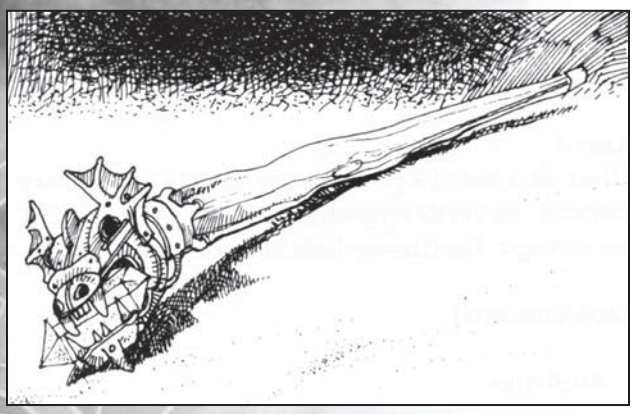
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the staff.

Effect: The staff is now Damage step 3. The wielder gains a +1 rank bonus to his Spellcasting talent. As outlined on p. 164 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, a character who does not know the talent uses it at an equivalent rank to the bonus.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 500

Effect: The staff is now Damage step 4.



Thread Rank Three

Cost: 800

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the dwarf smith who created the staff's head, and where he obtained the iron ore for it.

Effect: The wielder gains a +1 rank bonus to his Detect Trap talent. As outlined in the **Magical Treasures** chapter on p.164 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, a character who does not know the talent uses it at an equivalent rank to the bonus.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 1,300

Deed: Because Akarem was an Elementalist, the wielder must use the staff in combat against five creatures that each have a relationship with a different element. For example, the wielder may fight off a fire-breathing hellhound (fire), a nautilid (water), an earth elemental (earth), a cloud bird (air), and a thorn man (wood).

Accomplishing this Deed earns the wielder 1,300 Legend Points, in addition to the Legend Points earned by defeating the creatures.

Effect: The wielder adds +1 to his Physical and Spell Defense when resisting air-, earth-, water-, wood-, or fire-based attacks.

Thread Rank Five

Cost: 2,100

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the elemental bound to the staff.

Effect: Once per day, the wielder may summon Orichalus, a gargoyle-like earth elemental, and have it perform a single service. To determine how long the spirit remains, the summoner makes a Willpower Test, the result of which is the number of minutes the spirit remains in his service.

The summoner may increase this duration by using blood magic. By taking a number of Strain Points of damage equal to his Wound Threshold, the summoner can increase the duration to a number of hours equal to the Willpower Test result.

For more information and special rules regarding earth elementals, see the **Spirits** chapter on p. 370 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**.

Orichalus, Strength Rating 3 Earth Elemental

DEX: 5 **STR**: 8 **TOU**: 9
PER: 6 **WIL**: 8 **CHA**: 6

Initiative: 4
Number of Actions: 1
Attack: 8
Damage:
Unarmed (5): 13

Physical Defense: 7
Spell Defense: 12
Social Defense: 9
Physical Armor: 11
Mystic Armor: 4

Death Rating: 48
Wound Threshold: 14
Unconsciousness Rating: 41

Recovery Tests: 4
Knockdown: 13

Combat Movement: 18
Full Movement: 36

Karma Points: 6
Karma Step: 6

Powers:
Aid Summoner (3): 3
Detect True Element (3): 3
Find (3): 9
Manipulate Element (3): 11
Soothe (3): 9
Astral Sight T (3): 9
Enrage Element (3): 11
Manifest (3): 3
Share Knowledge (3): 3
Spear (3): 11

Legend Points: 245

Equipment: None

Loot: None

Commentary

Orichalus stands about 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighs an impressive 900 pounds. Its head resembles the one on the staff.

Banesword Screech

Maximum Threads: 1
Spell Defense: 13

Location: Aboard the *Shadow Skulker*, wielded by Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis. See **Pyres over Travar** in the **Terror in the Skies** chapter on p.128.

Throughout the centuries of the Scourge, Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis experimented with raw magic in the Nethermancer's mountain retreat. Among other things, the Horror created a magical sword, which he Named the Banesword Screech. The Name "Banesword" refers to the killings nec-

essary to weave threads to the weapon's True pattern, and demonstrates the Horror's hatred of the physical world; forged in evil, this blade will almost certainly taint any characters who rush to gain its benefits.

Whenever the blade slays a Name-giver, it traps the victim's soul and uses his pain to increase its magical power. Without a thread attached, the sword has the same characteristics as a two-handed sword (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 436 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Thread Rank One

Cost: 300

Deed: The wielder must slay a Name-giver. Upon the target's death, the blade traps the victim's soul and uses his pain to increase its magical power. Accomplishing this Deed earns the wielder 300 Legend Points, in addition to the Legend Points earned by defeating the Name-giver.

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 9 against all members of the most recent victim's race. The wielder must make a Willpower Test against the Spell Defense of the weapon whenever he sees a member of that race. If the test is failed, the wielder is overwhelmed by a sudden rage and attacks the Name-giver in question. The rage continues for 10 combat rounds or until the Name-giver is dead or the wielder makes a successful Willpower Test against the sword's Spell Defense, which he may attempt each round. Once the rage has passed, the wielder no longer feels involuntary hatred for that Name-giver, although he may feel it for other members of the same race.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 500

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 11 against all members of the most recent victim's race.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 800

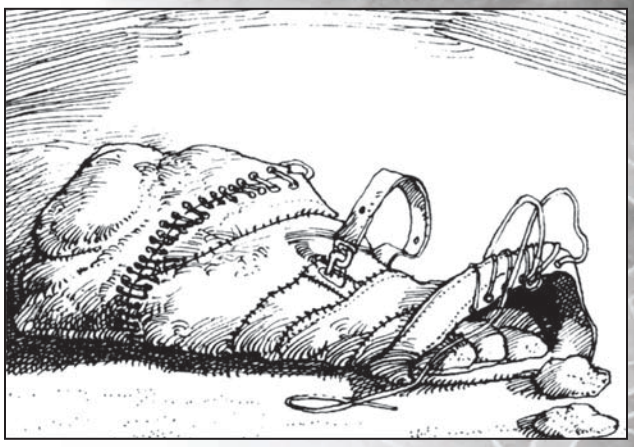
Effect: The sword is now Damage step 13 against all members of the most recent victim's race.

Blinding Stones

Maximum Threads: 1
Spell Defense: 9

Location: Trader's hoard, Talon Kaer. See **Talon Kaer** in the **Terror in the Skies** chapter on p.113.

Blinding stones give off a sudden flash that blinds opponents when the wielder speaks the key word and throws a stone to the ground at his feet. The flash allows the wielder to make a quick attack or an even quicker escape. As the wielder improves his thread rank, the flash becomes more intense. The wielder is not affected by the flash from his stones. A bag of blinding stones typically contains five stones, which must be put back into the bag after use to recharge; a stone takes 24 hours to recharge.



Thread Rank One

Cost: 100

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the Elementalist who made the stones.

Effect: When the wielder throws a stone, everyone within a five-yard radius must make an Initiative (8) Test. If a character's test fails, he becomes partially Dazzled (see p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 200

Effect: When the wielder throws a stone, everyone within an eight-yard radius must make an Initiative (8) Test. If a character's test fails, he becomes partially Dazzled (see p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the magician who invented the stones and taught others to make them.

Effect: When the wielder throws a stone, everyone within a ten-yard radius must make an Initiative (8) Test. If a character's test fails, he becomes fully Dazzled (see p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 500

Effect: When the wielder throws a stone, everyone within a 15-yard radius must make an Initiative (8) Test. If a character's test fails, he becomes completely Dazzled (see p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Servitor Sword

Maximum Threads: 1
Spell Defense: 10

Location: Aboard the *Shadow Skulker*, wielded by black servitors. See **Broadsides!** in the **Terror in the Skies** chapter on p.123.

A Horror that lives in the Thunder Mountains created these obsidian weapons for its black servitors to wield. As the sword's thread rank increases, the blade edge becomes harder and sharper.

Without a thread attached, the sword has the same characteristics as a normal two-handed sword (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 436 of the **Player's Compendium**), but is able to cause Bleeding Wounds that inflict 2 Damage Points per round from blood loss until the victim makes a successful Recovery Test or receives healing aid (see the **Combat** chapter on p. 401 of the **Player's Compendium**).

However, on any Damage Test that generates a bonus die, the sword's hooks are caught so deep in the enemy or his armor that the wielder has to make a Strength Test against the target's Toughness step. If this test fails, he loses hold of his weapon and is disarmed.

Thread Rank One

Cost: 200

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the Horror that created the sword.

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 8.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 300

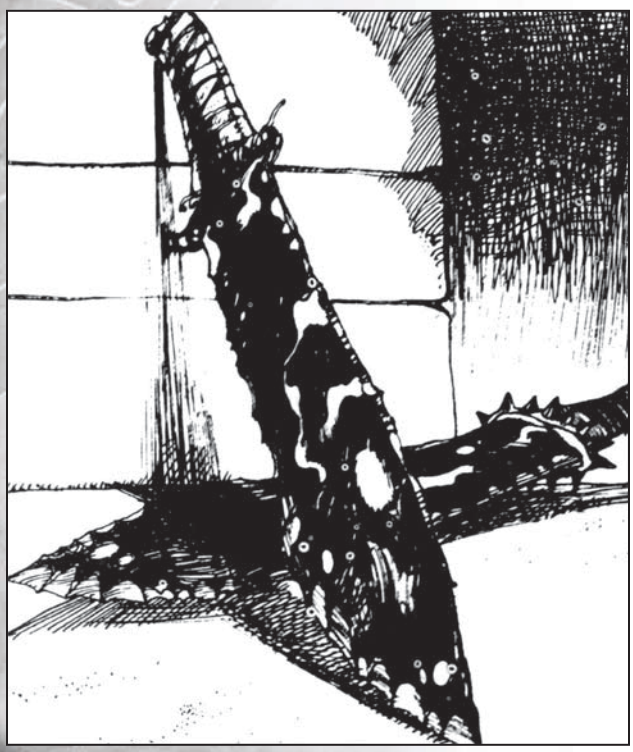
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn that the weapon is called a Servitor Sword.

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 9.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 500

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 10.



Short Sword of Dazzling Speed

Maximum Threads: 2
Spell Defense: 12

Location: The Trader's hoard, Talon Kaer. See **Talon Kaer** in the **Terror in the Skies** chapter on p. 113.

Forged for a wealthy t'skrang Swordmaster long ago, this weapon's blinding speed and shiny surface distracts foes and allows the wielder to strike faster than usual. Without a thread attached, the sword has the same characteristics as a normal short sword (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 436 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Thread Rank One

Cost: 200

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the sword.

Effect: The wielder adds a +1 bonus to his Initiative Tests.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the t'skrang Swordsmaster who commissioned the sword.

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 5.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 500

Key Knowledge: The blade's first owner captained a famous pirate ship. The wielder must learn the Name of that vessel.

Effect: The wielder adds a +2 bonus to his Initiative Tests.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 800

Key Knowledge: The Swordmaster once used his gleaming blade to win an important battle on the Serpent River. The wielder must learn the Name and details of the battle.

Effect: Any opponent who engages the wielder in melee combat and can also see the sword is nearly blinded by the light reflecting off the shining blade. The opponent must make an Initiative (8) Test. If the test is failed, he becomes fully Dazzled (see p. 407 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Thread Rank Five

Cost: 1,300

Key Knowledge: The pirate was eventually caught and hanged for his crimes. The wielder must learn the Name of the man who brought him to justice

Effect: The wielder adds a +3 bonus to his Initiative Tests. The sword is now Damage step 7.

Storm Armor

Maximum Threads: 1
Spell Defense: 15

Location: Aboard the *Shadow Skulker*, worn by Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis. See **Pyres over Travar** in the **Terror in the Skies** chapter on p. 128.

Another of Rasper Nor/Tyrannisis' creations, this plate mail armor was forged under the sizzling caress of lightning from a violent electrical storm. Black clouds swirl constantly across the dark surface of this thin, metal suit.

Without a thread attached, the armor has the same characteristics as normal plate mail armor (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 440 of the **Player's Compendium**).

Thread Rank One

Cost: 200

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the armor's Name.

Effect: The elemental air woven into the armor lightens its weight to 30 pounds, reducing its Initiative Penalty to 3.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 300

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn that the armor comes from the Delaris Mountains.

Effect: The elemental air woven into the armor lightens its weight to 20 pounds, reducing its Initiative Penalty to 2.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 500

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn that Tyrannisis made the armor.

Effect: The cooling winds and rains woven into the armor enable the wearer to withstand intense heat. The wearer

adds +3 to his Physical Armor versus fire- or heat-based Damage.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 800

Key Knowledge: The storm that Tyrannisis trapped within the armor ravaged the countryside and tore apart several villages in the Delaris Mountains, causing such severe winds and flooding that one trollmoot Named the storm "The Rage." The wearer must learn this Name.

Effect: The elemental air woven into the armor lightens its weight to 10 pounds, reducing its Initiative Penalty to 1.

Thread Rank Five

Cost: 1,300

Effect: If the wearer takes damage during a storm, the suit grants him +2 bonus Recovery Tests, which must be used within 24 hours or they are lost. This effect occurs only once per storm, per day.

Derita's Silk-Tailed Wailer

Maximum Threads: 2
Spell Defense: 24

Location: This sword is carried by Kwamm. See **Cast of Characters** in the **Infected** chapter on p. 192.

Derita's Silk-Tailed Wailer is a unique silver broadsword, identifiable by intertwined bat wings carved on its black-

enamel hilt. On the pommel of the sword is a thick ring, to which the wielder can tie a length of silk cord. Without a thread attached, the sword has the same characteristics as a normal broadsword (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 436 of the **Player's Compendium**).

First wielded by one of Verwol's original Grim Legionnaires, this weapon gained its magic when its owner, Derita, tricked a Horror called the Artificer of Dooms into investing the blade with magical powers. Derita and the Horror signed a contract to give the sword its magic using ink made from Derita's blood, the Horror's blood, and an unknown third substance. Derita used the contract's fine print to outwit the Horror.

Thread Rank One

Cost: 500

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the sword's original owner.

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 6. When unsheathed, the sword emits an eerie howl, which may scare the wielder's opponents. The wielder gains a +2 rank bonus to his Frighten talent. As outlined in the **Magical Treasures** chapter on p. 164 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, a character who does not know the talent uses it at an equivalent rank to the bonus.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 800

Effect: The wielder must attach a black silk cord to the pommel of the sword, tying the other end to his belt. In combat, the silk stiffens and propels the blade toward the wielder's chosen target, effectively lengthening the blade's reach. The cord can be up to 1 yard long for each of the weapon's thread ranks. At Rank 2, for example, the wielder can strike using his Melee Weapons talent at a target up to 2 yards away. At Rank 5, the distance increases to 5 yards, and so on. When used in this manner, the silk has the same tensile strength as the blade.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 1,300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the True Name of the Horror who enchanted the blade: Harjarlifex.

Effect: The wielder gains a +2 rank bonus to his Detect Influence talent. If the talent is used successfully, the blade hums in increasing intensity, based on the result of the test. As outlined in the **Magical Treasures** chapter on p. 164 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, a character who does not know the talent uses it at an equivalent rank to the bonus.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 2,100

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 7 against normal opponents, and Damage step 9 against Horrors and Horror constructs.

Thread Rank Five

Cost: 3,400

Key Knowledge: The wielder must determine the third substance, which is the tears of an orphaned child.

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 8 against normal opponents, and Damage step 10 against Horrors and Horror constructs. The wielder adds +1 to his Spell Defense when resisting Horror powers and spells.

Thread Rank Six

Cost: 5,500

Effect: The sword is now Damage step 9 against normal opponents, and Damage step 11 against Horrors and Horror constructs.

Thread Rank Seven

Cost: 3,400

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the terms of the agreement between Derita and Harjarlifex, and how Derita used the contract's fine print to outwit the Horror.

Deed: The wielder must seek out Harjarlifex and negotiate an agreement with it to activate the blade's greatest powers. Harjarlifex, however, has learned from its mistake with Derita and will not fall for the same trick again. Accomplishing this Deed earns the wielder 3,400 Legend Points.

Effect: The wielder adds +2 to his Spell Defense when resisting Horror powers and spells. The sword is now Damage step 10 against normal opponents, and Damage step 12 against Horrors and Horror constructs.

The Blades of Cara Fahd

Maximum Threads: 8
Spell Defense: 18

Location: Tyrlaan, Galloran, and Traj Quickwrist each carry one of the daggers (see **Cast of Characters** on p. 249 of the **Shattered Pattern** chapter). The remaining four daggers are located in an ornate box in Tyrlaan's chambers (see **Tyrlaan's Lair** on p. 235 of the **Shattered Pattern** chapter).

The Blades of Cara Fahd are a matched set of seven daggers, each with a dark red wooden hilt set with a small, dark emerald. Runic carvings cover both sides of the hilts, the pommels, and the gleaming steel blades. One side of the blades contains the runic symbols for the ancient ork kingdom of Cara Fahd. The other side contains larger runes that together form the symbol of the Seven Spokes. This symbol can be seen only when the seven daggers are arranged so that each forms a wheel spoke, with the daggers' tips in the center and their pommels at the outer edge.

Each of the original eight wielders carried one of these daggers until the Horror, Betrayer, marked the Swordmaster Kragen Overtall. Kragen eventually betrayed his fellow group members and Cara Fahd. Afterward, the other members killed him and destroyed his dagger.

Only members of a group that has formed a group True pattern (see the **Thread Magic** chapter on p. 271 of the **Player's Compendium**) can use the magic of the Blades of Cara Fahd. Each individual dagger is meant to be carried by one member of the group, and each character weaves his own thread to his dagger. The daggers enhance the abilities granted by the group True pattern, as well as increasing a wielder's Spell Defense against Horrors and Horror constructs.

The increase to a wielder's abilities—via threads woven to his dagger—can never exceed the thread rank woven to that ability from the group's True pattern or pattern item. Threads woven to the Blades count toward the maximum number of threads a character can have active at any time. The daggers have a maximum of eight threads because eight daggers existed originally, even though only seven exist now. This also allows two characters to weave threads to a single dagger, which may be necessary if the player characters' group contains eight members. For more information, see **How Many Characters?** on p. 260 of the **Blades** chapter.

Thread Rank One

Cost: 300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn that the weapon is one of the daggers Named the Blades of Cara Fahd and that the Name of the Weaponsmith who forged the blades is Rugaah Gloh.

Effect: The wielder gains a +1 bonus to a single ability attached to his group True pattern.

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the prelude **Secrets of the Runes** (p. 265) in the adventure **Bond Breaker** (p. 264).

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 500

Effect: The wielder gains a +2 bonus to a single ability attached to his group True pattern.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 800

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn that the group of ork adventurers who used the Blades before the Scourge was Named the Seven Spokes.

Deed: The wielder must travel to the group's original home and erect a monument to them. This Deed is worth 800 Legend Points.

Effect: The wielder gains a +2 bonus to a single ability attached to his group True pattern, and a +1 bonus to one other such ability.

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the prelude **In Search of Knowledge** (p. 284) in the adventure **Grave Wisdom** (p. 283).

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 1,300

Effect: The wielder gains a +2 bonus to two abilities attached to his group True pattern.

Thread Rank Five

Cost: 2,100

Key Knowledge: One of the heroes who first wielded the daggers became Horror-marked and betrayed the group. The wielder must learn this adept's Name: Kragen Overtall.

Effect: The wielder gains a +3 bonus to a single ability attached to his group True pattern, a +2 bonus to an additional such ability, and +2 to his Spell Defense against Horrors and Horror constructs.

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the prelude **Lighting the Way** (p. 297) in the adventure **A Traitor's Fate** (p. 296).

Thread Rank Six

Cost: 3,400

Effect: The wielder gains a +3 bonus to a single ability attached to his group True pattern, a +2 bonus to a second such ability, a +1 bonus to a third such ability, and +2 to his Spell Defense against Horrors and Horror constructs.

Thread Rank Seven

Cost: 5,500

Key Knowledge: The group that first wielded the daggers defeated a Horror just before its members died. The wielder must learn the Name of that Horror: Betrayer.

Effect: The wielder gains a +3 bonus to a single ability attached to his group True pattern, a +2 bonus to two other such abilities, and +2 to his Spell Defense against Horrors and Horror constructs (+4 to his Spell Defense against Betrayer).

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the prelude **With a Tale to Tell** (p. 310) in the adventure **With an Axe in Hand** (p. 309).

Thread Rank Eight

Cost: 8,900

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn that the Seven Spokes defeated the Horror by imprisoning Betrayer's spirit within the magical pattern of the Blades.

Deed: The wielder must travel to the place where the original adventurers defeated the Horror: the Great Dome in the Tylon Mountains. This Deed is worth 8,900 Legend Points.

Effect: The wielder gains a +3 bonus to two abilities attached to his group True pattern, a +2 bonus to a third such ability, and +3 to his Spell Defense against Horrors and Horror constructs (+6 to his Spell Defense against Betrayer). The Blades also enable the wielder's group to perform a blood magic ritual that allows them to rip a target's spirit from his body. Using this power causes 5 Strain points of damage to each member of the group. The target's spirit becomes trapped in one of the daggers and can only be purged after a year and a day. During that time, the spirit can draw magical energy from the active threads attached to the dagger, using that energy to cause various magical effects. To use this special power, each member of the group must make a successful Willpower Test against the target's Spell Defense. If any test does not succeed, the power does not work. The step number for the trapped spirit's power is the highest rank among all the threads woven to the Blades.

When the characters are ready to pursue this Key Knowledge, go to the prelude **Last Words** (p. 327) in the adventure **Pure Liquids** (p. 326).

Tyrlaan's Crystal Ringlet Armor

Maximum Threads: 2
Spell Defense: 14

Location: Tyrlaan, see **The Finale** on p. 239 of the **Shattered Pattern** chapter.

Created by the Weaponsmith Firjana, one of Tyrlaan's many minions, Tyrlaan's Crystal Ringlet armor has the same characteristics, and looks the same, as normal crystal ringlet armor with no threads attached.

Due to the armor's long exposure to the corrupted Nethermancer, the Horror Verjigorm can mark the wearer as soon as he attaches a thread to the armor (see the **Horrors** chapter on p. 443 of the **Gamemaster's Compendium** for more information on Horror marks and the Horror Mark power).

Thread Rank One

Cost: 200

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the armor's Name.

Effect: The armor is now Physical Armor 5.

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 300

Effect: The armor is now Mystic Armor 5.

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 500

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the armor's creator.

Effect: The armor now has an Initiative Penalty of 1.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 800

Effect: The armor now has an Initiative Penalty of 0.

CHARACTER INDEX

A register of all the Names in Barsaive? I am intrigued, but I think that you must be kidding me…

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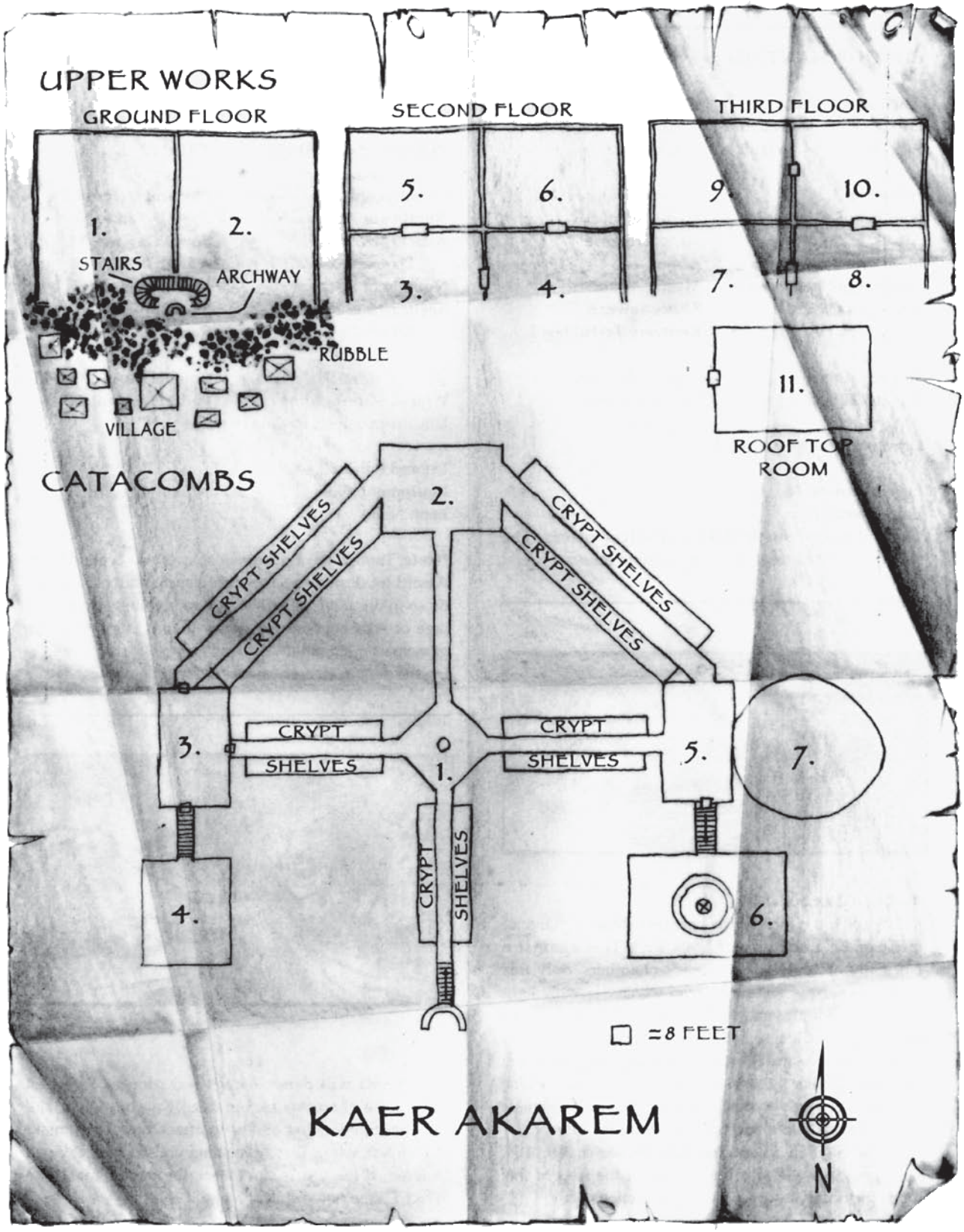
Map of Kaer Akarem (Mists of Betrayal)



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Rasper Nor's Letter and Talon Kaer (Terror in the Skies)

To the Air Warden of Travar

Dear Sir,

I have learned of the terrible creatures that roam the skies over Travar, and I believe I know somewhat of the creatures that plague you. Unless I am grievously mistaken, these rakken are Horror constructs, the same dreadful creatures that I encountered upon emerging from our kaer eighty years ago. I was barely able to defeat them, even with my considerable talent in the magical arts.

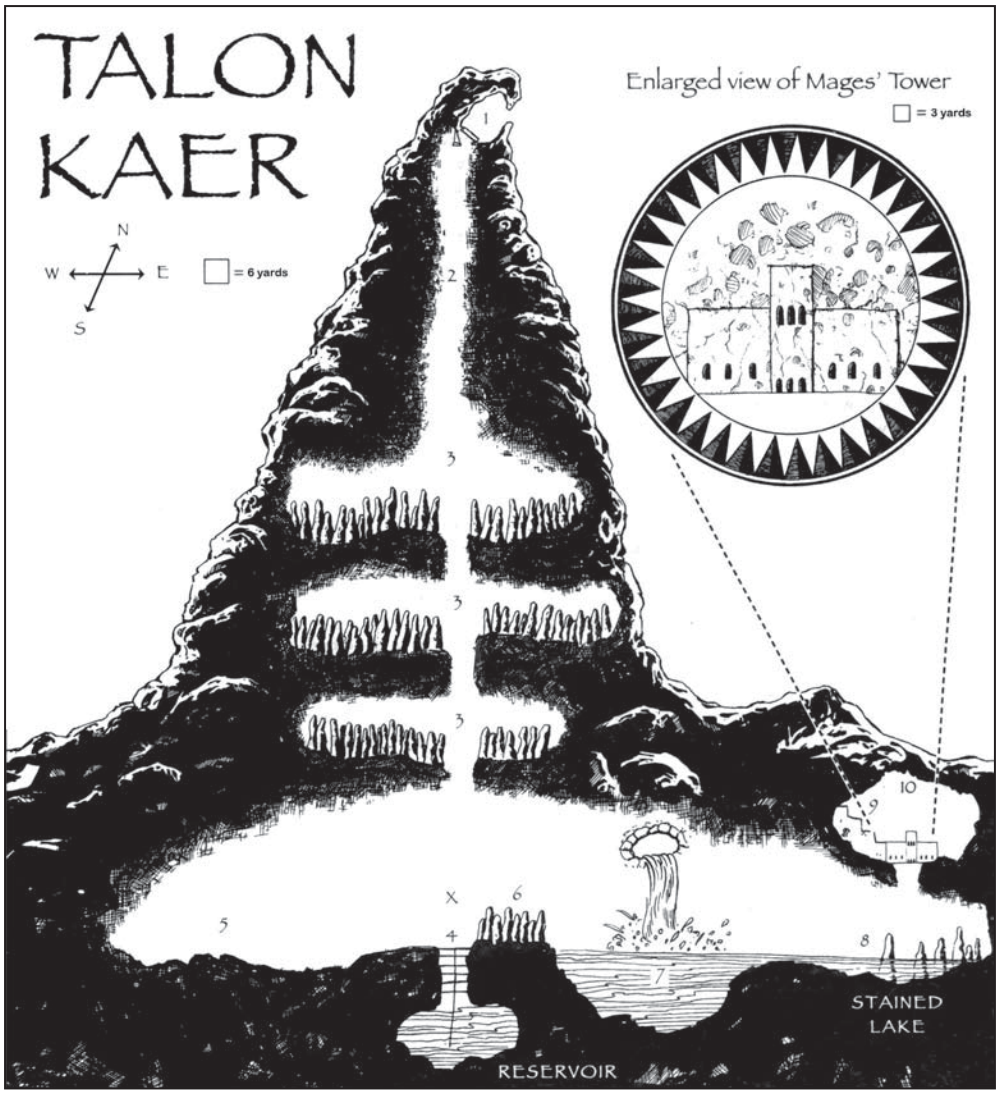
I recall, however, that one magician among us had studied these creatures, and even devised a means of dispelling them to their native plane. He wrote down this knowledge in a grimoire called the Tome of Banishment, which I believe still remains within the ruins of our kaer. Though I am human, I dwelt with the windlings in their kaer atop the Talon, a craggy peak in the Thunder Mountains. The windling magician Skeethen who compiled the Tome of Banishment was by misfortune buried in his laboratory when a portion of our haven collapsed. We sealed the breach with warding magic lest the Horrors exploit it, by oversight sealing the book up along with our departed friend. I thought little more of poor Skeethen and his book until I heard of your recent troubles.

I believe that this grimoire might aid you immensely, but alas, my bones are far too old to brave the hazards of travel so high and far into the mountains. If a band of true-hearted persons were to venture there in my stead, I believe they could recover the Tome with little difficulty.

I have enclosed a map of the laboratory's location within the kaer, drawn to the best of my ability. Please excuse this tired old mind if the map is less than perfectly accurate; it has been many a long year since I left my former home, and my memory does not always serve me as I might wish.

I wish you well, friends.

Rasper Nor of the Thunder Mountains



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Cloud Runner and Shadow Skulker Deckplans (Terror in the Skies)

THE CLOUD RUNNER

1. Forecastle
2. Foresail
3. Mainsail
4. Entrance to Hold
5. Rear Deck
6. Patrol Boat

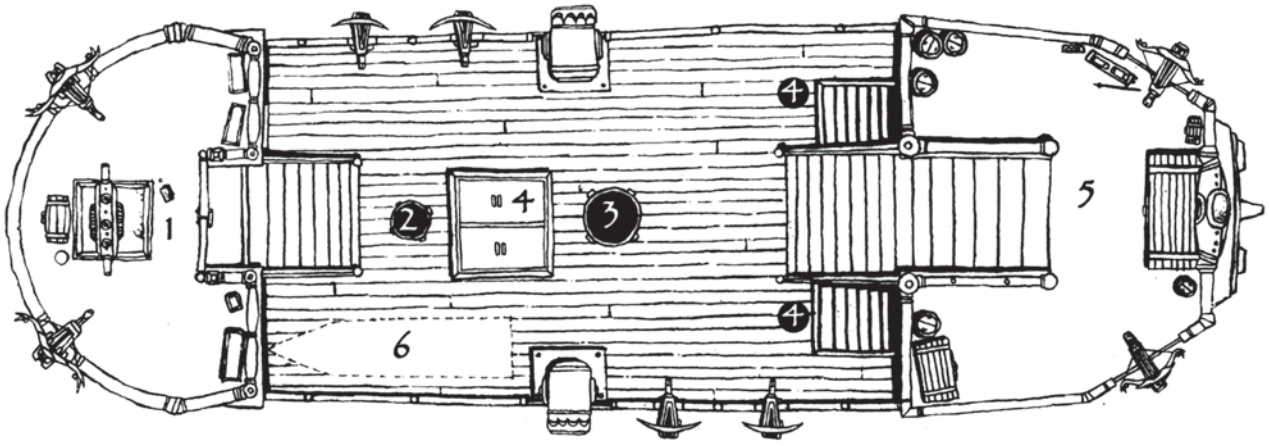
Captain's Wheel

Ballista

Cannon

Stairs

1 yard



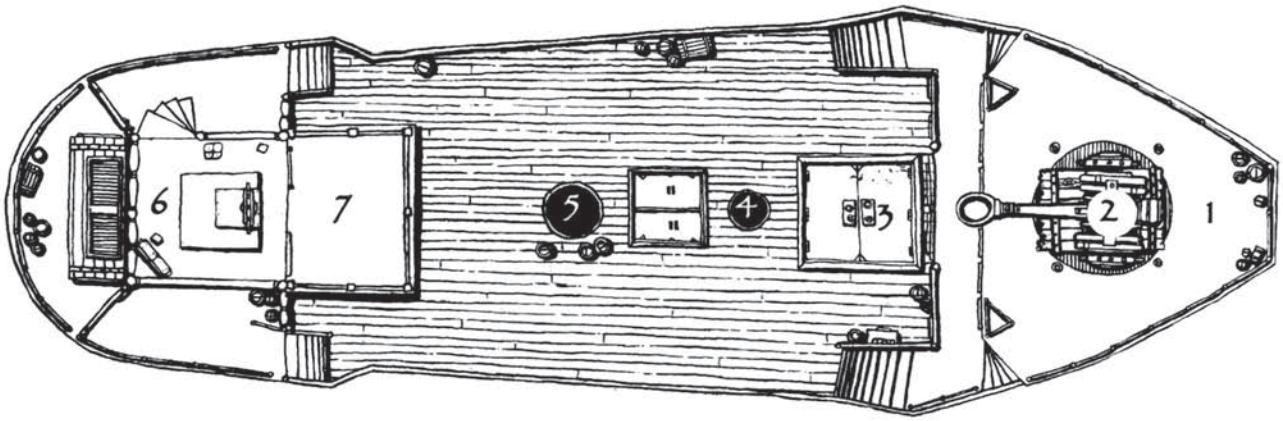
THE SHADOW SKULKER

1. Forecastle
2. Catapult
3. Pitch Bin
4. Fore Sail
5. Main Sail
6. Rear Deck/Captain's Quarters
7. Balcony to Captain's Quarters

Captain's Wheel

Stairs

1 yard



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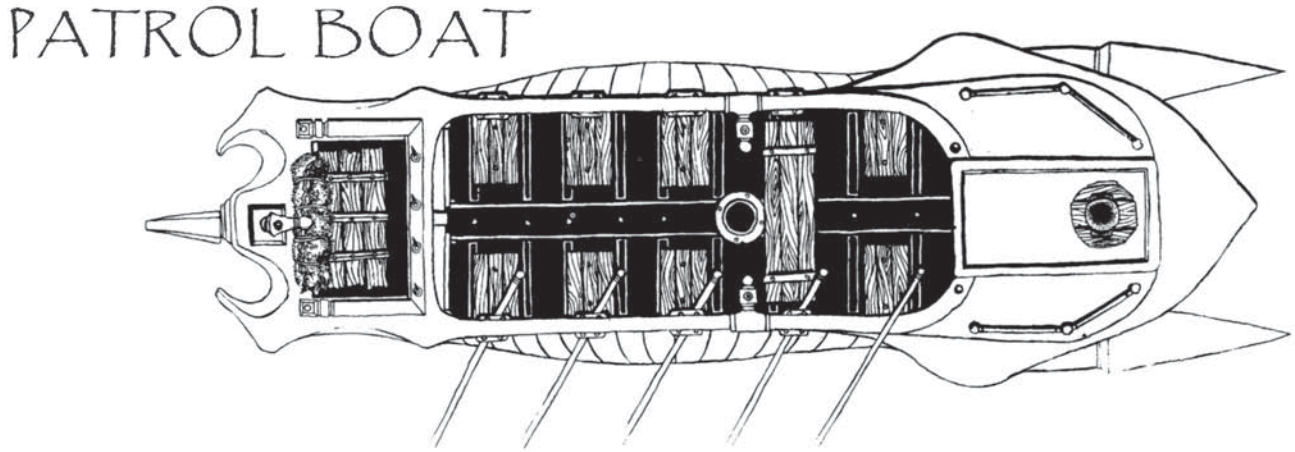
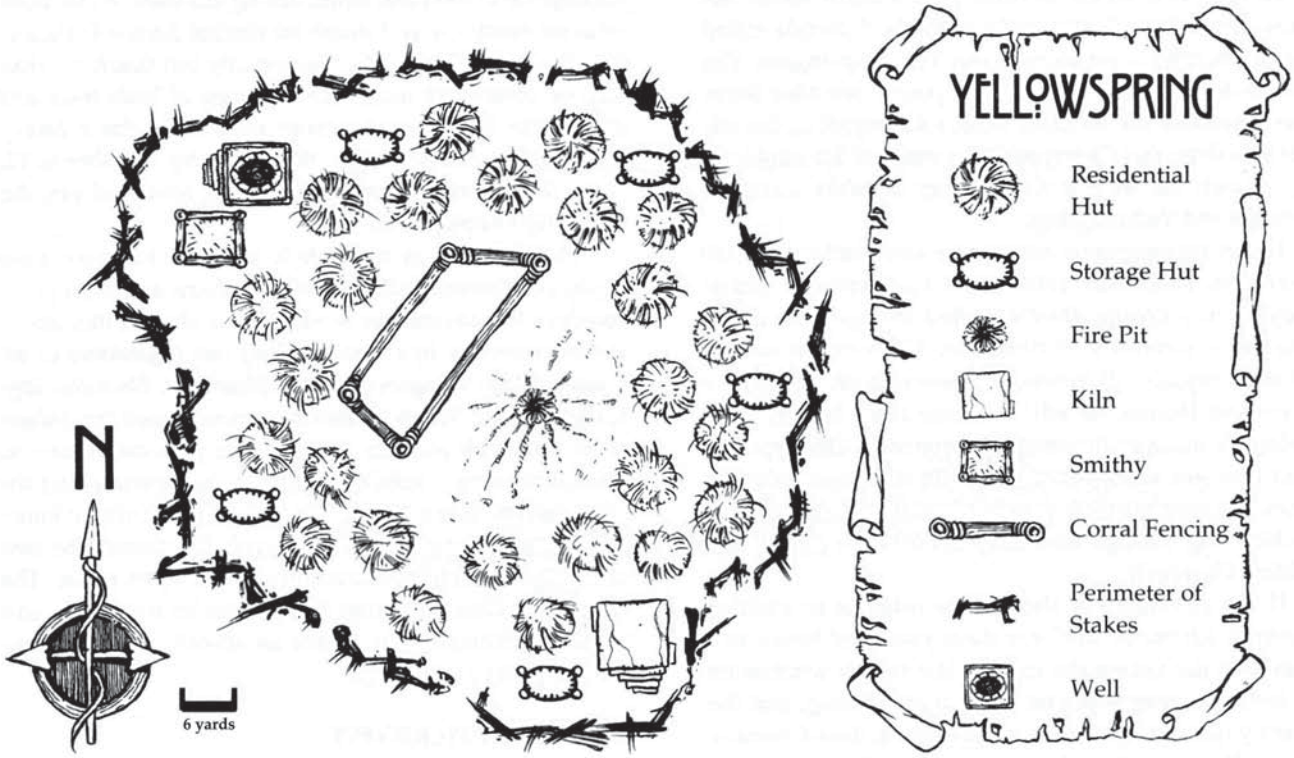
Patrol Boat Deckplan (Terror in the Skies)



Map of Yellowspring (Infected)



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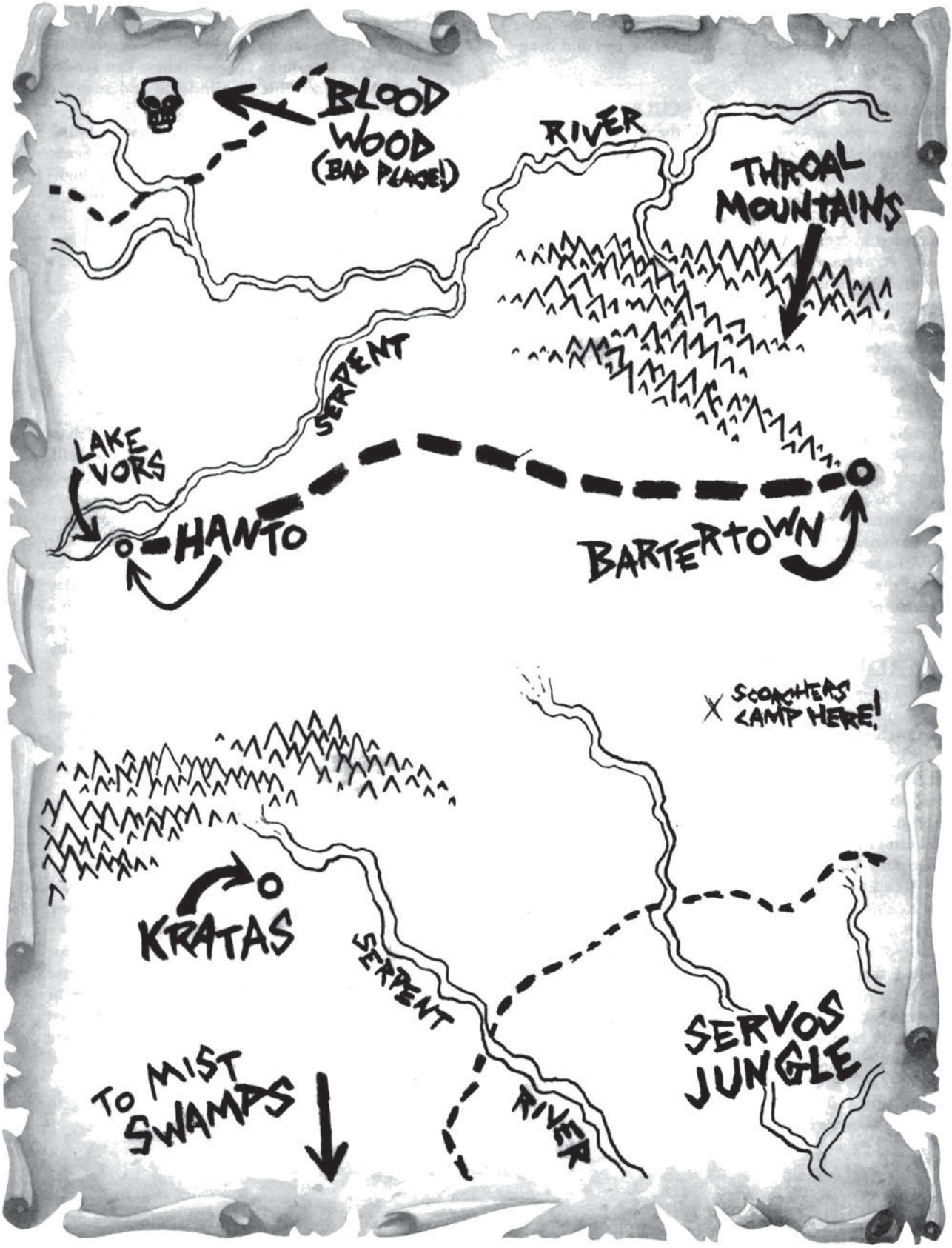
Charboyya's Map (Infected)



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Charboyya's Letter to Laverium (Infected)

To my dearest Mother,

Though you may reprove my extravagance in sending this second letter in a month, I eagerly await your reply. As you may already have heard from the brave adventurers who delivered this letter, the couriers I sent to Hanto a few weeks since have not returned. I fear that they took the advance fee I paid them—not, I assure you, a significant amount—and simply absconded to other parts to spend it. Likely they never reached Hanto, so these burblings of mine will make little sense to you. I hope all is well with you, my dearest Mother.

Business continues to grow, which pleases me. I have found, however, that great success merely sharpens a dwarf's sense of regret. My profoundest regret, dear Mother, is your refusal to join me here in Bartertown. None in Hanto will scorn you for choosing to spend your twilight days in relative comfort: certainly you have labored hard in the fields long enough for any Name-giver twice over!

I know, I repeat myself—fruitlessly, I fear. Please give my love to all in Hanto. Should you ever decide to accept my offer, I will send you an escort within two weeks. As always, I remain your loving son.

Charboyya

Charboyya's Letter to Emberica (Infected)

My brother Emberica,

My respects to you! I hope you have ceased provoking trouble with the headman of Bari village. No doubt he deserved a good thrashing, but your description made him sound as if his muscles might put a smith to shame! I hope your nose remains unbroken, as it was before you last wrote (which is not saying much!).

This letter ought to get through. I've had to hire a second pack of couriers to get this to you; your last reply never arrived. Did you frighten them off with your fierceness? You can be a most frightening dwarf, especially in the dark.

Write back to assure me you haven't broken any bones—yours or others—lately.

Charboyya

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Charboyya's Letter to Orweia (Infected)

My dear friend Orweia,

These last few weeks have been the most difficult I have faced in many a year. I worry little about myself, but the fear that something has happened to my family and friends makes me as nervous as a cat on a sinking boat. I have worn a path in my carpet with pacing, all because the last couriers I sent to Hanto did not return. I fear they have been waylaid and killed. They went willingly enough, for a fair price, but they might be alive were it not for my request. I have sent this missive by yet another group of fine young adepts, who may face a similar fate simply so that I may know how you all are faring. Truly, sometimes I think I am a selfish dwarf. (I know you will say otherwise—perhaps that is why I tell you such things.)

The lengthy letter you have missed contained many details of inconsequential matters—buying silks, selling silks, hiring workers, firing workers. I am afraid it all seems too trivial to pen a second time, but please do not cease writing every scrap of news about your life—especially the tales of your children, which cheer me so!

And yes, to your inevitable question. I have yet to find a mate. Here I am at the gates of Throal and cannot find a suitable dwarf maiden to share my life. I suppose I am not really looking.

I anxiously await your reply, my dear Orweia.

Charboyya

Charboyya's Letter to Chereca (Infected)

Greetings Chereca,

This is the second letter I have written you in a month, delivered by the second group of couriers I have dispatched in the same period. I fear for the safety of the first group, and so I would appreciate any assurances you can offer me. Is the savanna becoming more dangerous of late? Banditry and slaving seem to be on the rise; I very much hope you are less troubled by horrors. Have you succeeded in arranging the meetings you spoke of between the heads of Hanto's neighbouring villages? The search for common ground seems a most worthy task; I admire your persistence for attempting it, though I confess myself doubtful of success if the current crop of village leaders are as hard-headed and shortsighted as those in charge when I left Hanto.

Best wishes always,

Charboyya

PS: Lately you have appeared in my dreams.

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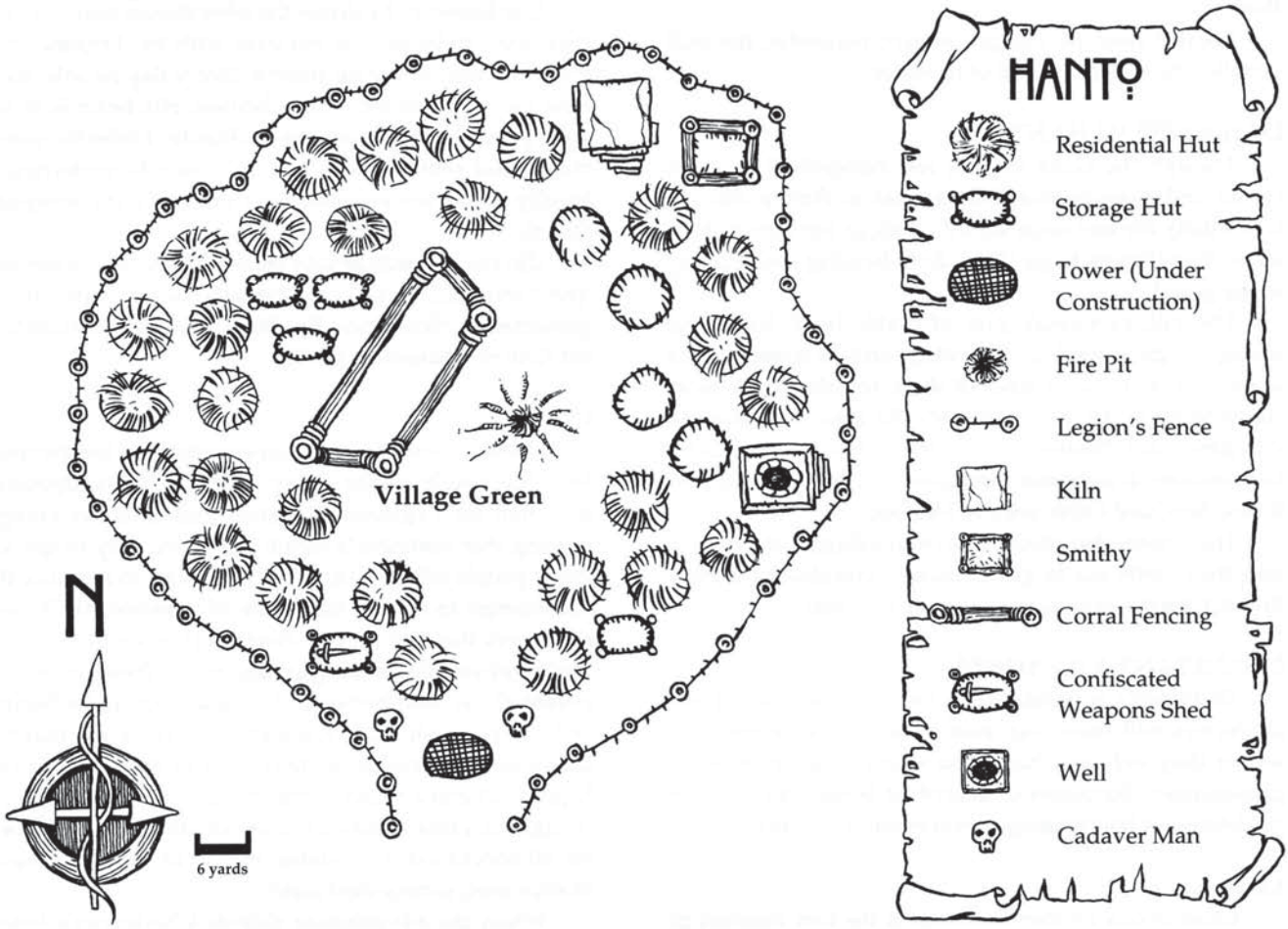
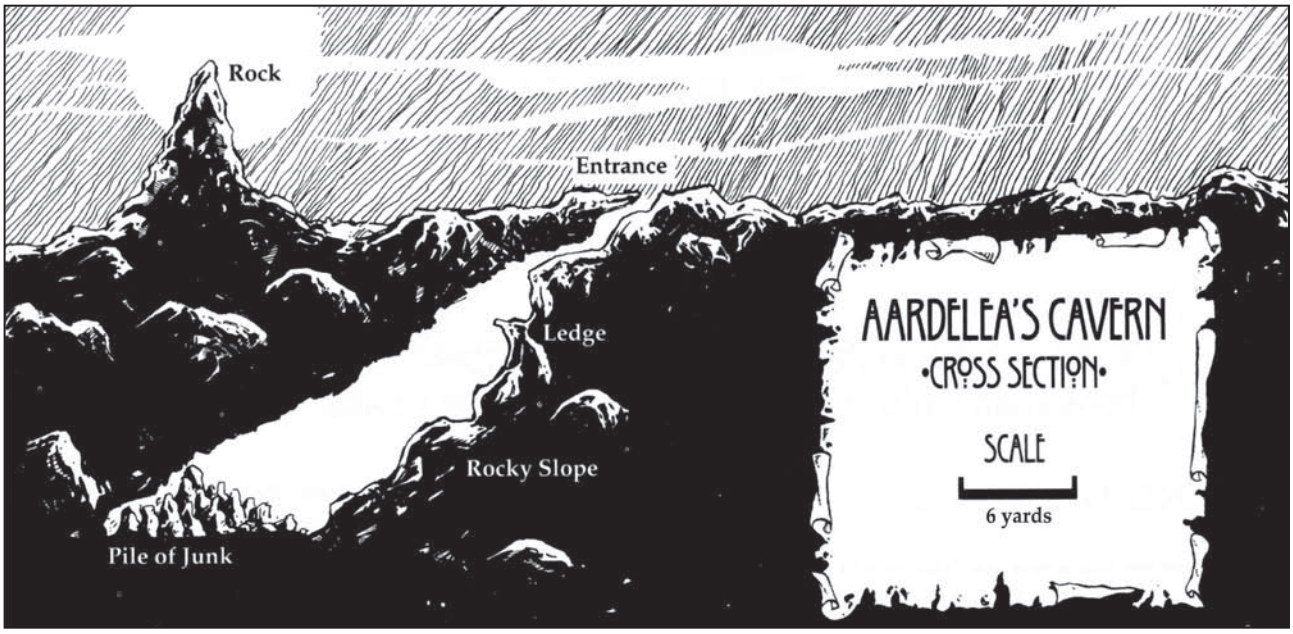
Map of Hanto (Infected)



Cross-section of Aardelea's Cavern (Infected)



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Rathann's Map (Shattered Pattern)

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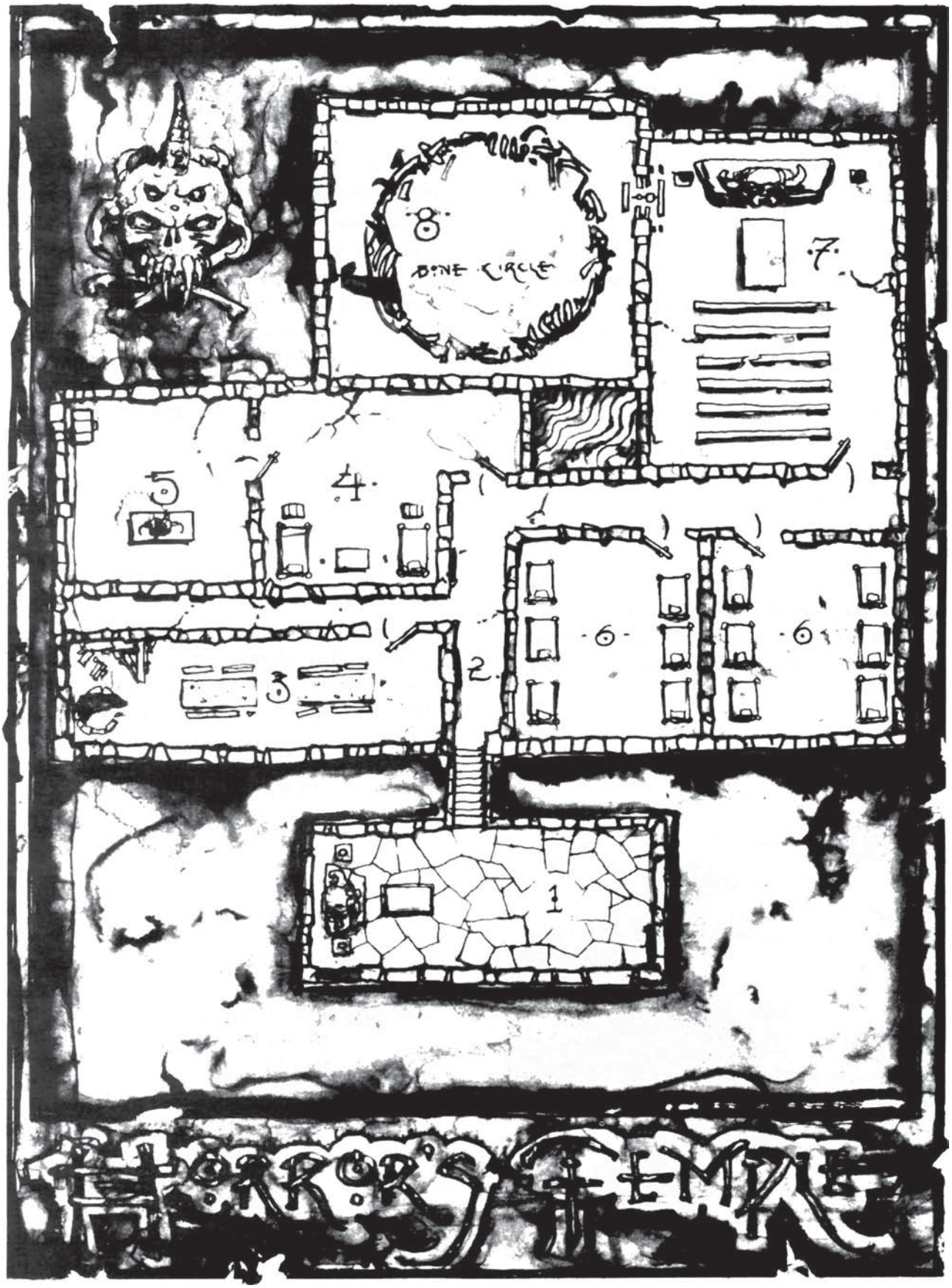
The Horror's Temple (Shattered Pattern)



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Kaer Varenna (Shattered Pattern)

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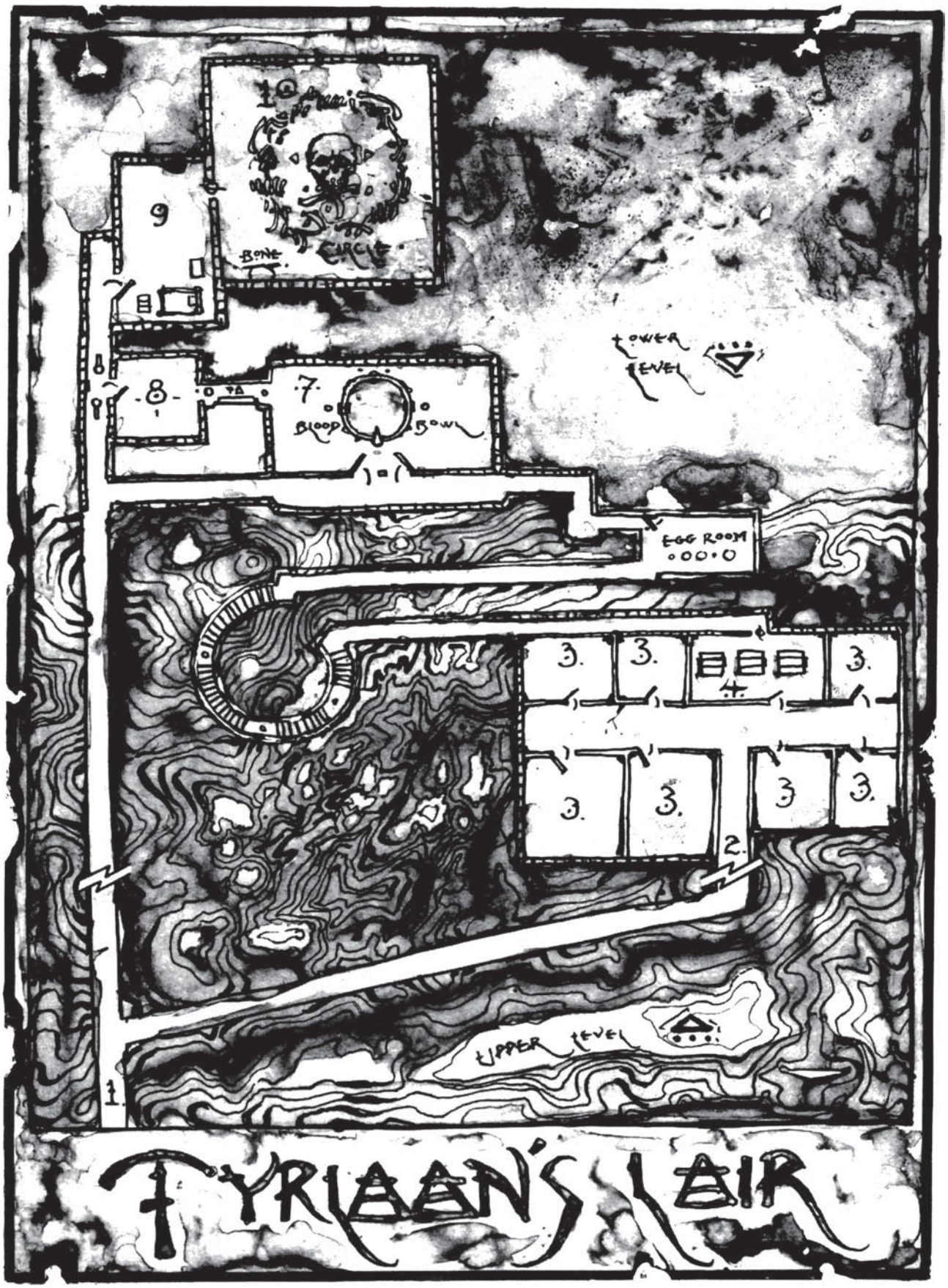
Tyrlaan's Lair (Shattered Pattern)



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Copper Cauldron (Blades)

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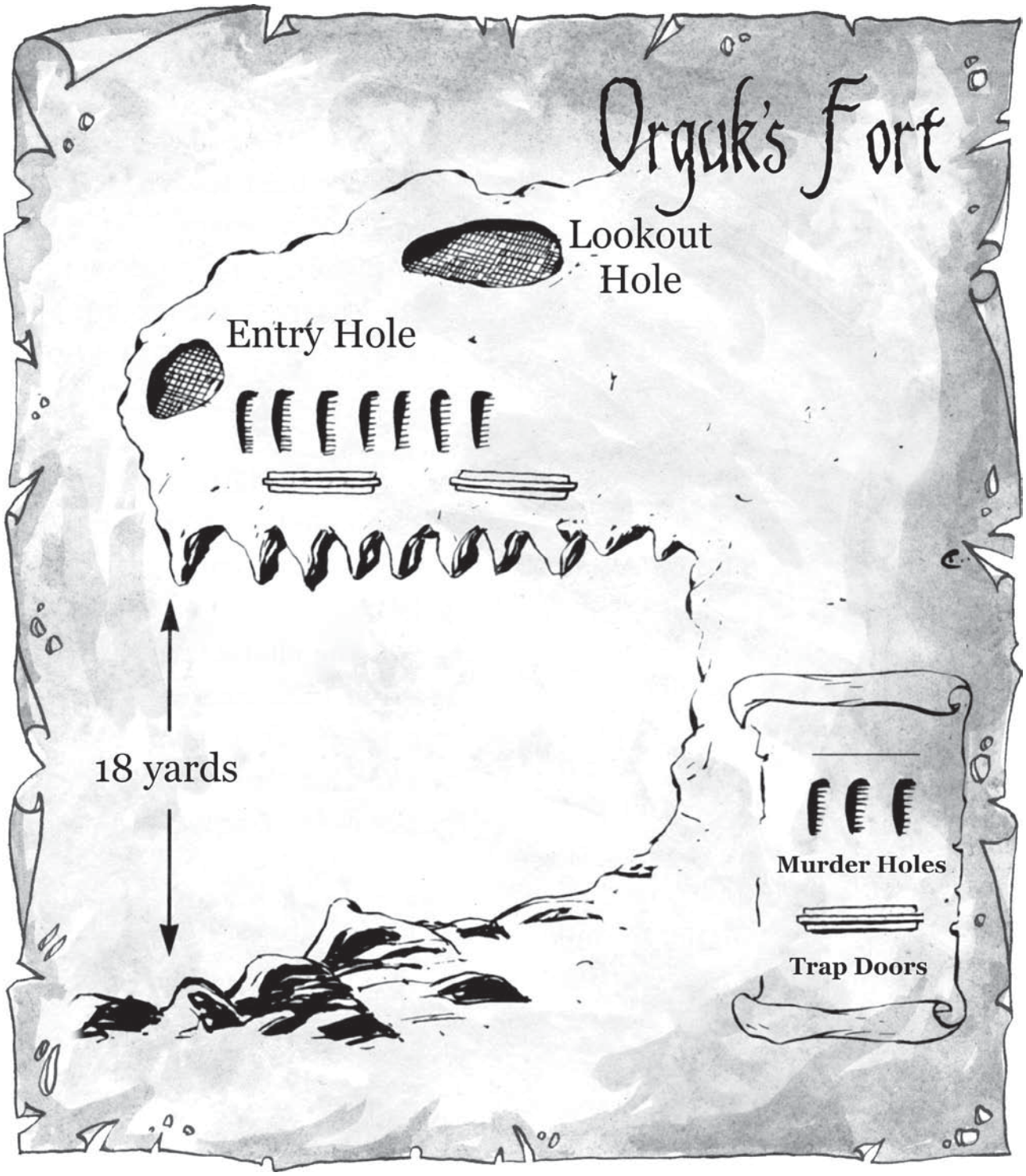

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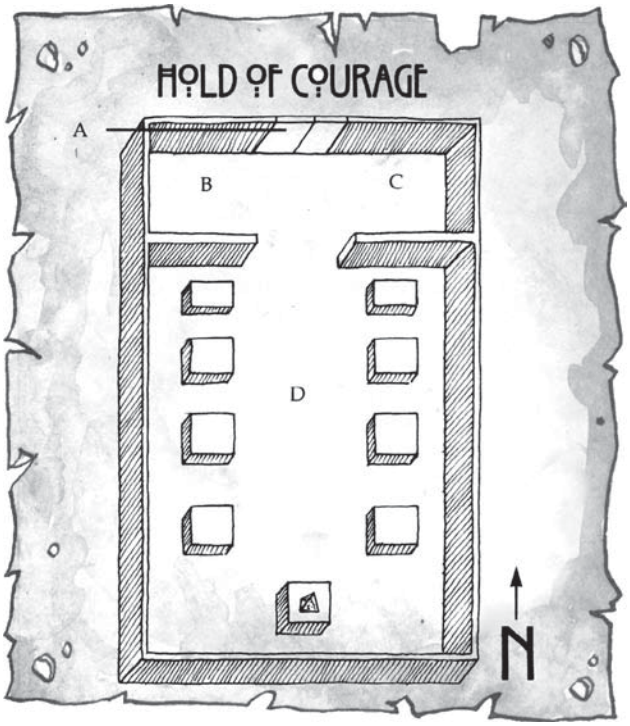
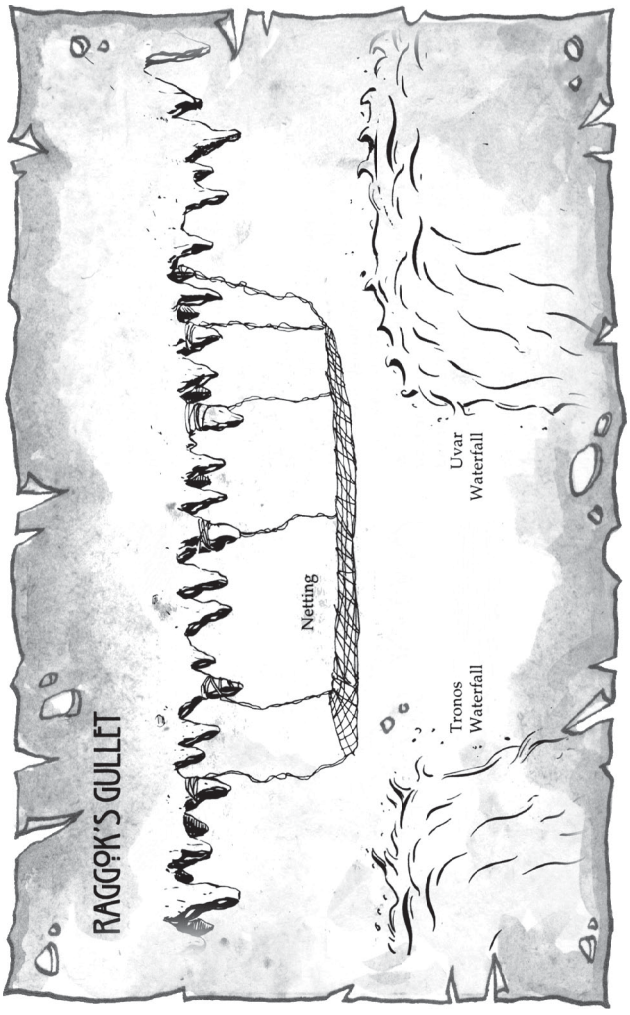
Hold of Courage, Raggok's Gullet, and the Grotto (Blades)





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•FIN•

MISTS OF BETRAYAL

A chance meeting with an elderly Wizard leads to a simple errand, one that takes the heroes on a journey of intrigue and betrayal that may end in glory—or death!

TERROR IN THE SKIES

Fire-breathing Horrors plague the skies above Travar. The heroes are asked to help, but the search for a means to defeat the creatures leads to a hidden windling kaer and a lost treasure. Mystery and magic are the keys to saving the city!

INFECTED

Deep in the isolated hinterlands of Barsaive, where strangers are met with fear and suspicion, the black-clad fanatics of the Grim Legion purge the land from a foul evil. Who'd have thought that a small band of unsuspecting adventurers would arrive to meddle with the Legion's affairs?

SHATTERED PATTERN

Someone has stolen the old elf's memory, and the heroes have few clues. On a quest leading to a treacherous wasteland plagued by the wretched disciples of a terrible Horror, the heroes can only hope to live to tell the tale...

BLADES

A quest to learn the dark secret of the ancient Blades of Cara Fahd and unlock their magical power takes the heroes across Barsaive, from the Ork Kingdom of Cara Fahd to the dark heart of the Tylon Mountains.

The **Adventure Compendium** is an adventure supplement for **Earthdawn**, containing five classic adventures that can be run as a campaign or stand-alone. Requires use of the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums.**

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