

BEASTS OF THE DOMINIONS

By UMBERTO PIGNATELLI



BEASTS & BARBARIANS

Golden Edition

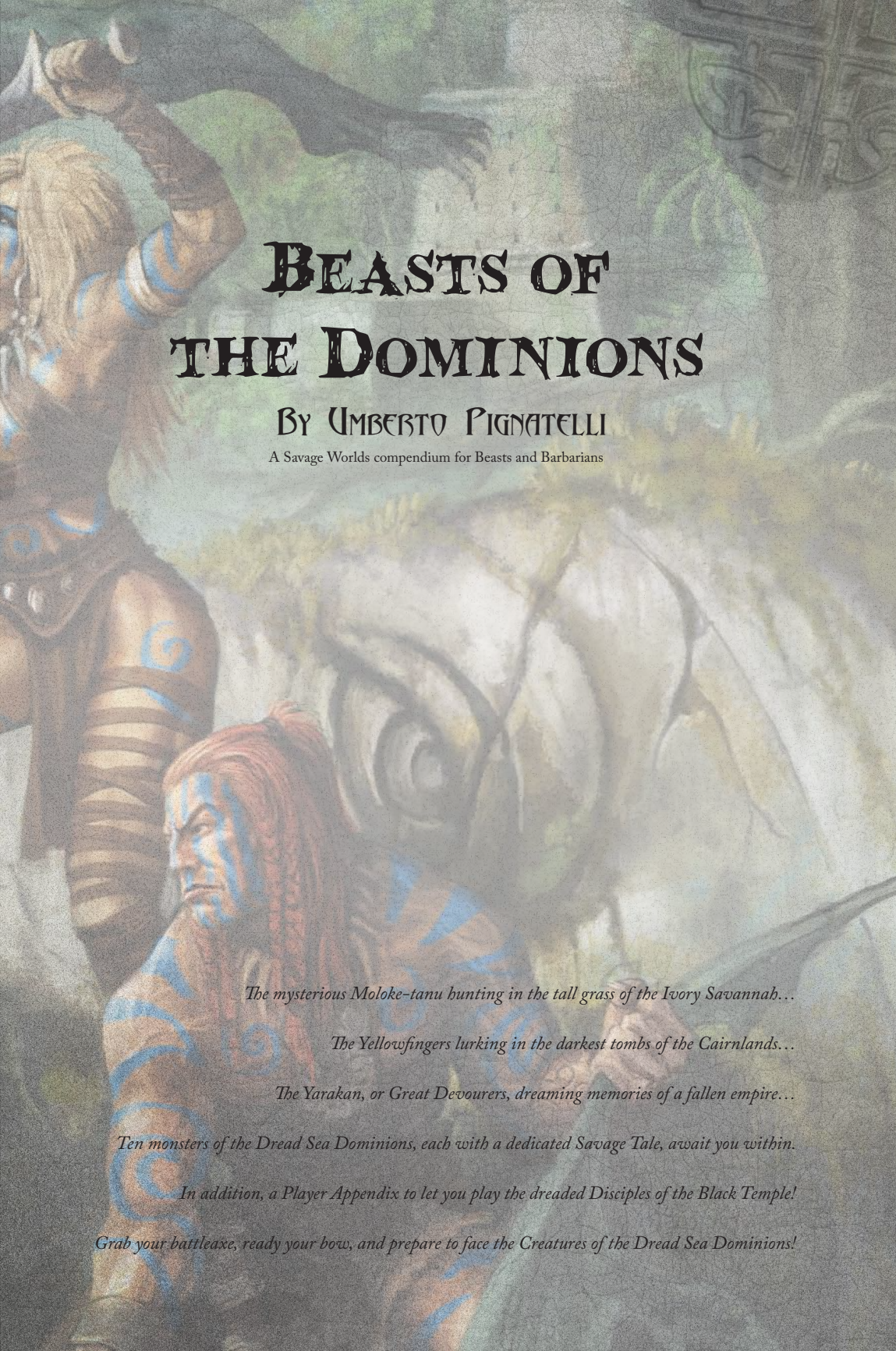
UMBERTO PIGNATELLI

**BEASTS OF
THE DOMINIONS**

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A Savage Worlds compendium for Beasts and Barbarians

The mysterious Moloke-tanu hunting in the tall grass of the Ivory Savannah...

The Yellowfingers lurking in the darkest tombs of the Cairnlands...

The Yarakans, or Great Devourers, dreaming memories of a fallen empire...

Ten monsters of the Dread Sea Dominions, each with a dedicated Savage Tale, await you within.

In addition, a Player Appendix to let you play the dreaded Disciples of the Black Temple!

Grab your battleaxe, ready your bow, and prepare to face the Creatures of the Dread Sea Dominions!

BEASTS BARBARIANS

A Sword and Sorcery Savage Worlds setting

BY UMBERTO PIGNATELLI

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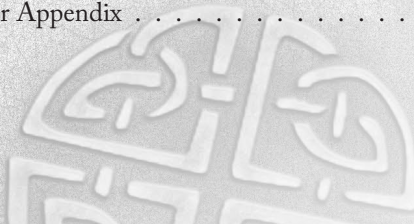
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	7
THENNAS	8
Scenario — The Betrayers of Rhybard	10
LOTUS SPAWN	20
Scenario — Windborn	21
MOLOKE-TANU	28
Scenario — Hunter's Moon	29
PALE SHADOW	36
Scenario — Eyes of the Night	37
PANTARKOS LUCRETIOS	46
Scenario — Main Attraction	47
CAUDRU	56
Scenario — The Whispered	59
SPIDER QUEEN	68
Scenario — A Matter of Love	69
TUKOMAL'S JAGHZA	80
Scenario — Hosts	81
YARAKAN, GREAT DEVOURERS	88
Scenario — Death's Cargo	90
YELLOWFINGERS	96
Scenario — The Price of Peace	97
PLAYER APPENDIX	104
DISCIPLES OF THE BLACK TEMPLE	106
Playing a Disciple of the Black Temple	107
Magic	109
Gear	110
Creatures	112
Game Master Appendix	113



Dear Master,

I write from a merchant camp in the south of Kyros on a piece of buffalo skin; I exhausted my supply of papyrus several months ago. Alas, the ink is very poor as such luxury is unknown in these remote lands.

Three years have passed since I left Syranthia and your kind teachings. I dearly miss you, and the rooms full of books in the Library. But as you taught me, the place of a Sage is in the wide world, hearing and collecting stories from travelers, getting to know the customs of foreign countries, and recording every scrap of knowledge so it will be not lost.

This is the reason I enclose a package with this letter. It contains the notes and sketches I have gathered in these long years traveling the world. They are about the people I have met and the strange creatures and beasts I have seen or heard of in faraway cities and caravanserais, from the palaces of princes to the huts of beggars.

You were right, Master: we live in a strange, dangerous world, and every corner hides an unsuspected threat or a marvelous creature. Sometimes both.

Tomorrow I join a caravan that travels south, crossing the Ivory Savannah before reaching the Lush Jungles and going farther still, to the very borders of the known world. It is a perilous journey and I might not return.

So, my dear Master, please accept my notes and use your great skills to turn them into tales, so they might come to be included in the Library and be of use to future generations.

With respect and love,

*Your disciple Justinus the Red,
Wandering Sage of the Library of Syranthia*

INTRODUCTION

This book presents ten monsters and NPCs typical of the Dread Sea Dominions, complete with stats, descriptions, and a complete Heroic Tale you can use as a stand-alone adventure, or customize to fit your campaign.

The scenarios are designed for a party of 4–6 Seasoned heroes, but you can alter them for more experienced groups. They can be played in any order, though some tales work better in the given sequence (check each tale's Requirements). Each scenario also includes a Hook, which you can use as inspiration for your own stories as well.

Each group of foes is based in a different area of the Dominions and evenly distributed across the lands, giving your party opposition in each major nation of the setting. However, you can relocate them to countries work better for your campaign.

In addition you find an Appendix, dedicated to players, to play the mysterious Disciples of the Black Temple, a sect of dark sorcerers with an even darker master.

To use this compendium you need copies of the *Savage Worlds* and *Beasts and Barbarians* rulebooks.

THENNAS

"Specters! They came out of the woods..." the fat merchant lying on the ground coughed blood. We didn't remove the arrow from his chest, fearing his condition would worsen.

"White faces... screaming like demons..." he added.

"No." Oren, the guide of our caravan, said "They weren't ghosts, but the Thennas. Ghosts don't use arrows, the rebels do."

I looked around nervously. The wood was dark. Dark and thick. And yet that very moment I felt certain we were being watched.

- from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

Habitat/Location: Borderlands.

Description: Rhybard, son of Mordan, is a Northeimer and was one of the most valiant captains of the Count of Felantium. For seven years he successfully held the Fortress of Mines, a stronghold protecting the largest ore deposits in the Count's dominions.

As he defended the keep against Cairnlander raiders, Northeim ravagers, and many other threats, Rhybard became very popular. Too popular for the ambitious Count, who never hid his desire to one day rule of all the Borderlands.

Fabricating false accusations, the Count had Rhybard arrested, removed from command, and sent to Felantium to face judgment. But the Northeim captain

never reached the city. During the journey he escaped and joined the forest bandits, the very same bandits he had hunted and killed for attacking the ore caravans.

The bandits call themselves Thennas, a Northeim term meaning "specter", because they paint their faces white before a raid. These clan-less warriors, rebels and escaped slaves have been around a long time, taking refuge in the deep forests of the Borderlands.

Rhybard quickly became their leader and turned them into brave and organized rebels, using guerrilla tactics in the areas around the Fortress of Mines. No longer interested in loot, they want the keep and they want Rhybard to rule it.

The new Governor of the Keep, Horatio, is the very opposite of Rhybard. A true blood Imperial, Horatio is a corrupt and despicable man who has turned the mines into a penal colony, forcing the convicts to dig for ore without rest, and imposing high tributes on the surrounding villages and farms. The locals support Rhybard, who was always a good and just leader. They hide his men and give them supplies, provide intelligence and mislead Horatio's men.

In the last two months not a single ore caravan has reached Felantium. Horatio has dispatched many soldiers to seek out the rebels, but the Thennas, true to their name, simply vanish in the forest, leaving a trail of bodies behind them...



RHYBARD THE THENNAS

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Edges: Block, Command, Command Presence, Hold the Line!, Tactician

Hindrances: Loyal, Wanted

Gear: Iron long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4, range: 3/6/12), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged Weapons), medium bronze armor (+2).

Special Abilities:

• **Painted Warrior:** Thennas make use of War Paints (see **Body Paint** in *Beasts and Barbarians* freebie). Depending on the situation, the use War Paint or Camouflage Paint, granting them +1 to Intimidation rolls in battle or +1 to Stealth rolls in the wild, respectively.

THENNAS

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d8, Tracking d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: Woodsman

Hindrances: Loyal, Poor, Wanted

Gear: Bronze long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4), bow (range: 12/24/48), rough light armor (+1).

Special Abilities:

• **Painted Warrior:** Thennas make use of War Paints (see **Body Paint** in *Beasts and Barbarians* freebie). Depending on the situation, the use War Paint or Camouflage Paint, granting them +1 to Intimidation rolls in battle or +1 to Stealth rolls in the wild, respectively.



VETERAN THENNAS

This rough fellow is a veteran of many battles and often acts as leader of a group.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d8, Tracking d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: Block, Connections (local farmers), Woodsman

Hindrances: Loyal, Poor, Wanted

Gear: Bronze two handed sword (Str+d10, -1 Parry, 2 handed, AP 1), dagger (Str+d4), bow (range: 12/24/48), rough light armor (+1).

Special Abilities:

• **Painted Warrior:** Thennas make use of War Paints (see **Body Paint** in *Beasts and Barbarians* freebie). Depending on the situation, the use War Paint or Camouflage Paint, granting them +1 to Intimidation rolls in battle or +1 to Stealth rolls in the wild, respectively.

GM TIP: ADVENTURE OR CAMPAIGN?

This scenario synthesizes in few pages a longer and much more complex story. If desired, the GM can transform it in a whole campaign with the heroes playing a major part in the Borderlands' politics. You can keep them involved in the freedom fight or in crushing the rebels, depending on what side they take. If you decide to take this approach, modify the timing of the events, especially the three missions to Become Trusted (see page 11). You can also add other tales into the story, some of which take the heroes outside the Borderlands. For example, what if the heroes are sent to Northem by Rhybard to find support, or to Gis to buy a powerful magical artifact? Or you can decide more missions are necessary to gain Savar's trust.

SCENARIO — THE BETRAYERS OF RHYBARD

REQUIREMENTS

This adventure is best suited to mercenary characters and is set in the Borderlands.

ADVENTURE HOOK — SPIES

Governor Horatio understands in order to destroy the Thennas, their leader Rhybard must be eliminated. But the chief of the Thennas is well protected by his men and the local population. He has decided to send spies to infiltrate the rebels. Foreign adventurers. You.

You must find Rhybard, gain his trust, and lead him and his men into a trap. You must also report regularly to Lipless, the governor's spymaster, at midnight on the fourth day of the week at a crumbling tower in the forest.

Governor Horatio has promised the party a reward of 1,000 Moons for locating Rhybard, and 3,000 Moons if they lead him into his trap.

IN THE CAGE

Lipless' men imprisoned you in a cage hanging from a tree along the road from the Fortress of Mines to Felantium. Hopefully the Thennas, which have been spotted recently in the area, will free you, offering you a perfect chance to join their ranks.

Your cover story is you were convicts assigned to work in the mines by the Fortress of Mines but you managed to escape. Unfortunately, you were recaptured, and to make an example of you Governor Horatio condemned you to die of thirst and hunger in cages hanging by the road through the forest.

Now you only have to wait and look miserable.

The party isn't doomed to stay idle for long, as the Spymaster's plan has an unsuspected flaw.

At dusk, a massive shadow emerges from the trees: a large bear. The savage forest beasts are fond of the snacks left for them by Horatio, and this bear is hungry. It first tries to crush the cage (Toughness 10). Every time the cage is attacked but not broken, the characters inside suffer 2d4 damage.

Once the cage is broken, the bear attacks the party directly. The heroes can defend themselves with Improvised Weapons (pieces of the cage or nearby branches do Str+d4 damage), but they stand no chance against the beast.

After a couple of rounds human figures approach, dressed in rough furs and wielding bows. They pepper the bear with arrows making it flee and saving the heroes. They are the Thennas, the famous bandits of the region, as the party can tell by their white painted faces.

Before the party can say anything, they hear a patrol of soldiers from the Keep approaching! The Thennas immediately lead the party into the thick of the wood.

Note on gear: the party obviously begins the adventure with no equipment, but nothing prevents them from hiding their

gear somewhere before being imprisoned and retrieving it later.

(M) Black Bear (1): See page 18.

(M) Thennas (7): See page 9.

(M) Savar (1): Thennas band chief. He is a Veteran Thennas and a Henchman.

ADVENTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Thennas take the party to a small camp in the heart of the forest. Organized in small groups, the Thennas are always on the move. The chief of the men who freed the adventurers is a gruff man named Savar, Rhybard's uncle and one of his most trusted lieutenants.

The Thennas are always looking for new recruits, but they don't force anyone. They offer to lead the party out of the forest, away from Horatio's reach, unless the adventurers want to join their ranks. Once the party signs up they're given weapons and basic equipment (as per the Thennas profile), as well as paint for their faces. The party gains the Painted Warrior Special Ability during this scenario.

BECOMING TRUSTED

The Thennas are very cautious and they suspect Horatio is trying to place spies among their ranks. The party must complete several missions (see below) to gain Savar's trust before meeting Rhybard. During this time, they'll eat, sleep and fight with their small band, becoming part of the revolution. The GM is encouraged to add personality to Savar and his men, using the Allies Personality Table, and to help the players role play situations to develop camaraderie. This makes the tough choices the party faces later more personal.

FIRST MISSION: FREE ELDRED

The morning after the heroes' liberation the Thennas move their camp and plan to visit Eldred, a farmer who supports and feeds them. But when they arrive they find a nasty surprise. The Governor's soldiers paid Eldred a visit, killed his wife and daughters, and arrested him for supporting the Thennas. He is being taken to the Fortress! The soldiers and the prisoners left an hour ago. Savar knows a shortcut through the forest to intercept them and needs volunteers for the ambush.

Savar runs through the forest as fast as a deer and as tireless as a wolf. The heroes must make three Vigor rolls (the Woodsman Edge applies) to keep up with him. If they fail more than one roll, they are Fatigued. If a critical failure is rolled, the character suffers 2d4 damage.



The devilish pace is worth the effort: the party manages to reach the path (2" wide and cutting through the thick vegetation) five minutes before the soldiers arrive. Give the players exactly five minutes in real time to position themselves on the map. During this fight, Savar and the Thennas are under their control.

The soldiers march two abreast, with the prisoner chained (Toughness 8) in the middle of the group. The Officer is third in line. Savar only wants to free Eldred and disappear among the trees. If the heroes fight valiantly, Savar starts to trust them.

(M) Thennas (2): See page 9.

(M) Savar (1): See page 11.

(M) Governor's Soldiers (10): See page 19.

(M) Governor's Officer (1): See page 19.

SECOND MISSION: SINK THE BARGE!

A week later, Savar's band receives an order from a messenger sent by Rhybard. Having learned leading a caravan of ore safely through the forest is almost impossible, Governor Horatio has decided to try an alternative route: a heavily guarded barge is now moving down the river. If it delivers the ore to Felantium, it spells disaster for the rebels. Savar's group is closest to the river and must stop the barge in some way. If the party behaved well in the previous mission, Savar accepts their assault plan and with a Persuasion roll might even let them lead the mission.

The barge (Top Speed: 3, Toughness: 12 (4), Crew: 4+12) is propelled by oars or a

sail, but is slow. It is heavily defended and three sentinels always have their bows at the ready. During the night, the barge drops anchor in the middle of the river but the soldiers do not stop their patrol.

(M) Governor's Soldiers (14): Half of them are phalanx soldiers with heavy armor (+3). See page 19.

(M) Governor's Officer (1): See page 19.

(M) Thennas (1 per hero): See page 9.

(M) Savar (1): See page 11.

There are several ways to sink the ore barge besides a direct assault. A few are listed below but creative players will find others.

Damage the Hull. Once dark, someone can swim silently to the barge. Make a roll using the lowest of Swimming and Stealth for the saboteur to swim under the hull and damage it with a sharp tool such as a hatchet. This is done with a Swimming (+2) roll inflicting weapon damage to the hull, bypassing its Armor. In case of success, the hull is so badly damaged the barge sinks in 1d4x5 minutes. As the hero is holding his breath, each damage attempt requires a Vigor roll. In case of failure, the swimmer suffers a level of Fatigue. No Fighting roll is required to hit the hull, but Stealth is to keep quiet. If the roll is a critical failure, someone on the barge hears the noise and raises the alarm.

Drop Boulders. With a Knowledge (Borderlands) or a Common Knowledge (-4) roll the characters can find a suitable narrow gorge with boulders at the top. Then, they must wait for the ore barge to approach and drop the boulders down on it. It requires precise timing and good mus-

cles, so use the Dramatic Task rules with Strength as the skill. The whole group can make cooperative rolls. If they gather three successes in three rounds, a boulder (Damage: 3d6, AP 6) falls onto the barge. There are three boulders available, so the party and the Thennas can split into various groups for multiple attempts.

THIRD MISSION: THE COUNT'S MAN

Some of the Thennas' informants have reported a courier of the Count of Felantium and his large escort are traveling along the forest road toward the Fortress of Mines carrying a message for Governor Horatio. It is vital the Thennas intercept the message, but the courier is in the fortified village of Bottar, heavily guarded by men who know Savar and the other Thennas on sight. The heroes instead are strangers, and can enter the village, find the courier and steal the message without being detected.

Fabricius the courier is staying at the local inn, the Rampant Rooster, constantly guarded by his men. The courier carries the scroll on his body and never leaves it. With a Streetwise roll or at least two hours spent observing his behavior with the tavern girls (Notice roll), the party learns Fabricius is a conceited man and very fond of women. The group can use this weakness to sneak into his room: a pretty heroine can seduce him or one of the local girls can be bribed (100 Moons at least) to leave the door to Fabricius' room open.

But Fabricius is very careful: even when he sleeps, he keeps the message in a locked scroll case chained to his hand. A Stealth and a Lockpicking roll are required to retrieve it without alerting him.

This part of the adventure is very open. It would be a good place for a GM to use a hero's Hindrances against them, such as an Enemy being a member of Fabricius' guard. To add further complications, draw a card for each party member and check the corresponding suit.

Clubs – Suspicious Village Guards. The village guards (Governor's men) are very suspicious of any newcomer and thoroughly question the heroes at the gates. In addition, if a face card has been drawn the guards patrol the village throughout the night in groups of four.

Spades – The Sympathizer. Savar tells the heroes of a supporter in the village, Gurac, the local one-handed tanner. Gurac helps the heroes as best he can but, if the card drawn is a face card, he decides instead to sell them to the guards in exchange of the freedom of his son, a convict in Fortress of Mines.

Hearts – The Lover. Tiana, a gorgeous local girl, flirts outrageously with Fabricius, possibly ruining the plans of the party. She isn't a fool and asks for a very large sum to be bribed (400 Moons), because she knows she has to disappear if she accepts the deal. If a face card is drawn, Tiana cannot be bribed. Fabricius sentenced her husband to death and she wants to get him alone to murder him!

Diamonds – The Most Trusted One. Fabricius has an additional and very trusted guard, a giant black dog called Ghul (use Dog stats from SWD, adding Size +1). The beast is absolutely faithful to its master and always sleeps at his feet.

Once the party steals the message, they must leave the village and take the scroll to Savar.

(M) Fabricius' escort (8): Governor's Soldiers. See page 19.

(M) Fabricius: Use Governor's Soldier stats adding Stealth d6 add the Habit (lecherousness) Hindrance. See page 19.

(M) Village Guards (10): Governor's Soldiers. See page 19.

MEETING RHYBARD

Once he has the message, Savar reads it to the party. It contains very bad news: the Count of Felantium has agreed to double Governor Horatio's troops! They'll be sent to the Fortress of Mines in seven days. This is very important news and Rhybard must be informed immediately. Savar asks the heroes to escort him to Rhybard's hideout tomorrow morning. This leaves the party a few hours to meet Lipless (see Reporting, below).

The characters finally get to meet their primary target!

REPORTING

The night before being taken to Rhybard, the heroes must sneak out of Savar's camp to reach the rendezvous point in the forest and meet Lipless. This requires a simple Stealth roll. In case of failure, they are noticed by some Thennas, but with a good excuse, a Persuasion roll, and some role-playing they can get out of trouble.

Lipless is a bald, sly man with a cold stare. He knows the content of the message the heroes stole, of course, because it is all part of his devious plan to ensnare Rhybard.

"The message is the first part of a trap I and the Governor have devised," he says.

THE FORTRESS OF MINES

THE FORTRESS

The Fortress is an old stone stronghold built at the end of a valley. On three sides it is protected by sturdy fortifications, while the fourth side is the mountain wall itself. It hosts a garrison in the main building (partially dug into the mountain), a well, stables, barracks, a smithy and a smelting place where the rough ore is melted down and turned into ingots.

Several low huts house the convicts currently resting (see below). A reinforced gate blocks the way into the mines.

THE MINES

The Mines are a network of tunnels, natural caves and underground chambers. Over time old veins were exhausted and new ones were found, so the mines are very extensive. The miners work on two shifts of twelve hours, constantly watched by a platoon of soldiers.

There are many dangers underground, such as poisonous air, cave-ins and the risk of getting lost. But, above all, the miners and the guards fear the cavebugs, ravenous giant insects found in deep tunnels.

If the heroes explore the mines they encounter at least one group of these nasty critters during their exploration.

(M) Cavebugs (1 per hero).

SLAVES AND CAVEBUGS

Both the slaves and the Cavebugs can affect the outcome of battles. Each round of combat, draw a card from the action deck and check the following table.

	2-6	7-10	J-JOKER
BATTLE IN THE MINES	<i>Nothing</i>	<i>Slaves!</i>	<i>Cavebugs!</i>
BATTLE AT THE FORT	<i>Nothing</i>	<i>Slaves!</i>	<i>Slaves!</i>

Slaves! Roll a d6. If a 1 is rolled, the slaves raise their pickaxes against the guards and join the Thennas! The Thennas army permanently gains a Token.

Cavebugs! The turmoil disturbs a big swarm of cavebugs which attacks indiscriminately. Roll 3d6 for each army. For each 1 rolled on any dice, a battle Token is permanently lost due to the creatures.

"Rhybard is a good tactician and knows with twice as many soldiers in the region the Thennas will have a hard time. Rhybard will most likely try to conquer the Fortress of Mines before the reinforcements arrive. And if he doesn't, you must persuade him to do so."

Lipless is pleased the heroes are to be taken to Rhybard's hideout, but he isn't interested in capturing him right away.

"If we catch and sentence him tomorrow it won't stop the Thennas. A new leader will arise. We must eliminate the rebels once and for all. You must tell Rhybard as you were digging in the mines you discovered a tunnel leading outside and you escaped through. This tunnel does actually exist, and it leads into the Fortress through the mines. But it is heavily guarded now. You must convince Rhybard to attack from there with all this troops. He'll be trapped, and will die like a rat with all his men."

With these words, Lipless dismisses the party.

(M) Lipless the Spymaster (1): See page 19.

MEETING RHYBARD CONTINUED

Savar leads the heroes to the outskirts of the forest, where a small and humble temple of the Divine Couple stands. Old Charus and his wife Wella, the priests, look after the temple aided by a long-bearded, slow-witted disciple named Bull.

In truth Bull is the charismatic leader of the Thennas. By playing dumb in a place everyone can see him, Rhybard can gather

a lot of intelligence and effectively manage his bands.

Rhybard is a very good leader. He immediately understands what the arrival of reinforcements will mean for the Thennas. He decides the rebels must attack the Fortress of Mines as a single force, and conquer it before the reinforcements arrive; otherwise they'll be too outnumbered.

It's time for the party to choose a side.

TOUGH CHOICES

Now the party must decide what to do. Stick with the original plan and betray Rhybard and the Thennas, or tell Rhybard the truth and betray Horatio? Both choices are valid and lead to two different situations, detailed below.

BETRAYING RHYBARD

The heroes tell Rhybard the false story of their escape. Rhybard is very prudent and won't trust strangers, but Savar vouches for the party. The leader of the rebels gathers all his followers and personally leads an attack to the Fortress of Mines by approaching the tunnel the heroes have described.

Unmasked! The Mines are a dangerous place (see sidebar) and Rhybard sends explorers before advancing his troops. Savar and his band volunteer for this task, and the heroes must lead them into the tunnel.

During their scouting action Savar discovers some of the Governor's soldier hidden in a cave and realizes it's a trap devised by the heroes! Aided by the Governor's soldiers, the party must stop him before he escapes.

(M) Thennas (1 per hero): See page 9.

(M) Savar (1): See page 11.

(M) Governor's Soldiers (1 per hero):
See page 19.

Butchering the Thennas. After killing Savar, the party must return to Rhybard, convince him everything is alright, and find a credible excuse for Savar's absence. This situation can either be roleplayed or played with the Social Conflicts rules.

Then the Thennas enter the mines and the Governor's soldier strike! This part of the game is best played with the Mass Battle rules.

Governor's Forces

Commander: Governor Horatio (Knowledge: Battle d6) *Forces:* 10 Tokens

The Thennas

Leader: Rhybard the Thennas (Knowledge: Battle d10) *Forces:* 6 Tokens

Due to the surprise, the Governor has a +4 Battle Plan modifier in the first round, +2 in the second round and +1 in the third round. The Thennas cannot retreat (+2 to Morale rolls).

If you want to play this scene in a more personal way, let the heroes personally capture Rhybard so they can bring his head to the Governor. The leader of the Thennas will not surrender and fights to the death, aided by his best men.

(M) Rhybard the Thennas (1): See page 9.

(M) Rhybard's Chosen Guards (1 per hero +2): Veteran Thennas, two of them are Henchmen. See page 10.

BETRAYING THE GOVERNOR

If the heroes confess who they really are, they can drastically change the outcome of the scenario.

First they must convince Rhybard and Savar of their good faith. This can be achieved with an intense roleplaying scene or the Social Conflict rules. Savar isn't willing to forgive the heroes, but Rhybard is. He realizes he now has a major advantage: if the vast majority of the Governor's troops are in the mines, a head-on attack on the fort has a great chance of success if combined with a diversion in the mines to hold the enemies' attention.

Rhybard leads the main attack, while Savar and the heroes are the diversion. Rhybard appoints Savar as commander of the bait army and gives him permission to kill the heroes if they make any false moves. To make the diversion even more realistic, one of the heroes will go into battle wearing Rhybard's armor (+3).

The two battles are fought simultaneously: one by the fort's walls where Rhybard storms the token defenses, and another in the Mines where Horatio himself tries to wipe out the Thennas.

BATTLE AT THE FORT

Token Garrison at the Fort

Commander: Soldiers' Lieutenant (Knowledge: Battle d6) *Forces:* 5 Tokens

Rhybard The Thennas

Leader: Rhybard the Thennas (Knowledge: Battle d10) *Forces:* 10 Tokens

The Thennas have a +4 Battle Plan Modifier in the first round, +2 in the second and +1 in the third round. The Token Garrison is in a Major Fortification (+2 to Morale rolls).

BATTLE IN THE MINES

Governor's Forces

Commander: Governor Horatio (Knowledge: Battle d6) *Forces:* 10 Tokens

Thennas Bait Army

Leader: Savar (Knowledge: Battle d8)
Forces: 4 Tokens

The Thennas Bait Army isn't surprised and fight defensively. This gives them a major terrain advantage (-3 to opponents' rolls). At the end of the third round, Savar is severely wounded (the GM can decide if he dies or not) and one of the heroes must take his place as leader.

Moving the Armies. After the third round of battle, the governor is warned the fort is under attack. At this point he can try to move some of his troops from one army to the other. He can withdraw two tokens from one army to add one token to the other army, but he cannot leave less than one token nor have more than 10 tokens in either battle.

The heroes win if they manage to resist until Rhybard has won the battle at the fort. Once he does, his men enter the mines, surround the governor's forces, and win the day.

If you want to have the heroes play part of the battle on the tabletop, ignore the Character Battle Results. Instead, each battle round (five standard combat rounds), the heroes are assaulted by a group of enemy soldiers, ready to dispatch "Rhybard" (the hero wearing his armor). These opponents are incremental, meaning if the party doesn't manage to kill all of them within the allotted five rounds, at the start of the sixth round a new group arrives to aid the surviving enemy soldiers.

(M) Governor's Soldiers (2 per hero):
See page 19.

(M) Governor's Officer (1): See page 19.

AFTERMATH

If the heroes played their dirty part well and betrayed Rhybard, Governor Horatio rewards them handsomely with the money he promised. But after a while he decides the adventurers know too much and order Lipless to quietly dispatch them. This can lead to another interesting adventure.

Conversely, if the heroes joined Rhybard's side, they can choose to stay with the Thennas because their fight against the Count of Felantium has only just begun. The reinforcement troops are approaching and the Thennas must prepare a surprise welcome for them.

Otherwise, if the Thennas' cause is not for them, Rhybard pays them handsomely and they can leave the Borderlands to seek new adventures.

CREATURES

BLACK BEAR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Swimming d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities:

- **Bear Hug:** Bears don't actually "hug" their victims, but they do attempt to use their weight to pin their prey and rend it with their claws and teeth. A raise and the bear has pinned its foe. The opponent may only attempt to escape the "hug" on his

action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll.

• **Claws:** Str+d6.

• **Size +2:** Bears can stand up to 8' tall and weigh over 1,000 pounds.

CAVEBUG

A cavebug is a large insect dwelling underground. It is omnivorous and very aggressive. Its carapace is very sturdy and light, and highly prized.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d4

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Special Abilities:

• **Armor +2:** Thick carapace.

• **Claws:** Str+d6.

• **Improved Frenzy:** A Cavebug can make two attacks per action without multi-action penalty.

• **Size +1:** These insects are the size of ponies.

GOVERNOR'S SOLDIER

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d4, Throwing d6

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

Edges: —

Hindrances: —

Gear: Iron long sword (Str+d8), spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands), dagger (Str+d4, range: 3/6/12), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged Weapons), medium bronze armor (+2).

GOVERNOR'S OFFICER

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d4, Throwing d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Command

Hindrances: —

Gear: Iron long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4, range: 3/6/12), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged Weapons), medium bronze armor (+2).



FABRICIUS

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d4, Throwing d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Block, Command

Hindrances: Obese

Gear: Iron long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4, range: 3/6/12), medium shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged Weapons), medium bronze armor (+2)

LIPLESS THE SPYMASTER

Of southern origins, the leader of Governor Horatio's spies and informants he earned his name because he is completely incapable of smiling. Devious and cunning, he prefers a clever plan and a dagger in the back to an open fight.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Streetwise d12, Throwing d6

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

Edges: Alertness, Connections (criminal, spies), Danger Sense, Rich, Thief, Watch your Back!

Hindrances: —

Gear: Dagger (Str+d4), cloak, leather armor (+1), two doses of *poison lotus* concoction (*orange lotus of dumb death*), two doses of *stun lotus* concoction (*powder of Hell's flower*), poisoner's ring.

LOTUS SPAWN

Habitat/Location: Heavy forested areas.

Description: According to legend, many centuries ago the Third Alchemist of Gis carried out sorcerous experiments on a specimen of Lotus from the remote land of the Pygmies. His attempts were too successful, and eventually slipped from his control. The other Alchemists were forced to intervene, and the Third was stripped of his mask and condemned to perpetual imprisonment, a fate unheard of in the history of Gis.

Voleth, the alchemists' apprentice, escaped the city with a sample of his master's work and continued his experiments in a remote castle in the Forest of Xorala in central Zandor. The Third mutated a particularly parasitic Lotus to into a giant carnivorous plant. Unlike other specimens, this plant doesn't passively wait for unsuspecting prey to fall into its mouth. It produces strange, man-sized flowers, each containing a humanoid, clawed creature called Lotus Spawn.

The Spawn are intelligent, autonomous beings, but live in symbiosis with the mother plant. Once they hatch from the flower, they actively protect and hunt food for the mother, sharing a telepathic bond with it. In exchange, the plant produces sweet nectar, the Spawns' only food source.

Both the plant and the Spawn are beyond man's control, as Voleth discovered. The plant grew to full size and engulfed the

Zandorian castle, killing Voleth and his servants in the process. Then the plant extended its long, snaking branches outside the building to colonize the surrounding forest, blossom new flowers, and create new servants.

Within a few years the forest became a haunted place. Travelers disappear while attempting to cross it, and the occasional woodcutter and hunter goes missing. According to rumor a powerful demon, left over from the Valk invasion, roams the overgrown trees.

For now the creature seems limited to the forest, but who can say where the wind may have carried its seed, free to sprout and blossom?

LOTUS SPAWN

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

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d4, Stealth d6, Tracking d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d4.

- **Forest Symbiosis:** While in a forest or other wood environment with the mother plant the Spawn gains the Woodsman Edge.

- **Plant Being:** The Spawn is a humanoid plant and doesn't feel pain like humans. It receives +2 to Toughness and +2 to rolls to recover from being Shaken.

SCENARIO — WINDBORN

REQUIREMENTS

The adventure is set in Zandor but can be relocated to any heavily forested area. A character with good Tracking is useful in this adventure.

ADVENTURE HOOK — BOUNTY HUNTERS

Zoramor is a typical modern Zandorian settlement: a small, heavily fortified town in the middle of the wild, desolate Zandor. A group of hardened survivors, ruled by the harsh but just Archont Milezar, scrape a living from the fields and doing the little commerce the current anarchy of the country allows.

Disguised as merchants, Zu'Haar the Scarred and his band of marauders snuck into the town. Their plan was to ransack the Archont's treasure room and leave unnoticed, but their attempt failed and they were forced to escape in a hurry. Their efforts were not in vain, however; during the escape they captured Milena, daughter of the Archon.

Milezar's rage was great, and he put a bounty on Zu'Haar. Whoever brings Milena back unharmed and presents him with Zu'Haar's head will be paid its weight in gold. As a result, almost every man in Zoramor and the surrounding area stopped what they were doing, grabbed a weapon, and went hunting for a fortune.

Most of the men are novices to bounty hunting, but there are some old hands as

well, like the heroes (who arrived in the city shortly after the kidnapping) and an unpleasant Valk mercenary called Arkat, nicknamed "The Shoemaker" after his nasty habit of severing his captive's feet to prevent them from running away.

After the first day of pursuit, most of the hunters gave up and returned to town. Only the heroes and, unbeknownst to them, The Shoemaker and his men, are still on the trail.

The tracks of Zu'Haar's band lead into an old overgrown wood, called the Forest of Xorala.

ADVENTURE DEVELOPMENT

This scenario is an exploration of the cursed forest, with the excuse of the bounty hunt and the added complication of a competitor. The exploration is story-driven, so no map is needed. Instead the heroes navigate through a series of encounters.

Horses. Both the heroes and The Shoemaker's band are intended to have horses. The beasts enter the forest though they aren't very happy to do so. However, starting with **In the Heart of the Forest** the trees are too close together for them to pass and they must be abandoned. Their survival is up to the Game Master.

OUTSIDE THE FOREST

Before approaching the woods, let the heroes make a Knowledge (Zandor) or Common Knowledge (–4) roll. On a success they know this particular forest has been abandoned for many years. With a raise they have also heard strange stories about it being a cursed place, infested by demons.

THE SHEPHERD

The heroes are still outside the forest when they hear a voice scream nearby. Not far away they find a bedraggled man hanging by the big toes from a tree branch. Nangal is a shepherd, and one of the few who dare to breach the borders of the forest.

The Shoemaker and his band captured him, thinking he was actively hiding Zu'Haar. They violently questioned him and stole two of his goats to replenish their supplies. But poor Nangal only told The Shoemaker what he now tells the heroes: half a day before, he saw a group of people (Zu'Haar and his bandits) ride into the forest. They seemed very tired and there was a girl tied to a saddle.

Now the heroes know they aren't alone in the bounty hunt, and their competitor is ahead of them. The Shoemaker is indeed ahead of the heroes but only by three hours.

If the party free Nangal and tend his wounds (a Healing roll), he also tells them the location of a fresh water spring in the forest (see below).

IN THE FOREST

Once in the forest, the party must track The Shoemaker and Zu'Haar. The tracks of the two groups overlap: The Shoemaker is following Zu'Haar and the party is following The Shoemaker. As a rule of thumb the group must make a Tracking roll before each encounter. If they fail they don't miss the tracks, but they lose some time, take a wrong turn, and so on. Give them a Rough Hour token. When the party has two or more of these tokens, they must do a Vigor roll or become Fatigued. The tokens and the Fatigue wear off after a good night's rest.

THE BRIDGE AMBUSH

The tracks of Zu'Haar and The Shoemaker cross an old rope bridge over a murky creek. The bridge is encrusted with moss and vines, but seems solid. It is 12" long and 2" wide, but counts as Difficult ground. Trying to cross on a horse or any beast of burden requires a Riding roll.

While the first of the heroes is crossing the first 4" of the bridge, two Valk mercenaries emerge from the vegetation at the opposite end of the bridge. One of them shoots arrows to keep the party at bay, while the other severs the bridge's ropes! The ropes have Toughness 6, and each round a mercenary can attack only one of them.

When the Valk severs the first rope any hero on the bridge must make an Agility roll or fall for 15" (3d6+3 damage, halved for landing in water). If the hero succeeds, he manages to stay on the bridge but can only advance using the Climbing rules.

If both the bridge's ropes are severed, everyone standing on it falls into the water as explained above.

If the party manages to get to the other side and capture the Valk, the two mercenaries say The Shoemaker left them behind to run slow down the competition. The main band is only two hours ahead of them.

If the party doesn't manage to cross the bridge, the Valk shout at them:

"Go away! This bounty is ours!"

And then disappear into the woods laughing. The party must now follow the river to find another way across and gain a Rough Hour token. When they do cross and reach the bridge on the other side

of the river, the two Valk are long gone. With a Tracking roll they find signs of a fight not far away: a broken Valk bow and 1d6 arrows fallen from a quiver. There are no bodies and there's no trace of the attackers. The two mercenaries were attacked by Lotus Spawn and their bodies are in the forest being carried to the castle.

(M) Valk Mercenaries (2): See page 27.

RAGING BOAR

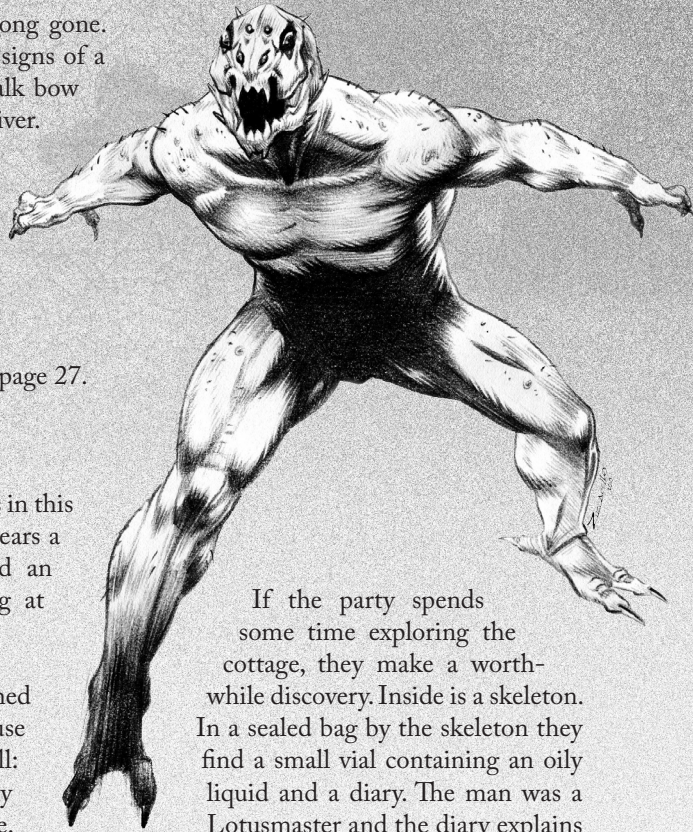
There are surprisingly few beasts in this wood, but suddenly the party hears a rustling among the plants and an enormous raging boar, frothing at the mouth, attacks them!

Once the beast has been dispatched the heroes can discover the cause of its fury with a Survival roll: the creature had suffered many wounds, from claws of some type. The wounds weren't deep enough to kill it, but sufficient to make it berserk. Its body is also stained with a greenish sap. Despite its appearance, the meat of the beast is both safe and tasty.

(M) Raging Boar (1): See page 27.

HOT ASHES AND THE DEAD LOTUSMASTER

The tracks continue to a small ruined cottage, completely engulfed by plants. Someone, probably Zu'Haar, camped outside the ruin not many hours ago; the ashes of the cooking fire are still hot. The party is gaining on both Zu'Haar and The Shoemaker. With a successful Tracking roll, they guess they are no more than an hour behind the bounty hunter.



If the party spends some time exploring the cottage, they make a worthwhile discovery. Inside is a skeleton. In a sealed bag by the skeleton they find a small vial containing an oily liquid and a diary. The man was a Lotusmaster and the diary explains he came from Gis to look for Voleth, the apprentice of the imprisoned Third Alchemists of Gis. He suspected Voleth had kept a sample of his master's creation and used it to continue his unholy studies. From what the Lotusmaster has seen in these forests, his suspicions were right and Voleth must be stopped as soon as possible. He doesn't clearly say what "the creation" is and what Voleth is actually doing.

The vial contains a dose of a concoction called Red Lotus of Fiery Flame (*barrier* power with a fire trapping) and it covers six inches on the battlefield.

FRESH WATER SPRING

The heroes find this place only if they freed Nangal the Shepherd earlier. They

come to the little spring in a small clearing. The water is so clean and fresh they recover all their Fatigue. Near the spring is a small, old statuette of the spirit protecting the place, a curious creature with the body of a frog and the antlers of a deer. This strange deity is Xorala, the protector of this forest.

If the heroes leave a small offering (GM's discretion), they gain a Bennie. If they steal the holy object, they are affected by Bad Luck until the end of the adventure.

"ALL AGAINST ALL"

Night is falling and the party has found neither Zu'Haar nor The Shoemaker. Suddenly, they hear sounds of battle not far away! They approach and see The Shoemaker's and Zu'Haar's bands fighting savagely. Milena lies, bound and wide-eyed, on the other side of the clearing. No one is watching her.

Just then, a greenish humanoid (a Lotus Spawn) emerges from the vegetation. He grabs the girl and drags her deeper into the wood. The fighters are so engaged with the fight they don't notice her abduction!

If the party leaves the two bands to their fight (foregoing the bounty on Zu'Haar's head) and goes after the girl, they must avoid the clearing or be attacked. Once on the other side, they briefly glimpse the plant creature carrying the girl before being attacked by a group of Lotus Spawn hiding among the trees!

(M) Lotus Spawn (1 per hero +1): See page 20.

If the party decides to take part in the battle instead, they can choose either side or fight both groups. They can also try to forge a truce (see sidebar).

(M) Valk Mercenaries (1 per hero +2): See page 27.

(M) Zandorian Bandits (1 per hero +2): See page 27.

(WC) Arkat The Shoemaker (1): See page 26.

(WC) Zu'Haar the Scarred (1): See page 27.

BANDITS AND MERCENARIES: AN UNTRUSTWORTHY LOT

The heroes can try to persuade Arkat The Shoemaker and Zu'Haar to make a truce and join forces to get Milena back. Treat this as a Social Conflict with three actors — the party, The Shoemaker and Zu'Haar — pitting the characters' Persuasion and role-playing against the opponents' Smarts. If the heroes manage to persuade either of the opponents, he allies with the party. If both are persuaded, a general truce is declared.

Neither the bandits nor the mercenaries are to be trusted. Whoever manages to retrieve Milena will betray the others!

If the party does not join the fight, one of the two sides (randomly selected or decided by the Game Master) wins and kills all the opponents. In both cases, the survivors can ally themselves with the party, but they'll be ready to betray them as above.

IN THE HEART OF FOREST

At this point the party, alone or with their reluctant allies, must track down the strange being that has kidnapped Milena. The wood has become rougher and denser than before and suffers Dim lighting conditions.

FLOWERS OF EVIL

After a while of traveling the adventurers notice the plants are changing, becoming long, snaky vines, sometimes as thick as snakes. They are so intertwined it is impossible to understand if they are different plants or parts of a single, huge vegetable being. Man-sized flowers of weird colors spring from it. Suddenly the flowers open simultaneously, revealing Lotus Spawn covered in a smelly substance. These hideous creatures attack the heroes!

(M) Lotus Spawn (1 per hero + 1 every 2 allies): See page 20.

THE PLANT'S CASTLE

The forest ends abruptly in front of an old and overgrown castle. You suddenly realize the vines you saw in the forest are part of a single, immense plant, whose roots are right here! The vegetable mass is so strong it has destroyed windows, walls, and towers. The tracks of the Spawn lead to the main gate and you wonder what may be lurking inside...

The court of the castle is barely accessible. Someone had built a hothouse in the yard — a very costly enterprise, given the price of glass in this region — but now it is shattered and the tracks of the Spawn lead inside.

In the hothouse the massive weight of the plant made the floor collapse into the cellar. There is a sturdy branch creating a sort

THE LOTUS OF XOBALA

The forest is a lush environment, and finding Lotus in it is easy. Every hour, a character is allowed a Lotusmastery or Survival (–4) roll. For each success and raise he finds a dose of Lotus that can be used, after proper treatment (Lotusmastery roll and a day of work) as Refined Lotus. But for every batch the Game Master secretly draws a card. If a Club, the Lotus concoction from this batch has a side effect:

CARD VALUE	EFFECT
2-5	Mildly poisonous. The target must make a Vigor roll or be Fatigued.
6-10	Allergic reaction. The target's skin breaks out in red but harmless specks. He suffers the Ugly Hindrance for a week.
J-Q	Hallucinogenic. The target suffers from a Delusion (Major) Hindrance (chosen by the Game Master) for 1d4 hours.
K-A	Strengthening! The target gains a die step in Strength for the next hour.
Joker	Strong Lotus! Double the duration of the power!

footbridge which the heroes can climb down.

The place is dimly lit, hot and damp. To their disgust, the heroes come face to face with the head of the carnivorous plant. In its mouth they see, immersed in a pool of digestive fluids, Milena and the bodies of the dead Valk mercenaries from the rope bridge. The girl is in some sort of delirium and moans feebly. The weak digestive ac-

ids have dissolved her garments, but they haven't attacked her skin yet.

The party should quietly remove Milena from the "mouth". Doing so without alerting the plant is a Dramatic Task (five rounds long) based on Stealth. If the task fails, the creature becomes aware of someone stealing its food and reacts (see below). Otherwise, once the girl is safe, Zu'Haar and/or The Shoemaker draw their swords and attack the party, breaking the truce! If the mercenaries and/or bandits aren't with the party but survived, they arrive on the scene, looking for the girl. Whatever the situation, the sound of the battle and the smell of blood cause the plant to react.

Plant's Reaction. When the plant reacts, a number of large flowers suddenly blossom, releasing Lotus Spawn eager to kill intruders!

In the meantime, The Shoemaker and/or Zu'Haar try to take off with the girl.

The battle is very difficult, but there is a way to end it quickly. Inside the plant's main mouth (where the party found the Milena) is a weak spot, the eye and the brain of the creature. It is a long, one-eyed Pseudo Pod, totally defenseless (Toughness 8, Vigor d8, Wild Card). The murky pool of digestive acids surrounding it counts as Difficult ground. The Pseudo Pod has the Command, Command Presence, Hold The Line! and Tactician Edges.

When the Pseudo Pod dies, the plant starts twisting, causing the building to collapse in few rounds, while the Lotus Spawn, now without guide, collapse motionless. The huge organism will take months to die completely, but without the consciousness it is harmless.

(M) Lotus Spawn (3 per hero): See page 20.

AFTERMATH

The Archont is very happy to see his daughter again. He is even happier if the party has captured Zu'Haar, who suffers a terrible fate. His scarred head is worth 500 Moons, and the Archont is a man who keeps his promises. An equal sum is awarded for saving the girl. In addition, as the town of Zoramor always needs strong warriors, the heroes can accept the Archont's offer to join his guard.

As for the Lotus plant, the specimen in the forest is surely dead, but what about its seeds? Some might have been carried away by the wind and might be growing right now in some remote country...

CREATURES



ARKAT THE SHOEMAKER

This fat, unshaven and smelly Valk is a ruthless killer, capable of torturing a child without remorse. He developed the habit of severing his prisoners' feet during a military campaign in Ekul and has kept it ever since.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Riding d10, Shooting d8

Charisma: -4; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Edges: Born in the Saddle, Command, One Hand and Half, Steady Hands

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Greedy, Obese

Gear: Bronze razor-sharp battle axe (Str+d8+1), bronze dagger (Str+d4), Valk composite bow (Damage: 2d6+1, Range: 15/30/60, AP 1), boiled leather armor (+1), belt with severed feet (+1 to Intimidation rolls), steppe pony.

RAGING BOAR

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Berserk:** When a boar is Shaken it goes berserk, gaining +2 to all Fighting and Strength rolls and its Toughness, but its Parry is reduced by 2.
- **Gore:** If a boar charges at least 6" before attacking, it adds +4 to damage.
- **Hardy:** Being Shaken a second time does not cause the boar to be wounded.
- **Tusks:** Str+d4.

VALK MERCENARY

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d4, Notice d4, Riding d10, Shooting d8, Tracking d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Edges: Born in the Saddle, Steady Hands

Hindrances: Greedy

Gear: Bronze short sword (Str+d6), bronze dagger (Str+d4), Valk composite bow (Damage: 2d6+1, Range: 15/30/60, AP 1), small shield (+1 Parry), boiled leather armor (+1), steppe pony.

ZANDORIAN BANDIT

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d4, Notice d4, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d4, Tracking d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Hindrances: Greedy, Outlaw, Wanted

Gear: Bronze short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4), light armor (+1), shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged weapons), war sling (Damage: Str+d6, Range: 8/16/32), riding horse.

Special Abilities:

- **Ambusher:** Brigands are masters of catching their victims off guard. If they have time to set an ambush and are in their territory, before the combat starts, draw a card from the Action Deck for every ten Brigands in the band and put it aside. At the start of each round you can decide to discard the Action Card the Brigands draw and replace it with one of the cards set aside.



ZU'HAAR THE SCARRED

This slender, scarred bandit is bold and brave, and as fast and insidious as a panther.

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Survival d4, Tracking d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: Ambidexterity, Florentine, Two Fisted

Hindrances: Greedy, Outlaw, Wanted

Gear: Two iron short swords (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4), light armor (+1), war sling (Damage: Str+d6, Range: 8/16/32), riding horse.

MOLOKE-TANU

The lion stalked out from the tall grass. It was an old beast, its skin marred and with little flesh on its bones. But a dark, hungry light shimmered in its sunken eyes. It opened its jaws and surprisingly spoke with the voice of my old friend, Doga the buffalo hunter.

"Come closer, I am Doga, your friend. I mean you no harm. Come closer."

With fear in my heart, I stepped back.

- from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

Habitat/Location: Ivory Savannah/Verdant Belt

You should never make an Ivory Tribe witch doctor your enemy. If he hates you enough, he can unleash upon you the terrible Moloke-tanu, "The-Being-That-Stalks-In-Darkness".

The ritual to summon, or rather become, a Moloke-tanu is known to very few shamans. Even fewer are the ones who dare to perform it and pay its horrible cost. The warlock must walk alone in the Savannah, chanting and beating his drum. In the end his music lures the intended target: a lion, an old man-eater if possible. The beast, driven by an unknown force, tracks down the shaman, who lies down and allows the lion to devour him alive. In this way, the spirit of the warlock possesses the body of the animal and, in an unholy fusion, a Moloke-tanu is created.

The Moloke-tanu looks like the original beast, only a little thinner and with a dark shadow in its eyes. Now a supernatural

creature, it retains the shaman's mind and the beast's cruelty, plus a plethora of evil powers. The Moloke-tanu is able to speak and mimics with incredible accuracy the voices of people it has heard, especially the ones it has devoured. It is supernaturally stealthy, and almost impossible to spot when standing still. It is very cunning and lures its victims into ambushes, using the voices of their friends and loved ones.

To make thing even worse, a Moloke-tanu is almost invulnerable. Mundane weapons, iron and steel-forged alike, cannot damage it. Fire wounds, but cannot kill it. Only a spear made with the wood of a Boa Tree can destroy the creature, a secret known only to some Sages and the few brave souls who have fought a Moloke-tanu and lived to tell the tale.

The Moloke-tanu usually starts by dispatching the enemies of the shaman possessing it, but once its vendetta is complete its predatory nature makes it a terrible threat to anyone living in the Savannah.



MOLOKE-TANU

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Stealth d12, Taunt d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Bite or Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Improved Frenzy:** A Moloke-tanu may make two Fighting attacks each action at no penalty.
- **Invulnerability:** A Moloke-tanu is immune to all types of weapons, steel included. Fire can damage them, but they regenerate fire wounds as per the Fast Regeneration special ability.
- **Low Light Vision:** Ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Pounce:** A Moloke-tanu often pounces on its prey to best bring its mass and claws to bear. It can leap 1d6" to gain +4 to its attack and damage. However, its Parry is reduced by 2 until its next action when performing this maneuver.
- **Size +2:** The adult lion body of a Moloke-tanu can weigh over 500 pounds.
- **Sorcerous Soul:** These creatures are born of the soul of an evil sorcerer and retain the powers of their former self. They have 20 Power Points, use Smarts as Arcane Ability, and can use the following powers: *boost/lower trait, confusion, fear, puppet.*
- **Voice Mimic:** Moloke-tanus are able to speak and can perfectly mimic the voices of people they have heard. If they mimic the voice of someone they have killed, they gain +2 to the opposed roll. Use Persuasion opposed to Notice to detect a Moloke-tanu imitating a voice. They use this ability to lure victims and to obtain the Drop on them.
- **Weakness (Boa Tree Weapons):** A weapon made from the wood of a Boa Tree can kill a Moloke-tanu and causes double damage.

SCENARIO — HUNTER'S MOON

REQUIREMENTS

This story should be played in the Ivory Savannah or the Verdant Belt.

ADVENTURE HOOK — MERCHANT GUARDS

The heroes are hired swords serving under Tiberias, a Syranthian merchant who travels to the Ivory Savannah every year to trade with the Zai Na, a peaceful Ivory Tribe.

Tiberias meets the Zai Na in the same place deep in the Savannah every year. He gives them tools, pottery and blankets and receives ivory tusks in exchange. He is convinced the tribe has found an elephants' graveyard somewhere, and this year he wants to persuade the tribe chief, Yboro, to reveal the location of the graveyard in exchange for a large amount of wares.

The long negotiation isn't part of the scenario but, if your group likes this kind of scene you can let them play it with the Social Conflict rules and some good roleplaying. Otherwise just read the following:

The negotiation between Tiberias, your employer, and Yboro, the Zai Na chief, was long and exhausting, but in the end the agreement was reached. In exchange for a large amount of wares, tomorrow the Zai Na will lead you to the elephants' graveyard, where the ivory awaits you!

"But that is tomorrow," says Yboro firmly. "This evening a great feast will be held to

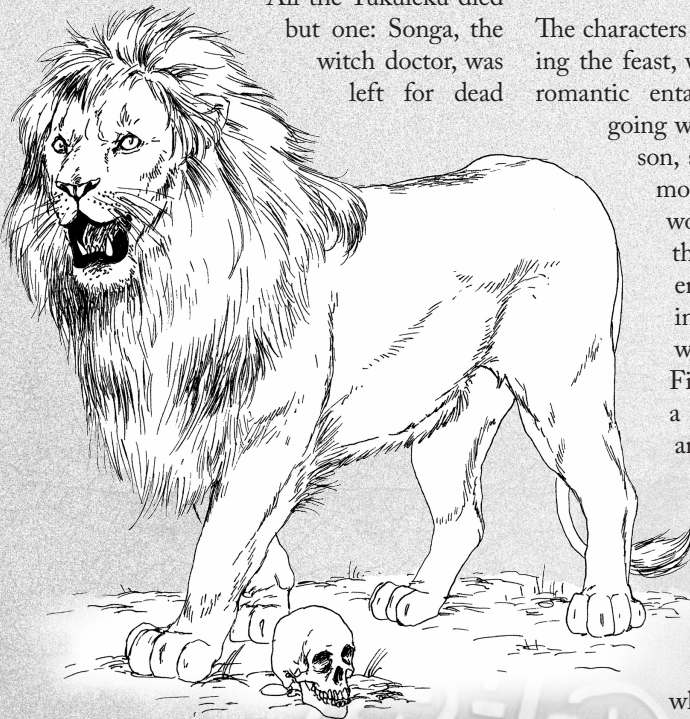
celebrate the mutually profitable agreement. We'll show you how our tribe drinks, eats, laughs and dances, pale strangers!" He concludes with a thundering laugh.

AN ENEMY READY TO STRIKE

Despite being peaceful, the Zai Na are capable of defending themselves if threatened. A month ago they were attacked by a rival tribe, the Tukuleku, wicked slave hunters working for the Caldeians. Several Zai Ne were kidnapped in a surprise raid, while the warriors were hunting in the savannah.

When they returned to their camp, the Zai Na tracked down the raiders, freed the prisoners and killed all the Tukuleku, showing no mercy. Such is the unwritten law of the savannah.

All the Tukuleku died but one: Songa, the witch doctor, was left for dead



on the ground. When he awoke and discovered all his tribe was dead, his children and wife included, his rage drove him mad. Tired and without any will to live, he went into the Savannah with his drums and performed the ritual to become a Moloke-tanu.

The ritual worked and the shaman died, merging his soul with an old lion's body. The Moloke-tanu has tracked down the Zai Na and tonight it intends to storm their camp just as the feast is about to start. It wants to kill the whole tribe but holds a particular grudge against Yboro and his family.

THE MURDERERS

A feast among the Ivory Tribes is something to be witnessed, with dances, food, drinks and beautiful girls ready to entertain the guests. Everyone is happy around the bonfire tonight.

The characters can relax and socialize during the feast, with ample opportunity for romantic entanglements. Everything is going well but Nola, Yboro's young son, suddenly goes missing. His mother, Sulla, looks around worried and asks everyone if they have seen him. In the end the whole tribe, guests included, is look for him both within and outside the camp. Finally the boy is found, half a mile from the camp, killed and partially devoured by some beast.

Let the heroes make a Notice roll. With a success they find the body of the boy, otherwise it is one of the tribesmen who makes the horrible dis-

covery. A Survival roll is enough to clarify the killer was a lion.

In truth, the boy was lured away by the Moloke-tanu, imitating the voice of his mother, and then killed.

The feast is ended and the following day a brief ceremony is held. Then, the tribe sets off for the elephants' graveyard. Everyone's mood is very gloomy, and Sulla can't stop weeping.

While passing near a field of very tall grass, Sulla suddenly shouts "Nola! Nola's calling! He is in the grass!" She immediately runs into the vegetation.

Before anyone can reach her, a roar and a cry of terror are heard. This time the Moloke-tanu drags away the woman and her body is found by a small river, where the lion's tracks disappear. Every player makes a Notice (–2) roll. With a success, they remember hearing a voice when Sulla ran off. With a raise, the character realizes it sounded like a boy's voice, but cannot be sure.

The tribesmen are now very worried and Yboro is devastated. The march is interrupted and camp is set, with Tiberias cursing about the delay. The tribesmen start whispering to each other, and the party can gather some information by chatting to them. For each success and raise on a Persuasion roll, they learn a piece of info

Voice 1. *A curse! A curse is upon us! We have displeased Etu in some way!*

Voice 2. *It is a sign of the dead elephant's spirits. They don't want us to take strangers to their graveyard.*

Voice 3. *They are the spirits of the evil Tukuleku, seeking revenge!*

Voice 4. *It is an old, sneaky man eater, too slow to hunt buffalo and gazelles but sly enough to lure a human. Nothing my spear cannot kill!*

Voice 5. *The Moloke-tanu, the evil, man-killing spirit is hunting our kin. We are doomed...*

IT LURKS IN DARKNESS

During the night, groups of sentinels are placed around the camp and Tiberias asks the heroes to join the guards because he feels uneasy.

Each hero stands guard duty together with a tribesman warrior. The pairings, five in total, are placed 15' away from each other in a rough circle surrounding the camp. Each group sits by a small fire, casting light in a Medium Burst Template. A randomly selected hero is paired with Zanla, Yboro's nephew.

Chatting with Zanla, the hero discovers the clan has been going through a hard period since last month when they faced an attack by the Tukuleku, a tribe of slave hunters. Luckily the Zai Na were victorious.

Later in the night, the hero and Zanla distinctly hear the nearest guards asking for help, but their voices do not come from their assigned position. The Moloke-tanu is using its Voice Mimic ability to try and trick them.

If Zanla and the hero investigate, they are ambushed by the Moloke-tanu, which gets the Drop on them. If the players don't fall for its trick, the creature attacks directly from the shadows. The beast first tries to kill Zanla, since it perceives the young tribesman is related to Yboro.

A savage fight ensues. The other sentinels can join the combat after the first round. Except for the area around the fires, the battle is fought in the dark.

The fight cannot be won because nobody can truly harm the Moloke-tanu. It dispatches several Zai Na warriors before Yboro arrives wielding a flaming branch and forces the monster to flee.

At this point the Moloke-tanu grows in a human voice: "You are doomed! I'll kill all of you, as you did with my people!" It disappears in the night.

(M) Moloke-tanu (1): See page 29.

(M) Ivory Tribe Warriors (1 per hero): See page 35.

N'DUNGA AND OBA

After the fight, the Zai Na tell the party the whole story, including their fear the Moloke-tanu is possessed by the spirit of Songa, the wicked Tukuleku shaman. The problem is nobody knows how to kill it because the beast seems immortal. Just then, N'Dunga, an old warrior, comes forth.

N'Dunga lost his right arm many years ago while fighting a lion. He fears no one, neither beast nor demon.

"I don't know how to kill the Moloke-tanu" he says, "but I know someone who might: a witch named Oba." At his words, the other tribesmen make gestures against the evil eye.

Oba lives near the Buffalo River and is believed to be extremely evil, but there is no other way to solve the situation. Since the Moloke-tanu wants to kill all the tribes-

men, and particularly Yboro's relatives, it is safer if other people — the heroes in this case — go and speak to Oba while the tribe keeps traveling toward the elephant graveyard.

N'Dunga volunteers to lead the party to Oba's hut. Before they set off, Yboro gives them a package with gifts for the witch. If the party opens it, they discover various bloody meat cuts, commonly known as "the parts for the witch".

Reaching Oba's hut requires an entire day, during which N'Dunga tells the heroes disturbing stories about the person they are going to visit. This is a good place for an Interlude.

When night falls they reach the witch's hut, an unsafe looking dwelling built directly over the river's waters. Oba is an old, wicked crone, and she isn't satisfied with Yboro's gifts. She wants more "parts", and the heroes must bargain with her.

"I want blood! Your blood" the old witch says, handling you a pot. "Some drops of your young, strong blood!"

The witch isn't interested in other forms of payments, and threatening her isn't a good idea (see sidebar). Oba won't help them until all the party members spill some of their blood into the pot. She gluttonously licks it before speaking.

"You need a weapon made with the wood of a Boa Tree," she says. "It is a peculiar plant created when two trees intertwine to form a single living being. As the Moloke-tanu is two creatures in a single body, so is the Boa Tree, and with it you can kill the beast."

Neither the heroes nor N'Dunga have the faintest idea where to find such a tree,

but Oba does. In exchange, she asks to be paid again, this time with a nail from each hero. N'Dunga loses his temper and the witch, apparently scared, agrees to reveal the information for free.

"There is a Boa Tree in a ravine in the Sick Ground, a barren land a few hours away from my hut traveling toward the rising sun. You cannot miss it."

What Oba doesn't say is the tree grows above a nest of dangerous giant scorpions.

If the heroes decide to willingly pay the requested price, she munches their nails like delicious snacks, then warns them about the scorpions and gives the hero with the highest Charisma a magical charm.

Oba's Charm. A crude necklace made of assorted scorpions' parts, Oba's amulet is very useful. The wielder is never attacked by a scorpion, unless he attacks first. In addition, the item is a minor relic with the *confusion* and *healing* Powers, contains 15 Power Points and Arcane Skill d12. The Powers only work against scorpions (in case of *healing*, against their venom) and, once the points are depleted, the amulet becomes useless.

THE BOA TREE

Locating the Boa Tree isn't as easy as the witch claims, and finding it before mid-day requires a Survival or Knowledge (Savannah) roll, both at –2. In case of failure, the party finds it later, after half a day of marching across the sun-scorched Sick Ground. Everyone must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue.

OBA THE WITCH

The old crone intentionally doesn't have stats. She has been dwelling in the Savannah for many centuries and is far more powerful than any adventurer. She isn't interested in battles and prefers to lie and manipulate people for her wicked purposes. She is a perfect villain or villainous patron in the hands of the Game Master. If attacked, she cries out and drops dead! But when her body is examined, only an empty, dry shell is found; her spirit has flown away. Wise adventurers will flee the savannah quickly, because Oba is very vengeful...

The group arrives at a ravine with a strange, twisted tree at the bottom. Sharp-eyed heroes (Notice roll) spot both the walls and the bottom of the ravine are full of holes roughly three feet in diameter. The entire is a nest of giant scorpions, with the Boa Tree growing right in the middle.

If the party moves very quietly, they can reach the tree without alerting the scorpions. This is handled as a Dramatic Task based on Stealth (–2). If by the end of the fifth round the party hasn't scored five successes, they are attacked by one giant scorpion per each two missing successes. In addition, another two come out of a random hole in the ground each round.

The battlefield is a round area, 10" in radius, with the Boa Tree in the middle. The ravine isn't very deep, but its borders are considered difficult ground.

There is an unlimited number of scorpions, so the party must snatch the wood they need and leave as quickly as they can. For each round spent cutting wood, each hero can make a Strength roll. Each success and raise gathers a piece of wood. Twenty pieces of wood are available in total.

(M) Giant Scorpions (unlimited): See page 35.

(M) N'Dunga (1): Ivory Tribe Warrior Wild Card. Add the One Arm Hindrance. See page 35.

The heroes might be furious Oba didn't warn them about the scorpions. However, if they return to her hut to seek revenge, they find it has disappeared (it actually moved away, walking on its poles).

BOARING LION, BAGING BULL

MAKING WEAPONS

Once the group has gathered the wood they'll want to make weapons. Doing so requires a Repair (+2) or Survival roll and some basic tools like a knife. The roll can be cooperative. In case of failure, a piece of wood is wasted. In case of success, an Improvised Weapon of the chosen type is built. With a raise, a normal weapon is built. Each attempt requires an hour. A weapon made of such wood is considered magical only against the Moloke-tanu.

Different types of weapons require different amounts of wood:

Arrows: 1 piece/ 3 arrows

Javelin: 1 piece

Club: 1 piece

Spear: 3 pieces

War Club: 4 pieces

THE STAMPEDE

Once armed, the heroes should rush to join the Zai Na. The trip takes half a day because the tribe has moved very slowly. When the party finds them, the Zai Na are camping near a peaceful herd of buf-

falos ready to settle for the night. The last two days have passed without further incident.

But the Moloke-tanu is sly and devious. Knowing it cannot attack a heavily guarded camp, it creates a diversion. Moving near the buffalo herd and using its sound mimicking powers, it frightens them into a stampede with the Zai Na's camp directly in the herd's path!

Each hero is allowed a Notice roll. If successful, he spots the cloud of dust raised by the herd; otherwise he is Surprised in the first round.

"Find a tree! Find a tree and climb!" shouts Yboro, pointing toward some tall trees nearby. The whole tribe panics and runs.

Taking refuge in the trees is a wise suggestion. The stampede reaches the Zai Na in five rounds. Reaching the trees requires one round, while another round and a Climbing roll are needed to ascend. The party has plenty of time, but several Zai Na need help. Draw a card for each hero. If a Heart is dealt, the hero spots someone (a pregnant woman, a small child, an old person) visibly in trouble. Helping them requires two additional rounds to reach the trees and causes -2 to the Climbing roll because the character has to push up the person in need. If a character saves a life, reward them with a Bennie. At the start of the sixth round, any character not in a tree is trampled and suffers 3d6 damage.

As you are running wildly, Zanla (or Yboro, if Zanla was killed) is just behind you. He is the last man to reach the trees, since he is helping an old woman, and can't climb up. A buffalo is about to run him down, but as you watch the courageous warrior manages to jump on the

back of the buffalo and disappears with the rest of the herd.

When the dust cloud settles, the party and the tribesmen look for survivors, especially Zanla. The man has been lucky: he is alive, although he has a broken leg and cannot walk. He managed to stay on the buffalo's back until the stampede ended, and is now calling for help, somewhere in the tall grass not far away.

The players might wonder if the cries are truly Zanla's or if it is another devious trick of the Moloke-tanu?

In the meantime, the Moloke-tanu has also heard Zanla and is moving in for the kill. If the heroes do not hesitate and immediately run toward Zanla's voice, they find him moments before the Moloke-tanu's attack. Otherwise they hear a terrible scream of pain as Zanla is devoured by the bewitched lion. All they can do now is avenge the brave young warrior's death.

In both cases, armed with their magical weapons they can now dispatch the evil beast in an epic battle.

(M) Moloke-tanu (1): See page 29.

AFTERMATH

By killing the Moloke-tanu, the heroes earn the Zai Na's eternal friendship (especially if they have saved Zanla). The tribesmen aid the adventurers as long as they remain in the Savannah. It means free food, a place to rest, pretty girls eager to become closer to such great warriors, and all the other perks of being a hero.

After a few days, they reach the elephants' graveyard and each hero is given a load of tusks worth 300 Moons.

In addition, the Game Master now has a great hook for another adventure. Why did Oba ask for the heroes' blood and nails? Is she just a hideous being with disgusting eating habits, or was her request part of some wicked control ritual which can be used to force the party to do some dirty work for her?

CREATURES

IVORY TRIBE WARRIOR

A fierce warrior of the Zai Na tribe.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d4, Stealth d4, Survival d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: —

Hindrances: —

Gear: Bone tipped spear (Str+d6, 1h: Reach 1 or 2h: +1 Parry), shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged attacks).

GIANT SCORPION

A huge scorpion as big as a man. It dwells in underground nests in desert areas and is very territorial.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d4

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

Special Abilities:

• **Armor +2:** Thick carapace.

• **Stinger:** Str+d4. Given its size, its sting has Reach 1.

• **Poison:** See the **Poison** rules in the *Savage Worlds* core rulebook. The scorpion's poison is Venomous.

PALE SHADOW

Even in death, the creature is impressive: taller than a man, but gaunter and covered in short white fur. The wings, bat-like and larger than a vulture's, were connected to the arms by a series of small, delicate muscles. The beings might almost be called beautiful, were it not for the mouth. Their canines are as long as daggers and as wicked as scimitars, because they feed on but a single thing: blood.

— from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

Habitat/Location: Ancient ruins or jungle.

Description: The Pale Shadows are an ancient race of bat-like humanoids. The height of a tall, emaciated man, they are covered in short, whitish fur and hideous faces with long teeth. They are dangerous, bloodsucking vampires.

In the past they were enslaved by the Keronians, but now only a few remain, dwelling in remote ruins or jungles. Elusive and gifted with animal cunning, they hunt at night, stealthily snatching their victims and returning with them to their nests among the branches of very tall trees or on the top of tall buildings to consume their meal at leisure.

The creatures are long-lived and some are more than two hundred years old. The younger ones, probably as a result of inbreeding, tend to be weaker and smaller than the older individuals, called "Royals", who act as the leaders of the packs.

A few of the Royals, usually the kings of the pack, have a strange power: their eyes are very luminous, and legend has it by

staring into them one can see glimpses of the past witnessed by these strange, ancient creatures.

PALE SHADOW

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

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

Special Abilities:

• **Bite or Claw:** Str+d4.

• **Bloodsucking:** If a Pale Shadow hits with a raise, it means he sinks his teeth into the victim's throat. This counts as a successful grappling attempt dealing Str+d4 damage in subsequent rounds. The Pale Shadow also has +2 to the opposed roll due to his frenzied state caused by the taste of blood.

• **Fear:** Seeing a Pale Shadow for the first time causes a Fear check.

• **Flight:** Pale Shadows fly at a Pace of 6 and Climb 0.

• **Infravision:** A Pale Shadow halves penalties for poor light vs. heat-producing targets.

• **Weakness (light):** Pale Shadows don't like bright light. In sunlight they suffer –2 to all rolls. Light-based spells and tricks gain +2 against them.



KING OF THE SHADOWS

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

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

- **Bite or Claw:** Str+d4.
- **Bloodsucking:** If a Pale Shadow hits with a raise, it means he sinks his teeth into the victim's throat. This counts as a successful grappling attempt dealing Str+d4 damage in subsequent rounds. The Pale Shadow also has +2 to the opposed roll due to his frenzied state caused by the taste of blood.
- **Fear:** Seeing a Pale Shadow for the first time causes a Fear check.
- **Flight:** Pale Shadows fly at a Pace of 6 and Climb 0.
- **Hypnotic Gaze:** Treat as the *confusion* power using Spirit as Arcane Skill and 10 Power Points. A character targeted by the gaze for three or more rounds has a dream-like experience of her past life, granting Knowledge (Ancient History) d6 for the remainder of the session.
- **Infravision:** A Pale Shadow halves penalties for poor light vs. heat-producing targets.
- **Size +2:** A Royal Pale Shadow is slightly bigger than a man.
- **Weakness (light):** Pale Shadows don't like strong light. In sunlight they suffer –2 to all rolls. Light-based spells and tricks have +2 against them.

SCENARIO — EYES OF THE NIGHT

REQUIREMENTS

To play this adventure the heroes need to be on a ship crossing the Dread Sea or another ocean.

ADVENTURE HOOK — PIRATES

The heroes' ship is attacked by a pirate vessel, the *Blood Bride*, whose Captain is the infamous renegade Amazon pirate Anaya the Swift. The heroes fight valiantly, but their crew is butchered. Only play the final part of the battle, with the adventurers cornered by the pirates and ready to make their last stand. They are tired, battered and wounded after impressive combat; start them with no Bennies, 2d4 Power Points and each of them suffering 1d4-2 Wounds.

The pirates attack in small waves, while their companions goad them on and keep the heroes from escaping. Let the party fight one wave of pirates per two Ranks (i.e. two waves at Seasoned).

(M) Pirates (1 per hero): See page 45.

Suddenly a bulky pirate, a tattooed giant of a man, comes out from the crowd. He stares at (name a character) with shock and surprise on his face. "By the blood of the Gods!" he curses "Is that you (character name)?"

PIRATES' CODE

The piratical code was set down a long time ago on the Finger Islands. A copy, written on an old piece of sail, is kept as a relic in the Rude Wench, the oldest tavern of the Cove. Other forms of this code exist in other regions and seas, but they don't differ significantly.

Treat as a Code of Honor (Minor Hindrance), with the following tenets:

-All crewmen ("Brothers") are equal and receive an equal share of the booty, except the Captain and the First Mate who receive two shares.

-If a non-pirate kills a pirate, his Brothers must avenge him. The only exception is if the murderer offers himself as a replacement for the pirate killed.

-You cannot harm a Brother except in a fair duel.

-All the Brothers must obey the Captain and the First Mate, but any Brother can challenge them for their position.

The bulky pirate is Kord, the First Mate of the *Blood Bride* and an old friend of the mentioned character. The hero saved his life many years ago. The Game Master could also use this occasion to introduce a character's Contact or other reoccurring campaign NPC.

Kord stops the fight and offers the party the chance to join the pirate crew as replacements for the pirates they have killed. It is an option of the Pirates' Code (see sidebar), and captain Anaya begrudgingly accepts. The heroes have no other choice than to join their attackers.

GAINING TRUST

After joining the pirates the party discovers the attack on their ship was not by chance. Anaya was looking specifically for their ship because of its precious cargo: a mysterious old coffer made of stone and metal.

The coffer comes from Kyros and was directed to Tricarnia. It was guarded by four Ivory Tribe warrior-slaves, who fought to the death to protect it.

The captain orders Nimblefingers, a pirate with a history of burglary, to open it. But the chest is booby-trapped and the thief dies horribly on a poisoned blade that extends from the coffer's side. At this the rest of the crew refuses to approach it. Captain Anaya orders the party to force it open. If they refuse, she can have them executed for insubordination; if they die trying, she rids herself of them anyway.

Strongbox of Blades. For the characters to survive they must open the booby-trapped coffer. It is an ancient, dangerous device of Keronian origin and emits a magical aura which can be spotted with the *detect arcana* Power. This insight grants +2 on any attempt to force it open (see below).

The lock is made from a curious mechanism of interlocking plates. Moving them into the correct position opens the cage, while arranging them incorrectly, or waiting too long between one move and the next, triggers a trap. Treat this as a Dramatic task of three rounds based on Lock-picking or Smarts (-4). The task can be cooperative.

The party needs three successes by the end of the third round. Otherwise, draw a card from the Action Deck and check the table

below. The trap hits the lead character of the cooperative roll and any other hero who had the misfortune to roll a 1 on the skill dice, regardless of the Wild Dice. All the blade attacks have the Drop.

CARD	EFFECT
2-5	<i>Thrusting Blade.</i> Fighting d8, 2d4 damage. Club: the blade is coated with Lethal (+2) poison.
6-10	<i>Slashing Blade.</i> Fighting d6, 2d6 damage. Club: twin blades (two attacks).
J-K	<i>Energy Discharge.</i> The first hero to touch the cage suffers 2d8 damage.
A	<i>Gas cloud.</i> Anyone in a Medium Burst Template suffers the effects of Venomous (+2) poison.
Joker	<i>Two traps!</i> Draw two cards, and the traps affect two heroes.

Once opened, to the dismay of the crew the coffer is empty! The real treasure is the bottom of the coffer itself, made of an old stone slab engraved with an ancient map.

"Shut up, dogs!" Captain Anaya barks "We found exactly what we were looking for! This stone adorned the tomb of Tipaas, a powerful sorcerer buried in Kyros centuries ago. When turned to face Tricarnia, the panel reveals the location of the ancient temple of Son Rah, a forgotten Keronian god. Never heard of the Burning Eyes of Son Rah? They are two gems, as big as a man's fist, encased in the god's statue. They are somewhere in that temple, waiting for us to plunderer!"

The legends states the temple of Son Rah is on an island, but doesn't give a location. The references on the burial stone are accurate enough to locate the island somewhere east of the Fallen Kingdom of Keron.



ISLAND OF MYSTERY

POWER STRUGGLE

The *Blood Bride* sets sail for the island of the idol, while the crew suspiciously stares at the heroes. They may have opened the coffer, but they have yet to gain the crew's trust.

During the voyage, Kord finds a moment in which to speak to his friend-hero privately.

"Captain Anaya hates me, and you as a consequence, because I am trying to seize command. Half of the crew is on my side now, but we aren't ready. When the moment comes, I'll need your help too."

Kord is willing to bargain and makes it known the position of First Mate, if he takes command, is open.

A couple of minor incidents with the loyalist crew members happen during the voyage, but nothing serious. The GM should improvise a few events, depending on his gaming group, or use an Interlude.

THE TENSION RISES

The *Blood Bride* reaches the island after a week of sailing. The island is a lush and tropical, covered by jungle and surrounded by tall reefs except a single, large beach on the southern coast. The ship is left with a token guard and, using dinghies, the pirates (and the party) land on the beach. The two groups (those loyal to Anaya and the supporters of Kord) are now blatant and the tension is palpable.

The island is quite large, but before going into the thick of the jungle Anaya sends explorers along both sides of the beach. The party's group discovers the old wreck

of Caldeian slave ship and crude shacks where the survivors lived.

The shacks are empty and were abandoned several years ago, but with a Notice roll the heroes find something creepy hanging from a doorstep: a crude amulet made of bones, hair and dried mud. A Knowledge (Arcana) roll reveals it is a ward used to repel demons, a habit typical of the Savannah. The amulet must have been hung there by a surviving Caldeian slave who hoped it would protect him from the terrible dwellers of the island, the Pale Shadows (see below). Sadly it was only superstition; the amulet has no real power.

There are no other signs of survivors.

Amos's Murder. After the inspection of the shacks the group crew rejoins the explorers, reporting they found nothing on the other side of the beach. At this point the pirates notice Amos, one of Anaya's supporters, is missing.

Amos is found dead where the jungle starts, killed by a mace blow. The only pirate using a mace is Kdul, one of Kord's supporters. His mace is still smeared with blood, proving his guilt, and the man is sentenced on the spot in accordance with the Pirates' Code. Kdul is guilty and doesn't even try to deny it, his motivation revenge for an insult.

The situation between the two groups of pirates deteriorates further, but there is no open fight. If a hero tries to provoke violence, Kord himself steps in to smooth things over. This can lead to an interesting roleplaying situation.

Tadior's Disappearance. The party venture into the jungle. With some hours of searching and a Tracking roll, the heroes find an old road, leading deeper into the

forest (if the heroes fail the roll, the pirates find it).

As evening approached, the captain decides to camp on the beach and explore the path the next day. The seaside is pleasant, but the nearby jungle is spooky, with old giant baobabs as big as houses and strangely devoid of any sound. The night passes quietly, though the atmosphere is tense: the crew is actually split into two clear groups, and nobody sleeps much.

Although the pirates stay awake all night, one of them, Tadior, a supporter of Kord, is missing in the morning, and this time he is nowhere to be found. The sentinel (Anaya's man) remembers having seen him go into the jungle to answer nature's call. Exploring the area with a Notice (-2) or Tracking roll, some traces are found, but they are unclear and end abruptly. On a raise, Tadior's bandana is found on the branch of a nearby baobab.

Accusations are thrown because everyone suspects revenge for the killing of Anaya's man, but no evidence can be found. In truth Tadior was taken during the night by the Pale Shadows. The creatures ambushed him and dragged him away, flying to their cursed city (see below).

THE CITY OF PALE SHADOWS

In the late morning the pirates take to the road and by afternoon they reach the center of the island. There they discover an old city overgrown with plants and mostly in ruins. Only the walls, protected by a huge gate, still stand. The gate is wide open.

The pirates scatter, rabidly seeking treasure. The party is free to explore this seem-

ingly Keronian city, characterized by tall, slender towers mostly inaccessible from the ground. The Pale Shadows demolished the stairwells making it impossible for non-flying creatures to reach the top floors where they sleep during the day.

Exploring the City. For each hour of exploration, draw a card from the Action Deck and consult the table on the next page. If an entry was already used, nothing happens. After four hours of exploration, the heroes finally find the temple.

GREEN

At dusk, the party finally finds the temple.

Finally, when the sun has almost set, you find a tall, crumbling building resembling a temple. Different from other palaces, the entrance is protected by a sturdy metal grate which catches your attention. In the darkened temple you spot a massive humanoid statue. Two enormous red gems shimmer in its eye sockets!

The metal grate must be cut or bashed in; the lock is too rusty to pick. It has Toughness 14. While the party is working on it, Anaya and Kord both arrive with some of their respective followers. One of the pirates carries a saw and with a few hours work can open the grate.

The room hides no danger and the pirates storm inside. Someone easily removes the gems from the statue and, at this point, the tension between the two groups of pirates explodes.

Anaya orders her men to attack and a savage fight breaks out.

(WC) Captain Anaya the Swift (1): See page 44.

CITY EXPLORATION TABLE

CARD	RESULT
2-5	<i>Unsafe Building.</i> A randomly selected hero (or anyone with the Unlucky Hindrance) must make an Agility roll or suffer 2d8 due to assorted debris falling. This building might collapse.
6	<i>Human Bones.</i> The heroes find scattered human bones near a tall tower. They don't look old, and there is a rusty Caldeian armor (common Knowledge Roll) among them. They belong to one of the shipwrecked slavers. If the heroes climb up the tower (very difficult: -4), they disturb a family of Pale Shadows. (M) Pale Shadows (1 per hero): See page 36.
7-9	<i>Poison Ivy.</i> The characters find a ruined building, resembling a temple, engulfed by green vines. With a Survival (-2) or Lotumastery roll they recognize the vines as mildly toxic. Entering the ruin causes a Vigor check, adding their Armor value. In case of failure, contact with the vines causes an annoying irritation (count as Bump and Bruises). The building is empty.
10-J	<i>Breach.</i> One of the heroes finds a breach in the city walls. This information is useful later when escaping from the city (see below).
Q	<i>Feeling Watched.</i> Select a random hero (or a character with the Danger Sense Edge) and tell him he feels watched. Have him roll Spirit. On a failure he feels unnerved and suffers Fear/Nausea until he leaves the city. If successful, he recovers and feels ready for anything, receiving a Bennie.
K	<i>Trinkets.</i> With a successful Notice roll, the party finds a useful trinket (a piece of pottery, an engraved statuette, etc.) worth 2d6x10 Moons. This is a good space for a GM to add clues regarding the heroes' ongoing quests or campaign.
A	<i>Old Cellar.</i> The party finds an unspoiled cellar containing ten big jars of centuries-old wine! For each jar draw a card. If red, the wine is very good; if black, the wine seems good but after an hour causes intense stomach pain (Vigor roll or be Fatigue). If the party shares this discovery, the pirates immediately start drinking and are intoxicated (Fatigued) in the next scenes.
Joker	<i>Mural Paintings.</i> On the walls of a building the heroes find strange paintings of bat-like people being adored and offered human sacrifices by a race of tall men. If discovered, the heroes can skip the Fear check from seeing the Pale Shadows.

(WC) Kord (1): See page 45.

(M) Anaya's Pirates (1 per hero): See page 45.

(M) Kord's Pirates (1 per hero): See page 45.

The fight lasts for three rounds, when one of the fighters stumbles upon something lying behind the idol. It is the body of Tadior, the missing pirate! At this discovery the crewmates stop fighting, the gems temporarily forgotten.

How did Tadior's body get here, given the room was sealed? Inspecting his body, suspicious looking wounds can be found along his jugular and he is unnaturally pale from lack of blood.

Meanwhile, night has fallen. The party notices that, with the exception of the pirates in the temple, no crewmember has returned from exploring the city.

THE NIGHTMARE STARTS

As soon darkness fell the Pale Shadows awoke, left their dens and silently killed all the other crewmembers. The only survivors are the heroes and the pirates in the temple.

The group has two options: look for the missing companions or stay inside the temple.

In both cases, the group is in trouble. If they leave to search the ruins they are attacked by a pack of Pale Shadows. If they stay inside, they discover a hole in the ceiling through which a pack of Pale Shadows launch an attack.

A new wave of creatures arrives every three rounds. The pirates, Kord and Anaya fight on the same side.

(M) Pale Shadows (6): See page 36.

(M) Royal Pale Shadow (1): Use the Pale Shadows stats, adding the Brute Edge. He is a Henchman. See page 36.

After dispatching the first waves of enemies the heroes realize staying in the city is suicide. They must flee and try to reach the relative safety of the thick jungle, where the flying creatures cannot move as well. From there they can reach the boats. If no player decides to escape, one of the main characters (Kord or Anaya) suggests it and all the pirates still alive agree.

If the players decide to stay in the city alone and meet their doom, the pirates leave them.

ESCAPE THE CITY

Leaving the city is played with the Chase rules.

Split the pirates evenly among the player characters and consider them "attached" to the heroes. The Pale Shadows move in groups, each led by a Royal Pale Shadow.

Set the length of the Chase to 10 rounds and use Agility as chase skill. While the Chase is in the city (rounds 1-5), the monsters take advantage of their flying ability, gaining +2 to the Chase roll. From the sixth round on, the pursuit is in the woods and the characters gain the same bonus.

If the heroes know about the breach in the walls and use it, the Chase in the city only lasts rounds 1-3.

Range. The monsters have no ranged weapons, so they don't waste time aiming and move faster. To balance this, they are considered Out-of-Range with a 2-10 card and in Melee with any face card.

Complications. Complications are up to the Game Master, but here are some suggestions:

Disaster. City gates closed (city); lost (jungle).

Major Obstacle. Dead end (city); a pit covered by foliage (jungle)

Minor Obstacle. Road blocked by debris (city), muddy ground (jungle)

Distraction. Pale Shadows screaming; sudden rain, moon covered by the clouds.

There are four groups of pursuers. Each group is composed as follows:

(M) Pale Shadows (1 per hero): See page 36.

(M) Royal Pale Shadow (1): Use the Pale Shadows stats, adding the Brute Edge. He is a Henchman. See page 36.

(WC) King of the Shadows (1). One of the Royal Pale Shadows, the leader of the fourth group, is their king (see page 37). If the party kills him, the chase immediately ends as the creatures give up, shocked by the death of their leader.

By the end the survivors reach the jungle, return to the beach, and row for the *Blood Bride*.

AFTERMATH

Kord and/or Anaya might be dead and the crew is decimated; it now comprises only the survivors plus 2d6 pirates who stayed on the ship. The party has a real chance of taking control of the *Blood Bride* and one of them can become captain. If Kord or Anaya are still alive, the heroes can serve under their command or decide to challenge their leadership.

In any case, a new life of sea adventures can await them.

The Eyes of Son Rah. The gems are extremely valuable, at least 10,000 Moons each, but they may hide a curse determined by the Game Master.

CREATURES



CAPTAIN ANAYA THE SWIFT

Anaya the Swift was an Amazon of Ascaia years ago. She turned to piracy but was captured and condemned to death by the Syranthians. After her escape she gathered a crew and stole a ship. She has been scouring the seas, looking for plunder and fights even since. Despite being a woman Captain, she is feared and respected for her deadly skill with the sword.

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

Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d10

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: Amazon, Block, Command, Counterattack, Improved Frenzy

Hindrances: Code of Honor (pirates), Greedy (Major)

Gear: Bronze long sword (Str+d8), throwing daggers x 4 (Str+d4, range: 3/6/12, +1 shooting rolls, -1 Fighting rolls), leather armor (+1).



KORD

An immense tattooed pirate who knows one of the heroes.

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

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

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Brawny, Brute

Hindrances: Code of Honor (pirates)

Gear: Bronze short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4, range: 3/6/12).

Special Abilities:

• **Born on the Deck:** Pirates are skilled in risking their lives while boarding enemy ships. They receive +1 to Tricks while fighting aboard a ship.

PIRATE

A typical pirate. He can be a former slave, a mariner, or simply a greedy fellow who has embraced a life of plundering.

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

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

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: —

Hindrances: Code of Honor (pirates)

Gear: Bronze short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4, range: 3/6/12).

Special Abilities:

• **Born on the Deck:** These men are skilled in risking their lives while boarding enemy ships. They receive +1 to Tricks while fighting aboard a ship.

PANTARKOS LUCRETIOS

The young man, lazily lying on a rich bed, watched me with dead eye and ignored the efforts of the pretty servant girls pampering him.

"I have always wondered how a Sage like you would do in the arena against a Nandal barbarian." He said in a voice made dull by heavy use of Lotus. "You cannot imagine what Nandals do when you keep them away from food for a week." He added with a smile.

"You cannot send me to the arena! I am an envoy of the Great Library!" I said, but a cold shiver ran down my spine.

- from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

Habitat/Location: *Faberterra*

Description: A Pantarkos is the Faberterran equivalent of a count. Lucretios is the last heir of an incredibly rich family from southern Faberterra. Physically frail, he developed a great passion for gladiatorial games and squandered fortunes betting on the outcome of fights in the arena.

Not satisfied, he built his own arena in his palace, a fortified mansion on a promontory. Here he stages private games for his personal leisure. But normal games aren't enough: he wants more and more dangerous challenges, so much so no professional gladiator accepts to work for him. Aided by Corvus, a devious Lotusmaster, he kidnaps strangers who travel through his lands to fuel his games.

Lucretios is utterly remorseless. He loves only himself and will do anything to satisfy his desires. He isn't a warrior or a mage, but thanks to his huge riches and family connections he can afford to hire plenty of mercenaries and servants.



PANTARKOS LUCRETIOS

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

Skills: Fighting d4, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d8, Taunt d6

Charisma: +2/-2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Edges: Connections (Nobility, Criminals, Slavers), Filthy Rich, Noble

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Habit (Lotus - Major)

Gear: Fancy clothes, several servants.



CORVUS

Corvus isn't the real name of this tall, skinny man. Originally from the Independent cities, he was forced to escape for unknown reasons. With Pantarkos Lucretios he has found a secure, well-paid position.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Lotusmastery d10, Persuasion d6, Stealth d8

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Arcane Background (Lotusmastery), Chemical Tradition, Extra Power x2, Extra Power Points x2

Hindrances: Greedy

Powers [20]: *Blind* (Silver Lotus of Dusk), *barrier* (Fiery Lotus of Hell), *fear* (Green Nightmare), *slumber* (Colorless Lotus of Sleep), *poison* (Green Lotus of Death), *stun* (Corvus' pollen)

Gear: Bronze dagger (Str+d4), lotus bag, prisoner's ring, refined Lotus (5 doses).

ADVENTURE HOOK — PRISONERS

The heroes wake with a terrible headache in a cage carried on a cart drawn by mules. They are surrounded by grinning soldiers, led by a long-robed, thin man, Lotusmaster Corvus. The soldiers and Corvus are all on horseback.

The last thing the adventurers remember is stopping to rest at an inn for the night.

The inn is within Pantarkos Lucretios' lands and the villagers called the Pantarkos' guards, led by Corvus, who drugged their food and impris-

SCENARIO — MAIN ATTRACTION

REQUIREMENTS

This scenario is set in Southern Faberterra, but can be located in any other "civilized" land. The story is ideal to introduce new groups to the world of *Beasts & Barbarians* because its hook is suited to banding together very different heroes.



oned them. The locals know if Pantarkos runs out of gladiators, he picks someone at random from the local population.

After traveling quite a while, they group reaches an old fortress on a promontory directly over the sea. A single, narrow bridge connects it to the mainland. The heroes are taken inside and the massive stone gates of the fortress slam shut behind them.

A DEADLY BARGAIN

The heroes are dragged into the courtyard in chains. Pantarkos Lucretios comes to inspect them, carried on a litter by slaves.

Corvus speaks on behalf of his master.

"Honorable guests," he says. "You are fortunate to be picked for the gladiatorial games of his highness, Pantarkos Lucretios, may the gods protect him. From now on your life depends on the strength of your arm and your ability to amuse our beloved master. I won't lie to you: it's very unlikely you'll survive.

But the Pantarkos is a very generous man and wants to keep you motivated, so he makes you a solemn promise. Win four consecutive fights, and you will be freed with a bag of gold as your reward. Lose, and you die."

In truth, until now no one has managed to win the last fight because it is against a powerful monster of the Islands of the Maimed Ones —the dreadful Chimera.

There are two ways to end this adventure: winning the four fights against all odds or escaping from the Arena aided by Belaxios (see below). The party should fight and win at least their first fight.

FIGHTS IN THE ARENA

The party is thrown into a cell to rest until their first fight that afternoon. They have to fight all day, with brief breaks to rest. Lukretios has extremely skilled healers at his service (Healing d10, Healer Edge) and the characters are well tended between fights.

The party's first fight is as a group against another group of enemies. But Lucretios doesn't like plain, fair fights.

Equipment. The gladiators are given the option of a gladiatorial outfit (Armor +1). If they refuse give them a Bennie for their courage. Weapons are assigned per fight. No other items are allowed. Smuggling small items into the arena can be done with an opposed roll, Stealth against the guards' Notice d6.

General Setup. All fights are staged in a 18" circular amphitheater in the palace's courtyard. The battlefield has two opposite gates, 3" wide, placed at 12 and 6 o'clock, and is surrounded by a 9" tall wall. The party enters through the gate at 6 o'clock and the enemies from the opposite one.

There is a single stand for the spectators, Lucretios and his Lotusmaster Corvus. The arena is surrounded by archers (usually 12, Shooting d8, evenly spaced out along on a catwalk), so any attempt at rebellion can be immediately quelled. At the center are four half broken columns, the remnants of a temple of Hulian.

Old Columns. The columns are 2" wide and 12" tall. Each is engraved with a letter of the Faberterran alphabet. They are placed 4" away from each other along an east-west line. From east to west, the symbols on them are: **Ξ, Ψ, Φ, Ω**. An entire round of inspection is necessary to spot the symbols.



FIRST FIGHT – BROTHERS IN IRON

The heroes are matched in pairs. If the number of players is odd, an old man, Belaxios, is matched with one of them. If they are even, two men are added: Belaxios teams with one of the heroes while another fighter joins another hero. The pairs are chained together with a 1" long chain to restrain their movements. They are equipped with a one-handed weapon of their choice and a shield to share. The chains have Toughness 10. Attacking with a chained arm suffers –2.

The opponents this fight are a pack of hungry wolves.

Note: Belaxios, even if Incapacitated, must survive this fight (see **Escaping from the Arena** below).

(M) Belaxios (1): Use Soldier stats. Drop Strength and Vigor to d4, raise Smarts to d8 and add the Priest Edge. See page 55.

(M) Wolf (2 per hero): See page 55.

(WC) Wolf Pack Leader (1): Wild Card bigger specimen (Size+1). See page 55.

SECOND FIGHT – THE BOAR OF BATTLE!

This time the heroes are thrown into the arena unarmed against two lions! Weapons (swords, maces, axes) have been placed on metal hooks protruding from the columns. Each column has two weapons, one 5" up from ground and one 10" up, and a shield on the top (12"). The lions try to climb only if there is no target on the ground.

(M) Lion (2): See page 54.

THIRD FIGHT – SPEEDING CHARIOT

The heroes can choose from a spear, a sword, and an axe plus a shield *or* two javelins. Their enemy this fight is a scythed chariot and driver with an Amazon archer! In the arena there is plenty of space for the chariot to maneuver. The charioteer tries to stay far away from the heroes, letting his partner pepper them with arrows, so the heroes need a clever plan (killing the horses, jumping onto the chariot, etc.) if they want to fight hand to hand.

Scythed Chariot

Acc/TS: 5/20; **Toughness:** 10 (2); **Crew:** 1+1; **Notes:** Scythed wheels, 4 horses.

(M) Amazon Archer (1): Use Soldier stats. Add Shooting d8, Marksman, and Steady Hands. See page 55.

(M) Charioteer (1): Use Soldier stats. Add Driving d8 and the Charioteer Edge. See page 55.

FOURTH FIGHT – THE CHIMERA

The heroes are issued a melee weapon of their choice, medium armor (+2), and a shield, plus the option of three javelins or a sling and shots.

Unless the heroes have found the Flame of Hulian (see **Under the Palace** below), the fight is extremely difficult.

The combat is held at night. Two bracers are placed in the arena and torches hang from the columns. Fire is one of the few things that can kill a Chimera; the heroes can use the torches as improvised weapons.

In the rare case the party manages to win the last fight, they are actually given 2,000

Moons each and set free. This doesn't mean the Pantarkos is finished with them (see **Aftermath**).

(WC) **Chimera (1):** See page 54.

ESCAPING THE ARENA GLADIATORIAL PITS

When not fighting the heroes are locked in a communal cell in the gladiatorial pits, a series of underground tunnels connected to a common room (see **The Hall of the Anvil** below) and the jailers' room.

There are two jailers and they check the cells every hour. If something is wrong, they alert the guards outside.

The cells are locked but the doors are fairly easy to pick (+2), so escaping is simple. The problem is there are only two ways out: the gate leading to the arena and a door leading to the upper palace. The gate is barred, while the door is heavily guarded by 4 guards at all times who can easily call for reinforcements.

Before making their escape, the heroes need a plan.

(M) **Guards (4):** Use Soldier stats. See page 55.

(M) **Jailers (2):** Use Soldier stats. They only have light armor and short swords. See page 55.

BELAXIOS

After the first fight, the heroes get to know Belaxios. The old man knows he is alive only thanks to the heroes. Belaxios doesn't look like a fighter, and he isn't. He is a Smith Priest of Hulian. He came to Lucretios' palace because it used to be a Temple of Hulian, and the old priest begged Pantarkos to give it back to the cult. Naturally the nobleman laughed and threw the old fool in jail. What Lucretios doesn't know is all Temples of Hulian are constructed with a secret passage to escape in emergencies.

In this temple, known as the Temple of the Sunrise (the southernmost temple built in the age before the Empire), the secret door is located in the Hall of the Anvil in the gladiatorial pits, not far from the cells! Belaxios doesn't exactly know how the passage is concealed; it's up to the heroes to find it.

THE HALL OF THE ANVIL

This large room used to be a forge. Although all the equipment is gone, nobody has managed to drag away the massive stone anvil along the northern wall of the hall.

The Anvil is an ancient altar to Hulian, engraved with a stylized sun surrounded by the symbols of the Syranthian alphabet. The writing says: "The Wise Man Walks from Sunrise to Dusk" in the following runes (see below):

A-B-Γ-Δ-E-Z-H-Θ-I-K-Λ-Ĭ-M-N-Ξ-O-Π-P-Σ-T-Y-Φ-X-Ψ-Ω

The runes are buttons, and pressing the right sequence of four unlocks the secret passage under the altar. The sequence is carved on the bases of the four columns in the arena and the writing explain the right order in which they must be pressed ("from sunrise" = eastern column, "to dusk" = western column). If the heroes haven't examined the columns, they'll have to take part in another fight. If the players are stuck, Belaxios says he has seen a symbol on a column in the arena.

The right sequence of symbols is: **Ξ, Ψ, Φ, Ω**. If the party uses the wrong sequence, the buttons reset, but the mechanism is old and it takes a full day.

UNDER THE PALACE

Once the right sequence is pressed, a click is heard and the altar rotates, revealing a hidden stairwell leading deep underground. The altar cannot be put back in its place and the guards discover the passage sooner or later (see **The Alarm** below).

The passage leads to a maze of hidden rooms on multiple levels. The palace is built on a tall cliff, so the complex resembles a tower where the heroes enter on the highest level, and the exit is at sea level much lower down.

Two interesting locations are detailed for each level. If the heroes rush, draw a card and check its color to determine which location they see. Otherwise, if they explore, they find both locations.

The Alarm. If the party has done things quietly, it takes an hour for the guards to realize the party has escaped and a group of soldiers to be dispatched to chase them. Exploring a floor requires half an hour if done thoroughly, but only 15 minutes if rushed.

(M) Guards (2 per hero): Use Soldier stats. See page 55.

(M) Guards Sergeant (1): Use Soldier stats. He is a Henchman See page 55.

FIRST FLOOR

Black Card: Pit Trap. This narrow (one man) passage contains a hidden pitfall. The hero leading the group must make a Notice (-2) roll or fall into a 6" pit full of spikes. He suffers 2d6+2 damage and his companions must find a way to rescue him.

Red Card: Swarm of Vermin. The heroes disturb a swarm of black rats which attack the party (2d4 damage) for a single round before scuttling off. In the room there are several unused torches the heroes can pick.

SECOND FLOOR

Black Card: Hidden Forge. While resting a moment, let them make a Notice roll (-4 if they are rushing). If successful they feel a draught and discover a secret door! Behind the door is a small, fully equipped forge. With a Knowledge (Religion) roll the hidden alcove is recognized as a Shrine Forge, one of the holiest places of the temples of Hulan. On an anvil lies a strange looking dagger, the Flame of Hulan (see sidebar).

Red Card: Corridor of the Dead Ones. This corridor has many niches where long dead Smith-Priests rest, dressed for battle. They are harmless but eerie. If the heroes have the guts to loot them (Spirit roll to avoid Nausea and Notice roll to find something useful), on a success they find an old melee weapon (shatters if Fighting die rolls 1), plus a shield with a raise.

THIRD FLOOR

Weeping Girl. While exploring, they heroes hear someone weeping nearby. They find a small room where a young girl lies on the floor. Her name is Karana, a servant who escaped from the temple a few days ago. While crossing the room she sprained her ankle on the irregular floor and now cannot walk. She begs for help.

Her story is suspicious and ignores the fact the temple is now a nobleman's palace. With a Notice (-2), attentive heroes spot strange symbols on the dirty floor surrounding the girl. A Knowledge (Arcana) roll reveals they are a circle of protection; with a raise the character understands their purpose is to trap demons!

The girl is a powerful demon, Lastor the Cursed, trapped by the priests centuries ago. If somebody steps into the circle, Lastor is set free and attacks the party! Unless they have found the Flame of Hurlian, they'll have to flee (starting a Chase).

(WC) Lastor the Cursed (1): See page 54.

FOURTH FLOOR

Unsafe Exit. The heroes finally reach a half-flooded room at the bottom of the tower. There is an exit leading to the beach, but between them and freedom are two obstacles. First, the passage is barred by an old metal grate which must be broken. Second, the room contains a very territorial Giant Crab. The beast came through the grate when it was small and now is too big to get out. Due to the low water, the battlefield has patches of Difficult Ground.

If the heroes kill the beast, they can force the grate in ten minutes with a Cooperative Strength roll. Instead, breaking the grate during the combat with the crab is a

RELIC:

THE FLAME OF HURLIAN

This flame-shaped dagger was forged from meteoric iron. As a mundane item it is razor sharp (+1 damage), but the incantations on it make it truly special — it bears the Mark of the Smith (see Beasts and Barbarians). In addition, when facing a demon or a creature with Weakness (Fire), the blade can erupt in flame (smite power). Each effect can be used only once before the weapon becomes normal, but retains its sharp edge.

Dramatic Task based on Strength: the heroes must break three bars (achieve three successes) to create a passage large enough to escape.

Once on the beach, the heroes must swim to the mainland (only 100 yards away) to regain their freedom.

(WC) Giant Crab (1): See page 54.

AFTERMATH

Escaping the arena is only the first step toward freedom for the heroes. When the gladiators' disappearance is discovered search parties are sent to hunt them. As long as they stay within the Pantarkos' territory, the heroes aren't safe.

Lucretios is a perfect recurring villain. Incredibly rich, he can afford to pay bounty hunters, assassins and more exotic hirelings to recapture the prisoners and bring them back to the arena.

CREATURES



CHIMERA

The Chimera is a mutated animal captured on the Islands of the Maimed Ones. It has the scaly body of a lizard and three heads: one of an octopus with a crown of long tentacles, one of a cruel giant hawk, and one of a vicious lizard. It is carnivorous and very aggressive.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +2:** Scaly skin.
- **Fast Regeneration:** The Chimera may attempt a natural healing roll every round unless its wounds were caused by fire or flame.
- **Fear:** The mere sight of the Chimera requires a Fear check.
- **Weakness (Fire):** The Chimera suffers double damage from fire based attacks.
- **Size +2:** The Chimera is the size of a bull.
- **Three Headed:** The Chimera can attack three times each round without incurring multi-action penalties, once with each head. The attacks can target different opponents. Octopus' tentacles (Str+4, Reach 3), hawk's beak (Str+d6, AP 2) lizard's mouth (Str+d8).



GIANT CRAB

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

Skills: Fighting d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 13 (9)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +4:** Thick carapace.
- **Pincers:** Str+d8. Reach 2.

• **Size +3:** The giant crab weighs half a ton, carapace included.

• **Weakness (Eyes):** The sole unarmored locations of the Giant Crab are its eyes. A Called Shot (−4) to the eyes bypasses the armor and ignores the Size modifier (giving the monster Toughness 6).



LASTOR THE CURSED

This demon resembles a horrible, dog-faced humanoid with razor sharp claws. After being imprisoned for centuries, it craves only one thing: murder!

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Persuasion d10, Stealth d6, Tracking d10

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

Special Abilities:

- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and disease. They have a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.
- **Fear:** Seeing the real aspect of Lastor requires a Fear check.
- **Invulnerability:** Lastor can only be damaged by its Weakness. Other attacks can make it Shaken, but cannot wound it.
- **Shapechange:** Lastor can take the shape of a human. Its Persuasion skill represents its ability to impersonate a role.
- **Weakness (Magic and Steel):** Lastor is only takes full damaged from magic, steel and magical weapons.

LION

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8

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

Special Abilities:

- **Bite or Claw:** Str+d6.

- **Improved Frenzy:** Lions may make two Fighting attacks each action at no penalty.
- **Low Light Vision:** Lions ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Pounce:** Lions often pounce on their prey to best bring their mass and claws to bear. They can leap 1d6" to gain +4 to their attack and damage. Their Parry is reduced by 2 until their next action when performing the maneuver.
- **Size +2:** Male lions can weigh over 500 pounds.

WOLF

- Attributes:** Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6
- Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d10
- Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4
- Special Abilities:**
- **Bite:** Str+d4.
 - **Fleet-Footed:** Rolls a d10 when running instead of a d6.
 - **Go for the Throat:** A Wolf instinctively goes for its opponent's weak spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.
 - **Size -1:** Wolves are relatively small.

SOLDIER

- Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6
- Skills:** Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Stealth d4, Throwing d6
- Charisma:** 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7(2)
- Gear:** Bronze short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4, range: 3/6/12), medium armor (+2), shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged weapons), bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48, RoF: 1).

CAUDRU

Bethara the courtesan stretched her voluptuous body, staring at me with strangely hungry eyes. Her impressive mutation began. First small areas of scaly skin appeared on her face, then her neck, breasts and finally her hands. Her fingers fused together without apparent pain and were replaced by perfect snake heads with tiny, flickering tongues.

She raised her arms, whispering in a seducing voice: "Dare you try the caresses of a snake woman?"

- from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

Habitat/Location: Southern hemisphere.

Description: Before the Keronian Empire, a strange race existed in the south of the world. Seemingly identical to men and women, these creatures have the ability to transform into monstrous snake hybrids.

There is no agreement among Sages about their true nature. Some say they were originally human and a strange disease made them acquire the ability to change shape, others say they are a completely separate race.

Whatever their origin, the Caudru worshipped an ancient divinity, the Snake-That-Devours-The-World, and in its name built a small but powerful kingdom, enslaving the primitive populations in the region of the Sword River (present-day Kyros).

The Caudru are a race born to rule, thanks to a specific power. In their monstrous form, they have snake heads in place of

their hands. These heads host venom delivered through a bite. If wisely dosed, the venom causes an extreme wave of pleasure in humans, more addictive than any type of Lotus. In greater doses, the venom is deadly but the victim dies in total pleasure.

With the rise of the Keronian Empire, the Caudru's kingdom was subjugated but not destroyed. Keronian sorcerers greatly value their poisonous abilities and kept them as pleasure slaves and concubines.

With the fall of the Dread Star and the destruction of the Keronian Empire, the Caudru were free. But the climate change caused by the disaster killed most of them, and the rebellion of the other slaves, who always saw the Caudru as in league with their oppressors, forced them to conceal themselves among ordinary humans. Some migrated to faraway places, seeking power and importance wherever they could find it.

Schemers by nature, Caudru prefer to act from the shadows, enslaving and controlling without being noticed. However these devious fiends face another major problem: their dwindling numbers have forced them to breed with humans, weakening their blood. In many pairings the child inherits no monstrous abilities or features.

A bloodline mingled with the Caudru is forever tainted, and, even after many generations, a true Snake can be born. These individuals are usually unaware of their nature and live a normal life. Finding and “awakening” these Sleeping Ones is a key task for the entire Awakened Snake race. They view it as the only way to ensure the survival of the species.



CAUDRU WOMAN

In their natural form Caudru Women retain great, though slightly revolting, beauty.

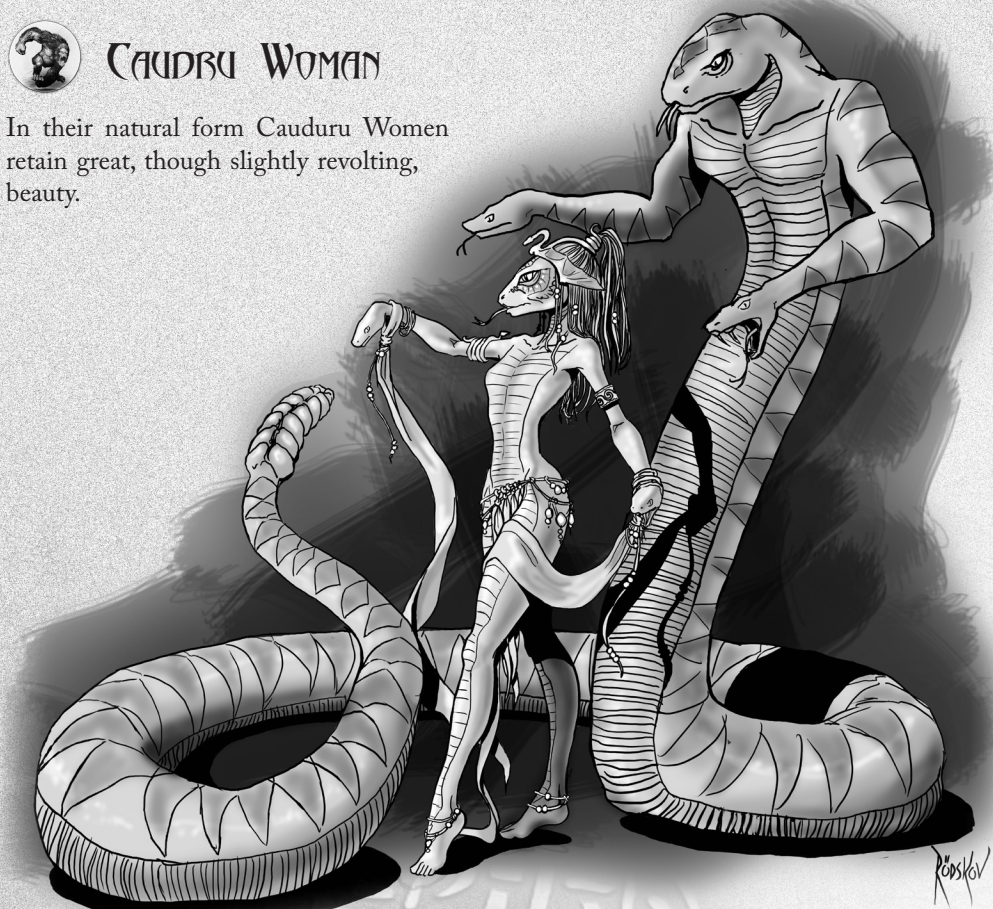
Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Persuasion d10, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities:

- **Charmer of Men:** Cauduru Women can manipulate men with subtlety and cunning, making them feel like gods or worms with the mere twitch of an eyelash. They have the *boost/lower trait* Power, only usable on men, and use Persuasion as Arcane Skill. They have 8 Power Points to spend on this Power only. This effect doesn't register as magic, but can be dispelled with the *dispel* Power.



• **Extraordinary Beauty:** Cauduru Women have a strange, alien comeliness, which is both revolting and attracting. They receive +4 to Charisma.

• **First Strike:** Once per turn the Caudru Woman (if not Shaken) gets a free Fighting attack against a single foe who moves adjacent to her. This automatically interrupts the opponent's action and does not cost the Caudru Woman her action if she is on Hold or has not yet acted.

• **Hand Bite:** Str. The hand bite delivers a "pleasure poison". Any target failing the Vigor roll experiences an incredible surge of pleasure (Shaken). The pleasure sensation lasts for several hours (but the Shaken effect is recovered as normal). This poison is very addictive and any victim must make a Spirit roll (-1 for each subsequent poisoning to a maximum of -4) or gain a Major Habit. The Caudru can also decide to deliver a larger dose of poison, which acts like a Head Bite.

• **Head Bite:** Str. The head bite of the Caudru delivers vicious Lethal poison.

• **Snake Lords:** The Caudru have the Beast Master Edge, but only in relation to snakes. They are immune to all types of snake venom.

• **Vestigial Hands:** The hands of the Caudru aren't very functional. They suffer -2 to any tasks requiring fine manipulation.



CAUDRU MAN

In their natural form Cauduru Men lose their legs but gain a serpentine tail and become exceptionally strong.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Persuasion d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities:

• **Constrict:** If a Caudru Man hits with a raise, he can choose to constrict the target in his coils. The round he constricts and each round thereafter, he causes damage to his victim equal to Str+d6. The victim may attempt to break free by scoring a raise on an opposed Strength roll.

• **Fear:** Seeing a Caudru Man causes a Fear check.

• **Hands Bite:** Str. The hand bite delivers a "pleasure poison". Any target failing the Vigor roll experiences an incredible surge of pleasure (Shaken). The pleasure sensation lasts for several hours (but the Shaken effect is recovered as normal). This poison is very addictive and any victim must make a Spirit roll (-1 for each subsequent poisoning to a maximum of -4) or gain a Major Habit. The Caudru can also decide to deliver a larger dose of poison, which acts like a Head Bite.

• **Head Bite:** Str. The head bite of the Caudru delivers vicious Lethal poison.

• **Size+1:** A male specimen of the Caudru is bigger than a human man.

• **Snake Lords:** The Caudru have the Beast Master Edge, but only in relation to snakes. They are immune to all types of snake venom.

• **Vestigial Hands:** The hands of the Caudru aren't very functional. They suffer -2 to any tasks requiring fine manipulation.

SCENARIO — THE WHISPERED

REQUIREMENTS

This scenario is set in Kyros along the Syranthian border. It can be set in any city or town on a river in a hot, damp area. The opponents of this scenario are very devious and skilled in the use of poisons. The presence of Pema the Elder is fundamental if the Game Master wants to ensure the party has a fair chance of surviving.

ADVENTURE HOOK — BABYSITTING A NOBLE

The heroes are hired by an influential Kyrosian noble, Amapur Raja, for a “babysitting” task. They must escort the nobleman’s son, Salathar, from Kyros City to Kenaton where the boy will stay with his uncle. The father is deeply involved in the kingdom’s politics and feels his heir is safer away from the capital. He has warned the heroes his political enemies might make an attempt on his son’s life, mentioning in particular Master Merchant Ramith, an influential politician and Raja’s bitter enemy.

To travel in the safest and most comfortable way, a luxury ship, the *Velvet Feather*, was hired and is now placidly sailing down the Sword River. The voyage has been smooth but far from pleasant; Salathar is an arrogant, cruel 16-year-old tyrant.

The only person who can bear him is Pema the Elder, his personal tutor and medic, an old Lotusmaster who has been serving the family for many years.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Unbeknownst to everybody, Salathar’s bloodline is tainted by Caudru’s blood: he is a Sleeping One. His innate cruelty doesn’t stem only from his pampered life but is the ancestral heritage of his true race. The voyage takes him to the river town of Chalat, an ancient stronghold of the Caudru where an Awakened One lives.

ADVENTURE DEVELOPMENT

The adventure starts with the heroes on guard duty on the main deck of the ship. A pretty slave girl who spilt wine on the young lord’s tunic is being whipped by a muscular mariner, while Salathar watches amused.

Everyone aboard knows what the real problem is: the little devil is bored, and when this happens he finds something, usually unpleasant for everyone else, to distract himself with. This scene is a good opportunity for the players to do some role-playing and understand the true nature of their protégée. Salathar hates being contradicted, and even if the heroes are his guardians, he is more than willing to exploit his rank and power.

TROUBLE AT THE DOCKS

In the afternoon the ship reaches the river city of Chalat (see sidebar). The city’s Rawal (governor), Romman, is a relative of Salathar, and the young lord is supposed to pay him a visit and stay at his palace for the night. The heroes must remain vigilant while Salathar is away from the safety of the ship.

The port is very crowded. While the young lord and the heroes are disembarking,

CHALAT

The heroes are allowed a Common Knowledge (-2; +2 for Kyrosians) or Knowledge (Kyros) roll for what they know about Chalats. Give the player all the information for his level of success and lower, so a character with a raise gains all three pieces.

Failure. *Chalat is a river town on the Sword River.*

Success. *Chalat is a busy port along the Gold Route. It is not far from a jungle area, but its immediate surroundings are well-tended fields.*

Raise. *Chalat is known as the City of Snakes. The Snake is the token beast of the Chalaters, who consider it a symbol of fertility, bringer of wisdom and killer of rats. Snakes are a common feature in the city's architecture and even in its cuisine. Chalats are renowned for its snake meat, a delicacy exported all over the southern Dominions.*

wares being unloaded from a nearby ship using a wooden winch drop four massive jars fall just where Salathar is standing!

The nearest hero (randomly selected) can save him with an Agility roll. If he fails the roll, he manages to push Salathar away but is partially crushed by the heavy jars (suffers 2d6 damage). The real trouble starts when the jars shatter on the ground and their content spill out: a slithering mass of very dangerous, very angry small snakes!

Salathar is bitten at least three times before the fight with the creatures starts, while the port's people run around in panic. Contact with these critters is very dangerous; the heroes should find improvised weapons (oars, Reach 1 or 2) or use tricks (like emptying barrels of wine

onto the snakes to sweep them away). It is also important to convey to the players they must save Salathar as soon as possible.

(M) River Snakes (10): See page 67.

When the fight ends, the young lord is on the ground, shaking with convulsions. Pema the Elder rushes to save him, but everyone knows he is beyond hope: the number of bites the boy suffered means certain death for even the strongest man. The young man suddenly shouts and then falls silent, breathing deeply.

Pema the Elder weeps with joy: it seems Salathar is immune to snake venom! The crowd cheers and many Chalaters bow to Salathar; surviving snake venom is a sign of blessing in Chalats. In the meantime, the party investigates the situation. A cargo of cottonmouths is quite normal in Chalats. The local fishermen catch them along the river and sell them as food. The workers manning the winch are nowhere to be found. They ran off immediately after the accident, fearing for their lives.

Despite what the party may think, the accident was just an accident, but the GM can leave some red herrings hinting at a possible murder attempt.

AN INTERESTING BANQUET

Salathar is hurried along to the palace while the story of what happened in the port spreads wildly. People take to the streets to see the man who survived the snakes' kiss.

At his palace, Rawal Romman does his best to apologize to his influential cousin. Salathar loves being at the center of the attention and generously accepts Romman's apologies.

Romman is a fat man, a true lover of food, and his table is well assorted: Syranthian peas and mutton from faraway Zandor are only a few of the delicacies served, besides the local delicacy of snakes cooked in every possible way. The heroes, in their capacity of bodyguards, are allowed to eat at the lower table, a few steps away from their protégée. There isn't much else to amuse Salathar, although a few musicians discreetly sing during the dinner and Romman does his best to converse with his guests.

At the end of the dinner, a servant announces an unexpected visit from Yantara, High Priestess of the Temple of Etu, the goddess of fertility, with her retinue, guards and singers included. The lady makes an impressive entrance on a palanquin carried by muscular slaves in masks and surrounded by beautiful girls.

Yantara is an attractive older lady and has a pet snake in her lap. She claims she wanted to see with her own eyes the young man who survived the snakes' kisses. She also offers to bring entertainment to Rawal's court. It isn't a secret the priestesses of Etu are holy courtesans, and the cult is very rich.

Yantara asks one of her fellow priestesses, a dark-skinned girl named Marah, to dance for the young lord. The dance is very seductive and Salathar is suitably entranced. At the end of the dance Yantara returns to the temple with her followers but leaves Marah to entertain the prince for the night, an offer no 16-year-old boy would refuse.

Roleplaying this situation can be a lot of fun. Whatever the heroes say or do, however, Salathar won't send the girl back and refuses any guard in his room that night!

He'll only permit sentinels to stand in front of his door and under the balcony.

The heroes on guard duty by the door hear only the expected sounds, and after a while the lovers finally fall asleep. A while later Pema the Elder silently comes to check on his lord but, when he enters the room, he finds it empty! Both Salathar and Marah are missing!

The guards under the balcony are asleep. With a Healing roll, the heroes learn they were drugged with Lotus. When awoken, they only remember a sweet scent in the air. There is no sign of struggle in Salathar's room and the bed sheets were used to make a rope and climb down into the garden. The scene looks more like an escape than a kidnapping. At the far end of the garden a secondary door, usually closed, now stands ajar.

It seems clear Salathar and Marah had help in their escape.

THE FUGITIVE BOY

But why escape? It seems likely Marah persuaded the boy to follow her somewhere.

Pema the Elder is panicking and fears Salathar might have fallen into a trap devised by one of his father's political enemies, Master Merchant Ramith. He doesn't want to alert the Rawal, at least for now, because he will surely organize a wide search throughout the city, endangering Salathar's life even further. The heroes have a chance to find him and bring him back before dawn.

An Important Clue. The secondary door at the end of the garden leads to a back alley, at the end of which there is a small, abandoned shack. Inside the heroes find an old

drunken beggar named Kuleth. For a few coins, he reveals a sedan chair with curtains drawn came to the garden some time ago and left after few minutes. The sedan chair resembles the one used by Yantara.

The first place to look for Salathar is the temple of Etu, although Pema the Elder doesn't think the cult might be implicated.

Pema the Elder is wrong. Yantara, the High Priestess, is a Caudru Woman who has subjugated all the followers of Etu at the temple with her poison. The story of the young boy unharmed by snake venom led her to believe he might be a Sleeping One. Using Marah, Salathar will attend a rite held in the secret temple of the Snake-That-Devours-The-World hidden below the temple of Etu. If the boy survives, he'll be Awakened; otherwise he'll die.

THE DAYS OF THE OPEN DOORS

The party easily finds the temple of Etu. Despite the late hour, light is streaming from the open doors, people go in and out. These are the Days of the Open Doors, a special religious feast when the doors of Etu's temple are always open and any man, young or old, handsome or ugly, who enters the temple is allowed to "commune" with a priestess.

The heroes can walk in through the main door, but if they prefer a more inconspicuous approach they can go to the courtyard in the back. From there they can gain access to the inner rooms (see below) because security is quite lax during the feast.

If the party prefers a more straightforward approach and enters the temple through the main door, they are approached by Rangira,

an old priestess who asks them if they are here to celebrate the Goddess' feast.

If the heroes accept her offer, they are brought to a private room where several pretty acolytes entertain them. The girls' lips are smeared with Blue Lotus, a stunning drug, and any character who kisses them must pass a Vigor check or become Fatigued. While the party dozes, the guards and Rangira return and attack them!

If the party declines and asks to speak to the High Priestess, Rangira shows them into a private room and asks them to wait. But the same guards as before return and attack. The guards fight to the death, while Rangira can be captured alive.

(M) Temple Guards (1 per hero): See page 67.

(M) Rangira, Priestess of Etu (1): Use the Cultist stats, add the Priest Edge. She is a Henchman. See page 66.

(M) Acolytes of Etu (1 per hero): Use the Cultist stats, adding the Attractive Edge and lowering Fighting by one step. See page 66.

THE DEN OF THE SNAKE

If the party captures and questions Rangira, she says:

"Young Salathar is the luckiest man ever. Tonight he will learn his true heritage, in the secret Den of the Snake."

She won't reveal anything else even if threatened. With a Notice roll, the heroes see she instinctively glances toward the inner temple, a location accessed only by the priestesses of Etu. If no player spots the clue, Pema the Elder does.

The inner hall is empty and silent. A statue of Etu, in the form of a pregnant woman, stands at the center, but the room is also filled with snake decorations. The goddess herself has a snake in her hands.

Along the end wall of the room is a concealed door leading to the a hidden temple dedicated to the real god worshipped here: the Snake-That-Devours-The-World. Finding the door requires a Notice roll which can be cooperative. The heroes are allowed as many attempts at finding the door as they need, each requiring ten minutes. In case of failure, draw a card from the action deck. If a Club, a group of Temple Guards comes into the hall to investigate.

(M) Temple Guards (1 per hero): See page 67.

The temple includes several areas and is almost dark; use the Dim Light condition unless otherwise specified. Closed rooms require a Lockpicking roll to open. No map needed because the place is truly a labyrinth, but the Game Master is free to let the party explore all (or some) of the following locations, in the order presented below.

Trapped Door. At the bottom of the stairs is a closed door, heavily decorated with onyx and gold engravings. The doorknob is placed inside a sculpted snake head and is booby-trapped. Pulling the doorknob down (as normal) triggers the trap.

Have the hero make an Agility (–4) roll, the snake’s teeth close onto the victim’s hand, puncturing it with Venomous poison. Pushing the doorknob instead opens the door. The trap can be found with a Notice (–2) roll and disarmed with a Lockpicking (–2) roll or using some clever trick (like pushing the doorknob with a stick).

Cells of the Drugged Ones. Many cells line this corridor, and low moans can be heard everywhere. Each cell contains 2d6 heavily drugged people. They seem to be experiencing great pleasure, but they don’t smell of Lotus or other known drugs. If the party tries to obtain some information from them with a Persuasion (–2) or Intimidation (–2) roll, the only thing



one manages to babble is “the gold snake means death”.

Dozing Guardians. This ample room is hotter than the rest of the temple. With a Notice (-2) roll the characters spot two strange heaps in a corner: giant constrictor snakes, guardians of the temple. They are sleeping (count as Inactive sentinels) so if the heroes are stealthy they can reach the other side of the room unharmed.

(M) Giant Snakes (2): Henchmen. See page 67.

Poisoning Rooms. A faint light and a low chant come from this room. A priestess of Etu and a dozen cultists, half of them in a comatose stupor (Exhausted), are inside. The priestess wields a fang-shaped stiletto and holds a small bottle in the other hand. She dips the dagger into the liquid, then punctures the neck of an acolyte causing him a great surge of pleasure. The bottle contains the pleasure poison of the Caudru and the acolytes are here to receive their daily dose. The priestess and her followers fight to the death.

(M) Cultists (6): See page 66.

(M) Priestess of Etu (1): Use the Cultist stats. She is the Cult Leader of the group, armed with a poisoned dagger with the same effects as the Caudru Hand Bite Special Ability. See page 66.

Corridor of Death. While going down a long passage, the heroes see a jade-encrusted gate on the left wall. A closer inspection reveals various decorations, including (Notice roll) a golden snake. The gate leads to a short corridor, ending in another similar gate. The whole corridor is a trap: any attempt at opening the second gate triggers the trap. First a metal grate (Toughness 10) falls from the ceiling, bar-

ring the way out, then small holes open in the walls and 2d4 River Snakes come out each round (up to a maximum of 20)! Both the holes and the grate fissure can be spotted by explicitly examining the ceiling and making a Notice roll.

(M) River Snakes (20): See page 67.

Treasure Room. This room contains a gold idol resembling a coiled snake with three eyes (value 4,000 Moons, weight 80 lbs). In addition, there are piles of jewels, coins, gems and so on, all part of the temple's treasure (total value 5,000 Moons, weight 50 lbs). The rooms seems unguarded, but any attempt at moving the idol causes a gong to sound, alerting a group of temple guards who arrive within 3d6 rounds.

(M) Temple Guards (2 per hero): See page 67.

THE NIGHT OF AWAKENING

Finally you reach the main temple hall. It is an ancient place, its walls and columns built with in an unusual style. In the middle of the room Yantara, surrounded by a group of followers, prays in a strange hissing language. She stands in front of a massive stone idol representing a giant three-eyed snake, neck raised and ready to strike. Two masked temple guards stand on either side of the statue.

Suddenly the prayers stop and Marah and Salathar enter. The boy looks fine, only a little bewildered.

The crowd stands stilly while Yantara speaks “Young man,” she says. “Tonight you learn your true origins. Behold!” And to your astonishment, her body shape changes into a beautiful, horrible human-snake hybrid!

“Marah,” she hisses “You have served the Snake-That-Devours-The-World with devotion. Come and receive your reward.” The priestess’ hand bites the girl, who falls to her knees overcome with incredible pleasure.

Then Yantara bites Salathar, who falls to the ground shaking.

“I am dying!” he cries.

“No, you are discovering your true self!” The Caudru Woman hisses.

Salathar’s body twists and turns into the male counterpart of Yantara: an enormous, serpentine beast with snake heads in place of his fingers!

“Awake! At last, the blood of the snake in your veins has been stirred! You belong to my race! Welcome brother, son, husband! Welcome to your true race! And now give the final reward to our Marah!”

As if expecting this very command, Salathar opens his enormous mouth and, with a single motion, bites the head off the poor girl!

At this point Pema the Elder shouts in terror: “For all the gods! Stop this abomination!”

The final fight of the scenario pits the heroes and Pema the Elder against Yantara, Salathar and the cultists.

Take him Alive! Pema the Elder orders the party to spare the boy. The old Lotumaster tries to make Salathar come to his senses. Despite being evil at heart, he loves his tutor, so Pema the Elder might succeed if he has enough time. Consider Pema the Elder’ attempt a Dramatic Task based on Persuasion. If he gathers five

ULASHA?

Groups who played Beasts & Barbarians: Death of a Tyrant will recognize many similarities between Ulasa, the snake demon, and the god of the Snake People. They are the manifestation of the same supernatural being in different cultures. If the heroes defeated the evil demon in Death of a Tyrant, they gain the Holy Warrior Edge during the Night of Awakening scene in the main temple against the Snake People and their followers.

successes in five rounds, the boy reverts to his human form. The same happens if he is rendered unconscious. If Salathar isn’t persuaded in five rounds, his snake blood takes control and he gains the Frenzy and Improved Nerves of Steel Edges during the fight.

Cult’s fanaticism. When Salathar or Yantara go down, the cultists become totally wild, gaining the Berserk Edge. When both are down, the cultists realize they’ve lost the source of the pleasure poison they’re addicted to and commit suicide, plunging their daggers into their own chests.

(M) Cultists (3 per hero): See page 66.

(M) Temple Guards (2): These chosen individuals have Strength and Vigor d10. See page 67.

(WC) Salathar (1): Wild Card Caudru Man. See page 58.

(WC) Yantara (1): Wild Card Caudru Woman. See page 57.

(M) Yantara’s Pet Snake (1): Use the River Snake stats, removing the Aquatic special ability. See page 67.

AFTERMATH

With the death of Yantara and the cultists, the heroes can return Salathar to the palace without anyone noticing his absence. The boy wakes up confused and tired. He only has vague memories of the night. Pema the Elder convinces him it was all a dream, and that Marah has returned to the temple.



The old Lotusmaster begs the heroes not to tell anyone about Salathar's nature. He assures them he can control him and find a cure. In reality, once unleashed, the beast is free forever. Salathar is evil at heart and in time he'll remember what happened.

If the heroes decide to eliminate him now, they'll have to fight Pema the Elder, and later they'll be hunted by Amapur Raja, Salathar's father. But if they don't, in the next few months Salathar rids himself of Pema the Elder and starts his new career as a villain. He looks first for other members of his race, and then hunts down the only people who know his secret: the heroes.

As for now, the voyage to Kenaton isn't over yet. Master Merchant Ramith might have actually hired some assassins and they might be waiting for Salathar and his escort later in the trip.

CREATURES

CULTIST

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d4, Stealth d4

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: —

Hindrances: —

Gear: Bronze dagger (Str+d4).

Special Abilities:

- **Fanatic:** The cultists use the Fanatics Setting Rule to obey their masters, the Caudru.

- **Sect leader:** Cultists are led by strong personalities. In every group of 4 or more cultists there is a sect leader, who has the Command Edge.

GIANT SNAKE

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d10

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities

- **Bite:** Str.
- **Constrict:** These creatures bite when they succeed in a Fighting roll and constrict their victim when they score a raise. The round they constrict and each round thereafter, they cause damage to their victim equal to Str+d6. The victim may attempt to escape on his action by getting a raise on an opposed Strength roll.
- **Size +2:** This creature is 15 yards long and big enough to swallow a man.



PEMA THE ELDER

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Healing d10, Knowledge (History) d6, Lotusmastery d10, Notice d6, Persuasion d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Edges: Arcane Background (Lotus Mastery), Healer, New Power, Power Points

Powers [20 PP]: *Boost/lower trait* (orange lotus of painkilling – raises Healing), *healing* (azure lotus of curing), *succor* (white lotus of purifying)

Hindrances: Elderly, Loyal, Pacifist (Minor)

Gear: Lotus bag, writing implements, refined lotus (5 doses), Lotusmaster's Bag (Pema the Elder carries four doses of concoctions for each Power he knows).

RIVER SNAKE

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d12

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 2

Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Swims at a Pace of 6".
- **Bite:** Str.
- **Poison:** Lethal poison.
- **Quick:** Snakes are notoriously fast. They may discard Action Cards of 5 or lower and draw another. They must keep the replacement card.
- **Size –2:** Most venomous snakes are 4-6' in length, but only a few inches thick.
- **Small:** Anyone attacking a snake must subtract 2 from his attack rolls.

TEMPLE GUARD

This muscular soldier was once a servant of Etu, but now he is a slave to Yantara the Caudru Woman.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d4

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

Edges: Brawny

Hindrances: —

Gear: Bronze tipped halberd (Str+d8, 2 hands), snake-shaped face mask (+2, head only).

Special Abilities:

- **Snake Blood:** Yantara spices the Temple Guards' food with a mixture of her own blood, Lotus and other strange drugs. This diet makes them more loyal and causes a strange curse. When dealt a red action card, for the entire round their head turns into a fanged snake head (Str+d6), which can attack without multi-action penalty. The first time a hero witnesses this sudden transformation they must make a Fear check.

SPIDER QUEEN

The creature emerged from the shadows. I was fixated with her perfect visage: delicate, elongated and more beautiful than the prettiest courtesans of Faberterra. Then I noticed her body, a spidery horror. The painter in me noticed the tiny muscles of her human torso perfectly connected with her chitinous abdomen. I wondered what wicked god dreamed up such a creature.

—from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

Habitat/Location: Warm climates.

Description: Few men have seen this terrible creature and lived to speak of it, and those who have do are usually evil souls so perverted their words cannot be trusted.

The few believable reports suggest the Spider Queens are hideous hybrid creatures with the body of an enormous spider and the head and upper torso of a woman. Their true origin is unknown, but they are likely the result of a misguided experiment by some crazy sorcerer of the past. Gifted with human intelligence, they are very limited in number. Only a dozen exist in all the known lands. Wherever they dwell they bring death and destruction. The only things that matter to a Spider Queen are reproduction and food.

No known male specimen exists, so these creatures mate with men they

find perverted enough to do so. Despite their evil nature, Spider Queens are very faithful to their mates and will do anything for them. On the other hand, they are also vengeful and an unfaithful mate meets a swift and terrible death.

These unnatural unions aren't fruitless. A Spider Queen can birth a great number of red spiders called Blood Spiders. These creatures, which have human blood in their veins, are subject to the will of their mothers and, to a lesser extent, their human fathers.

The Spider Queen and her unholy breed require a lot of food, a task which falls to their human mate. Through treachery, violence and other underhanded tactics, he provides her with living beings to eat. Should he fail in this basic duty, the Spider Queen considers him an unworthy companion and ends the relationship by devouring him.

Only very rarely does a Spider Queen give birth to another Spider Queen. Unless the mother is old and tired of life, she kills and devours the daughter straight away. Were she to allow the youngling to live, the baby would grow up to kill the mother because there is only one Spider Queen per den.



SPIDER QUEEN

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (10)

Special Abilities

- **Bite:** Str. Her bite is slightly poisonous. Any character Shaken from her bite must make a Vigor roll or be Fatigued.
- **Fear:** The Spider Queen is a frightful creature and causes a Fear Check.
- **Mane of Spiders:** The Spider Queen's body is covered by a shroud of her young, the Blood Spiders, granting her +3 Armor. In addition, they automatically deal 2d4 damage to any target within a Large Burst Template centered on the Queen. They are considered a single entity and the Blood Spiders cannot leave her body. When the Queen suffers a Wound, the additional Armor drops a point and the template shrinks by one size until it is destroyed.
- **Mistress of Arachnids:** Spiders are totally subjugated by the Spider Queen. She has the Command, Hold the Line! and Fervor Edges, but only regarding spiders.
- **Size +2:** The torso of the Spider Queen is human sized, but the rest of the body is an enormous, bloated spider.
- **Wall Crawler:** The Spider Queen can move on inverted surfaces at a Pace of 8".

SCENARIO — A MATTER OF LOVE

REQUIREMENTS

This adventure is set in a remote area of Kyros, but can be relocated to Faberterra, Syranthia or other reasonably civilized (and temperate) lands.

ADVENTURE HOOK — SOLDIERS

Vadokara, in remote, eastern Kyros, doesn't deserve to be called a "town" and is a crumbling mass of ruins. The walls, built in the past to protect the town from incursions by savage tribes, have collapsed, as have the buildings within. The population is poor, ignorant, and desperate. Nevertheless, Vadokara is Kyros' town and must respect its law and appointed ruler chosen by the Autarch.

But it hasn't. In the last two years two different governors have been sent to take control of the town and rebuild it, but something has gone wrong and nobody in the capital has heard from them. A third governor, a capable bureaucrat called Temar Nhir, is sent to Vadokara, this time with an escort of a dozen soldiers and a personal bodyguard of hand-picked warriors.

These warriors are the player characters. The hero with the highest Charisma or most reasonable background is the commander of the soldiers, and the other heroes are of chosen rank. Heroes

with less robust fighting skills should be assigned other roles, such as counselors, healers and so on.

The troops are tasked with taking firm control of Vadokara and ensuring the new governor is obeyed. Temar Nhir has brought his daughter, the haughty Melandra, with him.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Vadokara is in trouble. Shendul, a now apostate priest of Etu, returned from the jungle with an awful creature, a young Spider Queen, Randama, and has promised to be her mate and lover.

Randama found an appropriate lair among the crumbled rooms and subterranean corridors spread out like a web under the town. From her dark den she sends her terrible servants — deadly spiders of all sizes and shapes — to kill any who threaten her human lover. The apostate priest rules the town leaving the poor citizens to whisper secret prayers to all the gods for deliverance from this plague. In truth, the Spider Queen is a pawn in the hands of this sly man who uses her deep jealousy to manipulate her.

The cyclical appearance of a governor sent by the Autarch amuses Shendul. The newcomer and his escort usually don't survive the first week, and their presence grants Randama an additional source of human meat for herself and her progeny.

But this time the new governor is in company of foreign heroes...

ADVENTURE DEVELOPMENT

THE ARRIVAL

The heroes, Temar Nhir, Melandra, and the soldiers arrive in Vadokara after an unpleasant trip through the jungle. Rain, snakes, fevers and other events troubled the previous ten days or the Game Master can add some encounters of his own.

The closer the adventurers draw to the town, the worse the rumors they hear, hinting at a black, undefined, shadow lingering over Vadokara.

The town is very poorly guarded: no men watch the gates, and only a couple of ragged sentinels stand on the crumbling battlements. When they spot the incoming column of soldiers, they immediately dart away to warn their master of the arrivals.

THE ARREST

Shendul awaits the new governor in the muddy central square of the town, just outside his home, the temple of Etu. The building is seriously neglected, as is Shendul. The former priest is a shabby, smelly man in his forties, dressed in a stained red tunic and drinking rudely from a bottle of wine.

Shendul openly mocks the new governor in front of the crowd of silent citizens, clearly provoking him.

The heroes are allowed two rolls during the scene.

First, they can make a Knowledge (Religion) roll, or a Common Knowledge roll if they are of Kyrosian origin. With

a success they recognize the tunic of Shendul as the uniform of a Fagir, a sect of humble wandering priests of Etu dedicated to agriculture. But the man doesn't seem religious at all, and openly boasts about his apostasy.

Second, with a Notice roll they spot a large gold ring, very out of place on the dirty hand of the former priest. If the heroes don't notice it, the Governor himself does. It is the Hand of Justice, the Autarch's sigil identifying the governor of the town. Temar Nhir asks the man how he came to possess it, but Shendul answers disdainfully.

The Governor orders a search of the temple where other personal belongings of the previous governors are found. With this evidence, he orders Shendul's arrest and then installs himself and his men, player characters included, in the Governor's Palace. Shendul isn't concerned about his fate and makes salacious comments to Melandra while dragged to prison. The crowd stares expressionlessly at the event. They have already witnessed similar scenes and know Shendul won't be a prisoner for long.

The few city guards the heroes saw on the battlements have disappeared into the crowd; they are Shendul's followers. For the duration of the scenario, the local population is completely uncooperative. They fear Shendul's "wife" too much to risk getting involved.

A TROUBLING DISAPPEARANCE

The city palace is mostly abandoned and Temar Nhir orders the soldiers (i.e. the heroes) to put it in order, or at least make it habitable. This isn't a task the party must do by themselves: they have

twelve soldiers at their command, and can bully them into doing the cleaning.

In addition the new Governor orders the city streets to be patrolled by pairs of soldiers during the night. The heroes are exempt from this duty because, at least during the night, Temar Nhir wants them as personal guards to himself and his daughter.

Temar Nhir hasn't decided what to do with Shendul yet. He plans to question him about his affiliates, to make him confess to the murder of the previous Governors, and his cell must be closely watched. If the players enjoy logistics let them decide how to organize all these tasks.

The night passes quietly, but in the morning the two soldiers on guard duty are missing. The Governor speaks to the heroes.

"This town is a nest of rebellion and crime, and the dwellers must be taught they can't lay a finger on an Autarch's man without suffering the consequences. I want you to personally investigate the disappearance of the patrol. Bring me the culprits, so they can be punished."

The two missing soldiers, Narzub and Jibbal, were on patrol in the southern portion of the town, full of abandoned houses and warehouses. The population is very uncooperative (citizens lock themselves in their houses at dusk), so the heroes must make a successful Tracking roll and spend two hours to locate one of the soldiers. If they miss the roll, they still find him, but after four hours of leg work.



Jibbal lies dead in a piss-stinking alley, his body blotched and swollen. A Healing roll reveals he died of poisoning, but two big punctures on the right arm suggest a creature rather than a man.

Another track leads away from where the corpse was found to a nearby abandoned warehouse. Clearly visible in the dirt is the mark of a large sack being dragged away.

The building is in very bad shape with the door is missing, and the wooden floorboards rotten and creaking underfoot. In the center of the room, enveloped in a sort of cocoon, is the second soldier, Narzub. The scene is so grisly it requires a Spirit roll to avoid being Nauseated until leaving the warehouse.

While the party is checking the body, the assassin, a giant spider, drops down from the ceiling and attacks them! If the party hasn't been explicitly checking the ceiling, the beast has the Drop and fights to the death. Once dispatched, further inspection of the building and a Tracking roll reveal the spider may have come from a big fissure in the wooden flooring, leading off somewhere under the city. The fissure is impracticable to any creature without the Wall Walker ability. The heroes should head back to the palace and report to the Governor something very dark is living in Vado-kara's alleys.

(WC) Giant Spider (1): It is a Wild Card. See page 78.

INVERTED POSITIONS

When the party arrives at the Governor's palace, the sentinel outside the doors is missing. The players are on alert, and must explore the palace to discover what happened.

Moving through the various locations of the palace isn't safe. Whenever the party declares they are moving to another location, draw a card from the Action Deck. If a black face card is dealt, the heroes encounter a giant spider (Clubs) or a swarm of spiders (Spades).

The most important locations of the palace are detailed below.

Palace Doors. If the heroes return to the palace doors, they find them sealed by a thick layer of web (Toughness 10) with a giant spider guarding it. If they manage to kill the monster and open the doors, they find a crowd of citizens who attack them with a hail of stones forcing them back inside (Shooting d6, 1d6 attacks each round, Damage: d6+d4). The city dwellers, in their fear, want the strangers killed and the Spider Queen satisfied!

(M) Giant Spider (1): See page 78.

Shendul's Cell. The cell's door is open and the prisoner is gone! The sentinel on duty has disappeared.

Guards' Quarters. The off-duty guards are resting in this room, some sleeping on the beds. Upon checking them however, the horrible truth is the guards are all dead. A Healing roll reveals very small puncture wounds on their faces and arms, probably caused by some small, very poisonous spider.

NEVER SPLIT THE PARTY!

The party may split up, some looking for the missing soldiers while the rest stay at the palace to guard the Governor and his daughter. In this case, the palace group is attacked by spiders coming from the well. Have them face at least one giant spider or swarm per two heroes. Make the scene very unsettling, catching the heroes off guard (the swarm comes from their closet, or the giant spider comes out of the cesspit while they are at the latrine).

*Meanwhile, Shendul breaks out of his cell. If he meets the heroes, he tries to force them to surrender, threatening to have his spiders kill the governor and his daughter (see **Palace Hall** below). In this case the heroes are taken prisoners and the group reunites in **A Voice from Below**.*

Kitchens. This ample room hosts a plethora of cauldrons, pans and cooking implements. The fire is still burning in the fireplace, and the body of the cook, Namir (one of the soldiers) is laying in the middle of the floor. The poor sod is literally covered by a swarm of tiny spiders which attack anyone approaching the body!

(M) Swarm of Spiders (1): See page 79.

Governor's and Melandra's Quarters. Both rooms are empty, and any guards are missing.

Palace Hall. Outside the door are the bodies of two fallen soldiers who died fighting valiantly to defend their liege. Inside the room, sprawling on the Governor's seat is Shendul, accompanied by a couple of shabby hirelings (the city guards the party had seen on the bat-

lements). Tamar Nhir and Melandra stand motionless beside the seat, terrorized, with the wicked priest lustfully caressing the girl's hips. The two prisoners are helpless: there are big, reddish spiders on their necks, ready to bite them at the slightest movement! With a Survival roll, a character recognizes them as Venomous Spiders, arachnids whose poison matches the deadliest snake.

A VOICE FROM BELOW

When the party enters the palace's hall, Shendul orders the heroes to drop their weapons or he will kill the governor and Melandra. If the heroes comply, they are disarmed but rewarded with a Bennie. If they attack, the spiders bite the Governor who dies a slow, agonizing death. If the heroes still refuse to surrender, the spiders bite and kill Melandra. In each case the heroes lose a Bennie for un-heroic behavior.

Assuming the party surrenders, a hideous, cracking voice, vaguely female, is heard coming from underground.

"We did it, my love! We did it! Now bring them down to me and we'll feast on their meat in the darkness!"

"Yes, my dear" Shendul softly says, still watching Melandra lustfully "But I'll keep the girl for a while. She is too skinny for you, my dear. Let her fatten a bit..."

"No! No!" the inhuman voice shouts, enraged "I don't want that wench with you! I don't like her! She is insidious; she wants to take you away from me! We must kill and eat her first!"

At the sound of the raging voice, the spiders in the room respond with a

high squeaking, and Shendul doesn't dare object.

IN THE DARKNESS

The wicked apostate orders his hirelings to bind the heroes and all together they head off to one of the palace's cellars. There is a very old and well in the room, and carved stone steps down into it, reaching the sewers and water channels of the town built years ago. The biggest spiders crept out from here. A ladder leads into the well and the heroes are roughly pushed down it. The lower level is a sort of catacomb, a dark, smelly labyrinth festooned by webs and the constant sound of rushing water.

The adventurers haven't got spiders on their necks like the Governor and Melandra and the ropes used to bind them are fairly weak (a single Strength roll is necessary to break them). During the trip they have a chance to escape, if they are fast enough to take it. The group is walking in a straight line over a suspended passageway, and there is a second level four yards below them.

Jumping down requires an Agility roll (in case of failure the character suffers 1d6 damage) and surprises Shendul's hirelings. The apostate barks at his men to follow the escapees. A very short Chase starts. Use Agility, and the party has +2 to their rolls.

After three rounds Shendul calls the guards back. He thinks the heroes cannot find their way out of the labyrinth quickly, and he plans to reach the Randama's lair first and ask her to get rid of them.

If the party doesn't escape, they are brought directly, bound and helpless, to

the Lair of the Spider Queen (see below).

Once the party has escaped and are free of their bindings, they should find some improvised weapons. With a successful Notice roll they find something small like a rock (Str+d4), with a raise a medium tool like a stick (Str+d6), and with two raises they find something large and sturdy like a metal bar (Str+d8).

The heroes now must decide what to do: find the exit and leave the governor and his daughter to their fate, or track down Shendul and rescue them.

In both cases an abstract, map-less method is used to navigate the complex. The party must make group Smarts rolls every five minutes. For each success and raise they gain an Advancement Token. When they gather 8 Tokens, they reach their goal (upwards to an exit from the sewers or downward to the Lair of the Spider Queen). The sewers aren't a safe place, so the group must draw a card from the action deck and face the event below every time they make the Smarts roll. If a card is drawn more than once, no event happens unless differently stated in the text below. Until they find a torch, they are in Darkness.

CARD

EVENT

2

Slippery Edge. The group walks on slippery ground flanking a channel full of filth. Each character must make an Agility roll to avoid falling in the much. If this happens, they must roll Swimming (–2) because the water flow is very strong. Use the normal drowning rules.

3

Festoons of Webs. This corridor is blocked by thick webs. Unless the party finds a way through, they gain no Advancement Token this roll. Suitable ways are cutting them with a sharp tool, using fire, or simply brute force (Strength roll with –4).

4

Giant Spider. The group stumbles upon a dangerous creature, eager for food. Unless the card dealt is Hearts, the creature attacks!

(M) Giant Spider (1): See page 78.

5

Torch. The heroes find an old torch. This event can happen multiple times.

6

Chasm. The party's path is blocked by a deep channel 3" wide. The heroes must make a Strength roll to jump over it or find another suitable way to pass. Otherwise they must turn back, losing two Advancement Tokens.

Missing the roll means the hero falls in the chasm suering 3d6 damage.

7

Track. Melandra has left some hints on the ground to aid eventual rescuers. If a hero spots one of these hints with a Notice (–2) roll, from now the party can roll on Tracking (+1) instead of Smarts to gain Advancement Tokens.

CARD	EVENT	CARD	EVENT
8	<i>Hidden well.</i> The room floor is littered with rubbish and filth, hiding a deep well (15 yards). A randomly selected hero must make a Notice roll or fall into it. <i>Voices.</i> Thanks to the echo, the heroes hear Shendul and the Spider Queen! If they use their voices to navigate the area, in this round they can roll on Notice instead of Smarts to gain Advancement Tokens. They receive +4 to the roll if the card dealt is red (good echo) or -4 if is black (weird echo).	Q	<i>The Key.</i> With a successful Notice roll, one of the heroes finds a strange piece of metal on the ground. This T-shaped bar can be used as a key to open the grates in the sewers (free reroll of any 1 on the Smarts roll to gain Advancement Tokens). The same key gives +4 to rolls to open the penstock in the next scene.
9			<i>Lone Guard.</i> One of Shendul's men left the main group to empty his bladder. He counts as an inactive sentinel, with -2 to Notice rolls. If the heroes overcome him and force him to take them to Shendul (Intimidation roll), they immediately gain two Advancement Tokens.
10	<i>Cocoon.</i> Enveloped in a big cocoon the party finds one of their fellow soldiers, Tulek. The man is still alive and can be revived with a Healing (-2) roll. If successful he joins the party as an Ally. (M) Tulek (1): Use the Soldier stats adding Vigor d10 and the Brawny Edge. See page 79.	K	(M) Shendul's Hireling (1): Use the Soldier stats. See page 78.
J	<i>Larder.</i> The party reaches a large room full of bodies hanging from webs. It is the larder of some spiders. If the card dealt is black, there are also two Giant Spiders in the room (one for a Club, two for a Spade). The victims are all dead, but some of them were fellow soldiers of the party and useful equipment can be salvaged from their bodies (see Soldier gear below). (M) Giant Spiders (varies): See page 78.	A	<i>Storage Room.</i> The party finds a room blocked by a wooden door reinforced with metal bars. A Lockpicking roll is required to pry it open, or can be opened with a little effort if the party found the Key (see above). Inside is a small storage room, abandoned many years ago, containing forgotten tools. Among them are a big hammer (Str+d8), a rope, enough torches to reach the end the adventure, and a hatchet (Str+d6).
		Joker	<i>Light.</i> The party spots light from a manhole; they found an exit! They can leave the sewers immediately, ending the adventure there, if they want. If they continue looking for their friends, they feel heartened and gain a Bennie.

LAIR OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

The lair of the Spider Queen is a large, circular room of polished stone. A stone stair running along the walls leads to the bottom.

With a Smarts roll, the heroes understand the it is an old water cistern, built in a time of prosperity to secure water supplies to the city in case of siege. The room has a strong echo, allowing the voice of the Queen to be heard as far as the upper floors. The cistern is connected with another one through a short corridor blocked by a metal penstock, placed halfway up the access stair. The second cistern must be very full, because there are puddles on the ground next to it.

The whole room is littered with broken bones and other disgusting remnants of victims, and many spiders of various shapes and sizes scamper on the floor. Randama, the Spider Queen, lies in the shadows covered by a swarm of reddish spiders. She is intelligent and strangely attractive. She is also truly in love with Shendul and mortally jealous of Melandra. She wants her lover first to say her beauty is greater than the girl's, then to declare his undying love for her, and finally to kill the girl so they can drink her blood together.

Shendul is tired of her romantic talk, but agrees to do as Randama asks.

After dispatching Melandra, it's the Governor's turn, and the heroes if they are prisoners.

If the heroes have not been captured, they reach the room just in time to prevent Melandra and her father from being killed by the monster.

Jealousy. Randama is very suspicious, particularly of her lover. The party can play on this fact, trying to convince her (with a Social Conflict) Shendul has been unfaithful, he loves the girl more than the Queen, and so on. Depending on their success, the Queen reacts in the following way:

MARGIN	EFFECT
Tie	Randama is suspicious and deep in thought. She starts the battle Shaken.
1-2	Randama is devoured by doubt. She orders her spiders to bind one of Shendul's hirelings.
3-4	Randama is almost convinced. She orders her spiders to bind Shendul's hireling and Shendul himself.
5+	Randama is enraged. As above, plus she attacks Shendul, trying to kill him. After doing this, she vents her anger on the heroes. She gains the Berserk Edge for the battle.

The Penstock. Opening the penstock releases a wall of water into the cistern, changing the tide of the battle as spiders cannot swim. Opening the rusty penstock requires three success (raises count as extra successes) on Strength rolls. When the penstock is open, place a cone template in front of it. Any character caught in the template suffers the effect of the *blast* power. In addition, after two rounds the water starts filling the room, turning it into Difficult Terrain. From the third round on (fourth for the heroes), Swimming rolls are necessary. The spiders start fleeing in the second round. Randama is too big to go through the passage the heroes have used and is doomed to die here.

(M) **Swarm of Spiders (1):** See page 79.

(M) **Venomous Spiders (2):** See page 78.

(M) **Giant Spiders (1 per hero):** See page 78.

(WC) **Randama, the Spider Queen (1):** See page 69.

(WC) **Shendul (1):** See page 79.

(M) **Shendul's Hirelings (2):** Use the Soldier stats. See page 79.

AFTERMATH

By killing the Spider Queen and saving Temar Nhir and Melandra, the adventurers earn both the gratitude of the local population and of the Governor himself. The city must be rebuilt, and strong, brave men like the heroes are ideal to take leadership positions. They gain the Noble Edge while in Vadokara.

Alternatively, the Game Master can decide the heroes' deeds made them *too* popular for the new Governor's taste, especially when someone starts speaking of overthrowing him and appointing one of the heroes as ruler in his place...

CREATURES

GIANT SPIDER

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

Skills: Climbing d12+2, Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Stealth d10

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

Special Abilities

• **Bite:** Str+d4.

• **Poison:** Venomous poison.

• **Wall Walker:** Can walk on vertical surfaces at Pace 8.

• **Webbing:** The spiders can cast webs the size of Small Burst Templates. Treat as a Shooting roll with a range of 3/6/12. Anything in the web must cut or break their way free (Toughness 7). Webbed characters can still fight, but all physical actions are at -4.

VENOMOUS SPIDER

This reddish spider is as large as a human hand and moves really fast. It has a ferocious temper and terrible venom, so the Spider Queen uses it to deliver her unforgiving justice.

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

Skills: Climbing d12+2, Fighting d6, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 1

Special Abilities

• **Bite:** Str+d4.

• **Poison (-2):** Lethal poison.

• **Quick :** These monsters are notoriously fast. They may discard Action Cards of 5 or lower and draw another. They must keep the replacement card.

• **Wall Walker:** Can walk on vertical surfaces at Pace 8.



SHENDUL

This former Fagir (priest of Etu) is a sick, evil person, with no other interests but his own. He looks shabby, but his tongue can still make him appear charming when he wants.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d10, Streetwise d6, Taunt d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Brave, Charismatic, Improved Level Headed, Loincloth Hero

Hindrances: Greedy, Habit (lustful), Overconfident

Gear: Bronze short sword (Str+d6), robes.

SOLDIER

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Throwing d4

Edges: —

Hindrances: —

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Gear: Bronze short sword (Str+d6), dagger (Str+d4, range: 3/6/12), light leather armor (+1), shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness vs. ranged weapons).

SWARM OF SPIDERS

This swarm is made of poisonous red-dish spiders. Swarms cover an area equal to a Medium Burst Template and attack everyone within it every round. Small Swarms follow the rules of the Split Special Ability.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite :** Swarms inflict hundreds of tiny bites every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location (victims in completely sealed suits are immune).

- **Poison:** The poison delivered by these beasts in small doses. Knockout poison.

- **Split:** Swarms are clever enough to divide into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Templates) should their foes split up. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is lowered by 2 (to 5 each).

- **Swarm:** Parry +2; as the swarm includes scores of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons deal no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict Strength damage each round. Jumping into water grants protection from a swarm.

TUKOMAL'S JAGHZA

The insect, as big as a cat, walked on the murky water with its elongated legs. Its carapace was dark brown with green hues, and it shimmered like an ancient soldiers' armor. It stopped, turned its head and stared at me with intelligent eyes.

"Amazing!" I exclaimed.

Then the small insect started rubbing its claws, producing a high-pitched sound like that of a Syranthian harpsichord. From the thick of the swamp I heard the sound of something large approaching.

— from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

Habitat/Location: Any swamp area

Description: Jaghzas are insects, similar to pond skaters, only much larger. They can be as big as a cat but retain their ability to "walk" on water. These beasts are typical of the Tricarnian rice fields, where they eat smaller insects and are considered a minor nuisance.

Tukomal, a Tricarnian Prince and lord of a minor fiefdom, became fascinated with these slender beasts. His interest has a dark motivation. Through crossbreeding, Lotus use, and sorcerous experiments, he managed to create Jaghzas the size of ponies. They are ferocious and relatively obedient, if you know the proper magical ritual to control them.

But there are a few problems.

First, the giant Jaghzas need huge amounts of food, mainly meat. Tukomal overcame the problem by feeding them

his own slaves and guards. Now his small fiefdom is falling apart from neglect, but he isn't concerned. Once he has a horde of Jaghzas, he plans to invade his neighbors and then all Tricarnia.

Second, the mutated Jaghza larvae are very weak when they hatch, and only one in every thousand survives and reaches adulthood. After various experiments, the wicked prince found a solution. The larvae need to be kept somewhere soft and warm to grow. But his solution is one no sane and decent man would ever consider...

GIANT JAGHZA

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

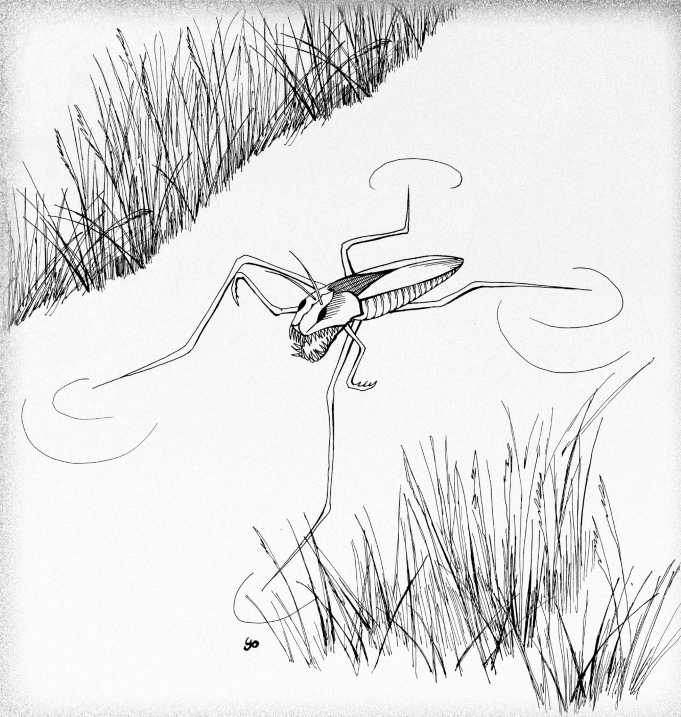
Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d4

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Special Abilities:

• **Armor +1:** Thick carapace.

- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Improved Frenzy:** A Giant Jaghza can perform two attacks without incurring a multi-action penalty.
- **Pond Skaters:** A Giant Jaghza can walk on water like solid ground.
- **Pounce:** Thanks to its powerful legs, a Giant Jaghza can jump 3d4" with no run-up, and uses this ability to charge its victims with all its weight. If attacking an opponent while jumping, a Giant Jaghza gains +2 to the attack and damage roll, but suffers -2 to Parry until their the next action. It cannot use Improved Frenzy when pouncing.



JAGHZA SWARM

This swarm is made of very small Jaghzas. Swarms cover an area equal to a Medium Burst Template and attack everyone within it every round. Small Swarms follow the rules of the Split Special Ability.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Notice d6

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities:

- **Bite or Sting:** Swarms inflict hundreds of tiny bites every round to their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location (victims in completely sealed suits are immune).
- **Split:** Jaghza swarms are clever enough to divide into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Templates) should their foes split up. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is lowered by 2 (to 5 each).

- **Swarm:** Parry +2; as the swarm includes scores of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons deal no real damage. Area-effect weapons work normally, and a character can stomp to inflict Strength damage each round. As they are aquatic creatures, jumping into water is useless against this swarm.

SCENARIO — HOSTS

REQUIREMENTS

This scenario is set in Tricarnia, but can be relocated to any swampy region area with rice fields, like the delta of the Buffalo River (Caldeia) or southern Ekul.

ADVENTURE HOOK — TRAVELERS AT DUSK

It is almost nightfall and the heroes are riding a path among rice fields. The fields are wild and untended, bamboos and other weeds engulfing them, and the whole place has turned into an overgrown swamp. These lands have long been abandoned, making it unlikely they'll find a warm inn for the night.

While debating what to do the heroes hear squelching sounds from the cane thickets flanking the road. A very young, pale girl, dressed in rags and clearly pregnant, approaches them. She looks like a slave. She almost faints where she stands and begs for help.

When the heroes move to help her, they see a small raft advancing on the shallow waters. On board is the smallest individual the party has ever seen: a pygmy dressed in Tricarnian attire. With contempt, he orders:

"In the name of Tukomal the Mighty, my lord, I order you to release the girl! Do as I command and you'll be free to move on."

The girl weeps and begs the heroes not to leave her in the hands of the pygmy. The scenario presumes the party refuses. When they do, Zalaka, the pygmy, rows away, but leaves the party with a not-so-veiled threat:

"You don't know what you are doing! You'll face the rage of Prince Tukomal!"

The barge disappears in the mists of the rice fields.

ADVENTURE DEVELOPMENT A SAD STORY AND SHELTER FOR THE NIGHT

The girl, Lyssia, thanks the heroes for their kindness. She tells them she escaped from Prince Tukomal's palace, "where terrible things happen". She shivers, but cannot be forced to say more on the subject; the shock of her treatment at Tukomal's hands is too strong.

If questioned about her pregnancy, she says the father of the child was Cyf, a slave who died in the dungeons of Tukomal's palace. She implores the party to take her away to a place where she can deliver and raise her child as a free woman. With a Healing roll the party discovers that, except for a few bruises, she is in remarkably good health.

Given the situation, it is important to find a secure place for the night. Lyssia's former village isn't far away, and she can lead the party there.

The village is a very poor place, a group of makeshift huts in the middle of the overgrown rice fields. It is abandoned and half awash because no one has been tending it. A Tracking roll reveals the place has been deserted for at least two months. Unless the Game Master decides differently, there is nothing interesting in the village. If questioned about what happened to the population, Lyssia says they were taken to Tukomal's dungeons, but she does not know what happened to them.

A TROUBLED NIGHT

During night time several things happen.

First, Lyssia starts feeling sick. She is about to give birth, which is strange be-

cause she isn't due yet. Let the group roleplay the situation. Delivering a baby is very different from their usual sword fighting and monsters bashing!

Second, during the night, the village is attacked. The heroes hear noises nearby, and under the pale light of the moon see terrible creatures as big as men literally running on the water!

The creatures attack head-on, so the whole party must participate in the fight if they want to survive. Remember the village is partially flooded, so place several Difficult Ground areas (at least five Medium Burst Templates) around the battlefield. The Jaghzas can walk on the water without any problems.

(M) Giant Jaghza (2 per hero): See page 80.

While everyone is concentrating on the fight, the wooden walls of the hut around Lyssia are torn apart and a giant Jaghza enters, preceded by a swarm of smaller specimens. The bigger insect is ridden by Zalaka, who controls his mount very well. The Jaghza uses its claws to snatch Lyssia and hoist her on its back.

(M) Jaghza King (1): Use Giant Jaghza stats, giving it Size +2. It is a Henchman. See page 80.

(M) Jaghza Swarm (1): See page 81.

(WC) Zalaka the Pygmy (1): See page 87.

At this point, the pygmy laughs evilly and leaves the party to face the rest of the swarm.

TRACKING THE BEASTS

Once the creatures are defeated, the group goes looking for Lyssia. The Jaghzas walk on water, but they are so big their trail is clearly visible in the cane thickets. A single Tracking (+2) roll is enough to follow it.

In addition two barges, ideal to move on the shallow waters of the rice fields, can be found in the village. Using them, the adventurers reach Prince Tukomal's palace a few hours before dawn.

TUKOMAL'S PALACE

This rotting dwelling does not deserve to be called a palace. Little more than a crumbling ruin of mossy stone and rotten wood, it includes a narrow tower surrounded by a stone wall. The courtyard and the lower floors of the tower are flooded. No one has been taking care of it since all the slaves died in Tukomal's experiments.

When the party enters the area, they hear Lyssia's screams of pain coming from the upper floors of the tower. Her labor is at its climax, but no hero has ever heard a woman scream in such a way. The crying should guide the heroes in their exploration. The sooner they find Lyssia, the easier it will be to successfully conclude the adventure, so the Game Master should keep track of how long their exploration takes. As a rule of thumb, track five minutes for every location explored, plus another five if combat is involved. If the party stops to patch up their wounds, remember to add the time used.

FLOODED COURTYARD

The courtyard is completely flooded and to move around the heroes need a barge or must swim. The area is full of floating rubbish such as planks of wood and an

old cart. Besides the tower, the only other building still accessible is the stables. They are flooded and a group of Jaghzas stationed on its roof jumps down to attack the party (add 2" to their jumping distance). A slippery stair leads to the Tower's Fist Floor.

(M) Giant Jaghza (1 per hero): See page 80.

FIRST FLOOR

This floor is built on higher ground than the courtyard so it isn't flooded. Totally abandoned, the place is filthy with piles of insect droppings. If the party explores the area with care (+5 minutes and a Notice roll), they find the half eaten corpse of a slave. Stairs lead down to the dungeons and up to the second floor.

DUNGEONS

Water was seeped through the walls and this area is partially flooded.

Flooded Cellars. These rooms were intentionally flooded and hundreds of Jaghza larvae swim in the water. Pieces of rotten meat float in the brackish water and the only audible sound is the constant munching of the larvae eating their food. The stench is so terrible it requires a Vigor roll to avoid being Nauseated.

Larder. This room is partially flooded (counts as Difficult Ground) and several human bodies, butchered as animals, hang from long chains — Tukomal's slaves used as food for the larvae. The butchers are another two of the sorcerer's creations: frog-headed servants armed with long pikes. They attack the party using the water environment to their advantage. Once dead, the two creatures revert to their human form, free from the

evil magic. While dying, one of the two whispers:

"Save my Lyssia. She carries my son."

The unfortunate fellow is Cyf. Any hero who swears to save the girl should be awarded a Bennie.

(M) Frog Headed Servants (2): See page 86.

SECOND FLOOR

This floor is still partially habitable. A stairwell, accessible from the Throne Room, leads to the third floor while a slippery, external staircase (Agility roll to avoid falling 6") leads to a small turret which houses Tukomal's Library.

Living Quarters, Banquet Hall, Main Corridor. These rooms contain nothing useful. With a Notice roll (and 10 additional minutes) the heroes can find some precious silverware or other useful trinkets (1d10x25 Moons). The floors are made of wood and dangerous in their rotted condition. Any time the heroes enter a room, the GM draws a card from the Action Deck. If a Club, the floor collapses under a randomly selected adventurer. He must make an Agility roll or fall to the first floor suffering 2d6+2 damage.

Throne Room. Formerly rich and impressive, everything is now neglected, dirty and rotten. The doorway to the third floor is guarded by two statues of humans with insect heads. The bodies of the statues are made of clay, while the heads are polished pieces of amber. When a character approaches the statues, they unleash a lightning attack from their heads (Shooting: d8, Range:2/4/8, Damage: 2d6, ignore metal armor). The statues can release an indefinite number of shots, but destroying

the heads (Toughness 7, –4 Called Shot) lifts the enchantment. The same can be achieved by pulling them off the bodies at distance (Shooting roll –4). If the heads are preserved, they're worth 500 Moons each.

If the heroes played the *Beasts and Barbarians – Green World* adventure, they notice a disturbing similarity between the insect statues and the Masked Pygmies heads...

Tukomal's Turret. This little tower is built outside the main tower, and is where the evil prince conducts his unholy experiments. The room is full of paraphernalia, strange apparatuses and other sorcerous implements. An old scroll is open on a lectern, entitled The Truths of Kmogas (see sidebar). It is written in ancient Keronian but Tukomal has translated it into common language.

By skimming the text (5 minutes), the heroes find it explains how to turn normal insects into giant ones. Reading by reading further (another 5 minutes) they learn the process is imperfect; only one in a thousand insects survives. But a note by Tukomal reveals the problem can be overcome by implanting the larvae into the belly of a pregnant woman! If the heroes read on (another 5 minutes), they discover the insects are wild and a magical onyx amulet can control them. The reading times can be halved with a successful Smarts roll.

THIRD FLOOR

The third floor is one large room, equipped as a laboratory. When the party reach it, the Unholy Birth is about to take place (see below).

UNHOLY BIRTH

In the laboratory, the party finds Tukomal: a tall, emaciated man holding a black amulet. Lyssia lies on a table in the throes of labor. Zalaka is here as well, watching the scene with sick depravation.

Lyssia's baby has long since died, serving as nourishment for a huge amount of larvae, which stream from Lyssia's every orifice! How far into the labor she is depends on how much time has passed since the heroes arrived at the palace (check the table below). If they have wasted too much time, several tiny monsters are lurking around the room, looking for lunch.

Unless they have read the Truths of Kmogas and are prepared for the scene, the heroes must make a Fear roll.

TIME	EFFECT
20 minutes	Labor yet to start.
30 minutes	1 small Jaghza swarm
40 minutes	1 Jaghza swarm
50 minutes+	1 Jaghza swarm, 1 small Jaghza swarm

In addition, at the start of the first round and every three rounds, another small swarm leaves Lyssia's body. All these creatures are under Tukomal's direct control.

There are many ways to make this fight easier.

Killing Lyssia. The girl is beyond salvation. Only the dark magic of Tukomal is keeping her alive. Freeing her from her suffering stops the production of new swarms.

Tukomal's Amulet. The amulet is the key to controlling the Jaghzas. Destroying it (Toughness: 5, called shot –6) or taking it away from the mage causes the monsters

RELIC: THE TRUTHS OF KMOGAS

This ancient scroll is written on the thin skin of a dawn lizard with the blood of an imp. Besides what the heroes have discovered so far, it contains a great deal of dark knowledge.

Any hero studying the scroll for at least one month with a successful Smarts (-4) roll permanently gains a die step in Knowledge (Arcana).

Yet the secrets written in this scroll can make the toughest hero tremble. If the hero's study is successful, he must make a Spirit (-2) roll. In he fails, he is affected by the Yellow Hindrance. Every advancement he receives another Spirit (-2) roll to remove it.

to turn on the sorcerer and his wicked servant. If a hero wields it and spends a Bennie, he can use its dark magic. In the hands of someone other than Tukomal, the amulet grants the *beast friend* power on Jaghzas (giant and swarms), with d12 Arcane Skill and 20 Power Points. It is worth 1,000 Moons, but can only be sold to another sorcerer after a successful Streetwise roll to find a buyer.

Killing Tukomal has the same effects as taking his amulet away. The Jaghzas turn against his evil servant. Once Tukomal and Zalaka are dead, the party should leave. The beasts are hungry, and nothing can be done for poor Lyssia.

(WC) Zalaka the Pygmy (1): See page 87.

(WC) Tukomal the Sorcerer (1): See page 87.

(M) Jaghza Swarm (varies): See page 81.

AFTERMATH

This adventure holds no rewards for the heroes. Lyssia is dead, but they have survived and managed to avenge her. With Tukomal's death the secret of the giant Jaghza has been destroyed and the terrible beasts will soon die.

But there is always the chance a specimen or two might survive and find a way to breed naturally. If this happens, a terrible scourge will be unleashed upon Tricarnia.

CREATURES

FROG-HEADED SERVANT

Resembling large men with frog heads and webbed feet and hands, they were created through one of Tukomal's gruesome experiments

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Swimming d8, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Gear: Bronze tipped pike (Str+d8, 2 hands, reach 1).

Special Abilities:

• **Aquatic:** Pace 8 in water.

• **Armor +1:** Rubbery hide.

• **Size+1:** These creatures are bigger than humans.



TUKOMAL THE SORCERER

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Sorcery d10, Taunt d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Arcane background (Sorcery), Improved Impressive Aura, New Power (x2), Noble, Power Points (x2)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Delusional (wants to become king of Tricarnia)

Powers [20 PP]: *Armor* (dark vapors), *barrier* (wall of tiny Jaghzas), *bolt* (throws explosive dead insects), *deflection* (I am not there!)

Gear: Robes, onyx amulet, sacrificial dagger (Str+d4).



ZALAKA THE PYGMY

Zalaka was raised a slave. He is fanatically loyal to his master, Tukomal. Zalaka is a Henchman.

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

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Riding d6, Stealth d8, Throwing d8

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 4

Edges: Acrobat, Assassin, Poisoner, Quick

Hindrances: Loyal (Tukomal), Small

Powers [8 PP]: *Poison* (see below for trap-pings)

Gear: Blowgun (range: 5/10/20, deliver poison), poisoned dagger (Str+d4, deliver poison), loincloth.

Special Abilities:

- **Slave's Poisons:** Zalaka has three darts and a dagger coated with a Very Fast *poison* (Black Rice Lotus), plus another dose of powder with Fast, Nonlethal *poison* (Azure Lotus of Dreams).

YARAKAN, GREAT DEVOURERS

The flickering light of the torch was reflected on the wall of the ziggurat. I always find Caldeian art somehow repulsive, but there was something particularly hideous in the strange, bloated figure engraved here. It was a fat, blind creature herding a mass of slaves.

"So, traveler, I have shown you the engraving." My guide said nervously. "Now, for all the gods, please let's go. The priests may be back any moment."

I jotted a quick sketch and followed him.

— from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

Habitat/Location: Anywhere

Description: A Yarakon is an ancient demon. Vaguely resembling a giant, meaty sphere with long cruel claws, a Yarakon has no eyes and perceives the world through some strange, inhuman sense. The Keronian sorcerers of the past summoned them as slave masters.

Inside their enormous, fanged mouth resides a living darkness, inhabited by things men should not know. It is a portal to another dimension. Staring into it can consume a man's soul and turn him into a puppet under the control of the demon. Being thrown into its mouth is an experience no one survives.

When the Dread Star fell there were dozens of these hideous creatures in the Keronian Empire. The catastrophe destroyed their masters, but not the Yarakons. The world they come from is accustomed to such drastic climatic changes, and these

creatures can hibernate to survive virtually forever. They close up on themselves, becoming hard and still like irregular boulders of strange black rock.

Only when they come into contact with food — blood and human flesh — do they return to life. Most of these creatures are now buried deep in the Dread Sea, but some might be waiting, in hibernation, in places beyond suspicion.



YARAKAN, THE GREAT DEVOURER

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities:

- **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and disease. They have a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.

• **Dimensional Devourer:** When the Yarakani hits a target with two raises, it “swallows” him, throwing the victim into his home dimension. Any creature in the mouth of a Yarakani must make an immediate Fear check with a -4 penalty due the total alien nature of the environment. In addition, any subsequent round he make a Vigor roll or suffer a Wound. Leaving the monster’s mouth is possible only by winning an opposed Strength roll (the Yarakani rolls with +4). Allies can help the victim from outside, prying the monster’s mouth open, with the standard cooperative rules.

• **Eye of Darkness:** Anyone attacking the Yarakani may gaze into the darkness of its mouth. Make an opposed Spirit roll. In case of failure the victim suffers a Level of Fatigue that can result in death. The spirit of the victim is devoured and he awakes 1d4 hours later as a Yarakani’s Servant. Fighting with one’s eyes closed prevents this risk, but fighting blind isn’t easy.

• **Fear -2:** The Yarakani is so inhuman seeing it requires a Fear check.

• **Host of Servants:**

A Yarakani usually keeps 1d4 Yarakani’s Servants within 6” as personal bodyguards or quick snacks. Each of them can use the Fanatics setting rule.

• **Multiple Claws:**

Str+d4. A Yarakani has a variable, always odd, number of arms, as well as the Improved Frenzy Edge.

• **Size +3:** Yarakanis are big, clumsy creatures.

YARAKAN’S SERVANT

A wretched man, turned into the mindless servant of a Yarakani.

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

Skills: Fighting d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: —

Hindrances: —

Gear: Spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 handed).

Special Abilities:

• **Mindless Servant:** A Yarakani’s Servant is immune to Fear and Smarts-based Tricks. In addition, he has a +2 bonus to recovering from being Shaken.



SCENARIO — DEATH'S CARGO

REQUIREMENTS

For this adventure the heroes should have a ship (maybe acquired in the *Eyes of the Night* scenario). Otherwise, Sorja rents a ship and hires the heroes as crew and fighters. The scenario starts in Teyaserana and develops in northern Caldeia, but can be relocated to other parts of the world.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Nayt Al-Yad was a Caldeian priest, but fled his homeland for political reasons. He settled in Teyaserana, a free city, starting a profitable career as slave seller and, thanks to his connections in his native country, smuggling large quantities of Khav, the Lotus-based drug produced in Caldeia. To do his business, he uses the *Velaska*, a ship owned by the independent captain Sorja.

In time, Nayt became very rich, but held a grudge against the political opponents who forced him to leave his country. He searched for a way to gain enough power to go back to Caldeia and have his revenge.

After some time, he found just what he was looking for: a sleeping Yarak. Being a petty practitioner of sorcery, he plans to wake the demon and use it to achieve his vendetta. Captain Sorja picked up the strange stone to be delivered to him, along with a load of Khav, and sailed toward Teyaserana without knowing the nature of his cargo.

A sudden summer storm forced the *Velaska* to enter an area of swampy channels by the Buffalo River delta. The ship sank in the shallow waters and only a handful

of men, Captain Sorja included, survived. Traveling back to Teyaserana through the swamps, alligators, fevers and poisonous beasts killed everyone except the captain. A month later, Sorja reached the gates of Teyaserana a wretched man, but with a dangerous plan to turn his misfortune around and become rich.

In all these years Nayt Al-Yad has given Sorja only a tiny share of the profits he has made with drugs. After a month of delay the *Velaska*, its crew and cargo are declared lost and Sorja wants to keep things that way. He knows where his ship wrecked, and the thought of all the sealed crates full of drug kept him through is arduous journey. All he needs to do is hire a ship with a tough crew, return to the swamps, recover the Khav unbeknownst to Nayt, sell it, and become rich.

ADVENTURE HOOK — HIRED BY A STRANGER

Sorja approaches the party in a tavern. His long beard and miserable appearance disguise him very well, and a Notice (-2) roll is required to recognize him. Sorja has quite a reputation, and the party has heard many stories about him and his tragic fate.

The sailor wants to leave Teyaserana as soon as possible.

"Strangers, I have heard good things about you, so I want to offer you a deal. I know the location of some precious goods. Everybody thinks they were lost forever at sea, so nobody will reclaim them. You have a ship, I know the place. Let us be partners in this venture."

In payment, he offers the heroes half the Khav they retrieve. If the heroes accept, Sorja insists they set sail immediately.

However, the Captain made a serious mistake. Before going to the tavern, he stopped by his home to see his wife. The house was being watched by Nayt Al-Yad's men, because the drug dealer is still furious at having lost the invaluable Yarakon stone.

The heroes are attacked by a band of Nayt's minions as they travel to the docks. They want to kidnap the rugged mariner to find out what happened to the cargo.

(M) Nayt's Hirelings (1 per hero): Use the Pirate stats, raising Fighting to d8. See page 45.

(M) Sorja (1): Use the Pirate stats with Boating d10 and Streetwise d8. See page 45.

The fight takes place in the narrow, dirty streets of Teyaserana. With a Streetwise roll the characters recognize the assaulters as notorious criminals, members of a dangerous gang of drug sellers. With a raise, they also have heard this gang work for Nayt Task.

TRAVELING SOUTH

The party makes it to the docks and likely set sail immediately. They travel south toward Caldea. Sorja knows the winds and sea currents, and their voyage is fast and safe.

This is a good place for an Interlude, or for the GM to add additional campaign material.

SEA CHASE

After two days the heroes spot a ship following them. Bigger and faster, it's gaining on them. The pursuing ship is manned by Nayt Al-Yad and a good number of

thugs. They want to board the heroes' vessel and capture Sorja. The pursuers make steady progress for three days before moving in to board.

Sorja knows these waters well, and as they approach the swamps there is an opportunity to avoid the boarding action. Treat as a five round Chase (each round representing an hour) based on the Boating of the captain. The enemy captain has Boating d8. The players can assist this roll.

The chasing ship is armed with a small catapult (Damage: 3d6; Range: 50/100/200; AP 6; MBT, Heavy Weapon, Toughness 16 (4)), and manned by a crew with Shooting d8.

If the heroes keep afloat four rounds, at the beginning of the fifth round a Caldeian warship appears on the horizon. Caldeians patrol their coasts looking for Khav smugglers, and their appearance forces Nayt's ship to turn back.

IN THE SWAMPS

Once in the swamps, Sorja insists they leave the ship in a hidden cove and navigate the shallow waters in barges (Acc/Top Speed: 1/2, Toughness: 8 (2), Crew: 1+3) because the water is too shallow for large ships. Since the barges must accommodate the large cargo of Khav, only the heroes and Sorja participate in the expedition.

Sorja leads the way, but finding the wreck of the *Velaska* takes time. He was feverish for most of the time he spent in the swamps, and this environment changes quickly.

The heroes have at least two encounters in the swamp, or more at the GM's option. Draw a card from the Action Deck for each encounter and consult the table below.

SWAMP EVENTS TABLE

CARD	EVENT
2-3	<i>Fever.</i> The swamps are an unsavory place. Each hero must make a Vigor (+1) roll or catch swamp fever (a Long-Term Chronic, Minorly Debilitating Disease).
4-10	<i>Nothing.</i>
Q	<i>Hidden obstacle.</i> Randomly select one of the barges. The pilot must make a Boating roll or the vessel suffers 2d6+2 damage from an underwater hazard. A wound means the hull is broken and a Repair roll is required.
J	<i>Insects.</i> The heroes are surrounded by a swarm of pesky mosquitoes. The heroes must make a Vigor roll or suffer Bump and Bruises. With a Survival roll a character can find a suitable way to avoid the insects (smearing mud over his body, using repelling herbs, and so on). If he scores a raise, he protects the entire group.
K	<i>Giant Leeches.</i> These disgusting creatures slide up the barges' hulls and oars to attack a randomly selected hero. Their bite is painless, but draining. The hero must make a Notice (-4) roll every four hours or suffer a level of Fatigue due to blood loss. Constantly checking their bodies prevents the heroes from being attacked a second time.
A	<i>Alligators!</i> A cluster of floating logs is actually a pack of hungry alligators! (M) Alligators (1 per 2 heroes): See page 94.

CARD

EVENT

Joker

Landmark! Sorja locates one of the landmarks he placed on his way out of the swamp. The group is moving in the right direction. They feel heartened and receive a Bennie.

ALL THE CHICKENS COME HOME TO BOOST

The party finally reaches solid ground and can leave the barges. Sorja is very excited; he knows they are close to the *Velaska*.

Suddenly the adventurers hear a slash of oars and see two barges full of strange, tough-looking soldiers approaching. Nayt found the heroes' ship, captured the crew and tortured them to learn where they were headed. Then he followed them into the swamps!

(M) Tricarnian Soldier-Eunuchs (1 per hero+2): See page 95.

(WC) Nayt Al-Yad (1): See page 95.

(WC) Sorja (1): See page 91.

In the middle of the fight while Nayt and Sorja are exchanging curses, a group of savage men emerges from the bushes and attacks both groups! The heroes and the drug merchant must join forces if they want to save their skin.

The newcomers are very strange. Their eyes are completely black and they fight like puppets without speaking or regard for their own safety.

(M) Yarakon's Servants (3 per hero): Count Nayt Al-Yad and Sorja as heroes for calculating the number of enemies. See page 87.

STRANGE ALLIANCES

These mysterious opponents are a tribe of former slaves, called the Swamp Dwellers. They escaped from the Khav plantations and lived as free men in the swamps until a month ago when the *Velaska* wrecked and the sleeping Yarakon came into contact with blood and awoke. When the storm ended, the Swamp Dwellers investigated the wreckage looking for loot, but were enslaved by the Yarakon.

Seeing the attackers, Nayt realizes they are controlled by the Yarakon, meaning the “stone” he bought isn’t a fake. But the demon is awake, free, and has an army under its control!

Nayt knows how to subdue the Yarakon, but he can’t do it alone. He offers the heroes a deal: help him subdue the demon, and they can keep the drugs. Sorja is very suspicious and doesn’t trust Nayt, but he leaves the decision to the party.

If they refuse, Nayt leaves, planning to return with more men. Alone, the heroes will have a very hard time with the Yarakon.

THE SLAVES’ VILLAGE

Following the tracks of the savages isn’t difficult (Tracking +2) because they haven’t been concealed. After a few hours the party and their allies reach the shores of a lagoon. The *Velaska* lies in shallow water like a wounded bird, its hull nearly broken in half.

A small cluster of poor huts has sprung up around the lagoon. There are almost a hundred slaves, but only half of them are capable of fighting. The others — old men and children — are so weak they pose no threat. During the day the Yarakon stays

inside the ship’s hull because it hates sunlight. In the evening it comes out to feed and to enslave any new arrivals.

(M) Yarakon’s Servants (50): See page 87.

(M) Yarakon (1): See page 86.

POSSIBLE PLANS

The Prisoners. While the adventurers assess the situation, they notice a new group of Servants has arrived herding prisoners in chains. The party recognizes the captives as the crew of their own ship, plus some of Nayt’s men!

The 20 prisoners are locked in 4 wooden cages. Most of the Swamp Dwellers mill around aimlessly with no will of their own until sundown. The cages are by the lagoon and guarded by two Servants each.

If the heroes attempt a rescue mission and are spotted, all the villagers converge on them and the Yarakon emerges from its lair (see **Wait for Darkness** below). If they manage to free their friends and escape into the swamp, Servants pursue them in 1d4 hours.

(M) Prisoners (20): Use Pirate stats. They are unarmed and Fatigued. See page 45.

Sneak into the Ship. The sunken ship is 20” away from shore on Difficult ground. The heroes must make a Stealth roll to reach it without alerting the Servants on the shore. The Yarakon, with a group of six chosen Servants (both bodyguards and food source), is below deck.

With a raise on the Stealth roll, the party can Surprise the demon. Once attacked, the demon calls for its Servants in the village. The first group arrives after three

rounds, plus another wave of four Servants every two rounds.

Wait for Darkness. If the party decides to wait until evening, the following scene unfolds.

The slaves gather on the beach in front of the sunken ship with a randomly chosen prisoner bound in front of them. The Yarakon emerges from the broken hull of the *Velaska* in all its terrible might. The creature walks through the shallow water to shore and opens its mouth. Exposed to the Eye-Of-Darkness, the prisoner becomes a mindless drone and jumps willingly into the demon's mouth. The ritual is repeated for each of the prisoners.

While the rituals are taking place the Swamp Dwellers are dazed and automatically Surprised for the first three rounds. This gives the heroes a good opportunity for a surprise attack, though they'll have to face the entire tribe.

Double Cross! Nayt Al-Yad needs to stand near the Yarakon to use the control ritual. The party must make their way through the mindless slaves and guard him a few rounds to cast the spell.

But once the Yarakon is under Nayt's control, the drug dealer turns the monster on the heroes. Now the party must fight both the Caldeian and the demon!

Throwing the Caldeian into the monster's mouth kills Nayt and banishes the demon simultaneously. The players get a clue from listening to Nayt's invocation (see sidebar). If they don't figure it out, Sorja does and alerts the heroes. Use the Grappling rules. A success on an opposed Strength roll after grappling him is enough to send Nayt towards his just destiny.

When this happens the Yarakon explodes with a loud boom, leaving only a mass of greenish slime.

AFTERMATH

Without the Yarakon to command them, the soulless Swamp Dwellers die in a few days; nothing can be done for these poor creatures. The *Velaska* still holds the Khav, though some crates may have been damaged by water. The exact number of salvageable crates is left to the Game Master, along with their value (around 1,000 Moons each is reasonable). But having the drug isn't the same as having cash. If the heroes want to sell it, they must find a buyer, and drug dealers... well, aren't the most honorable of business partners.

CREATURES

ALLIGATOR

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Swimming d8

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Special Abilities:

• **Armor +2:** Thick skin.

• **Aquatic:** Pace 5.

• **Bite:** Str+d6.

• **Rollover:** Alligators and crocodiles are notorious for seizing their prey in their vice-like jaws and rolling over and over with their flailing victims in their mouth. If one of these large amphibians hits with a raise, it causes an extra 2d4 rollover damage to its prey in addition to its regular Strength damage.



NAYT AL-YAD

This tall, elegant man resembles a dashing swordsman more than a wicked Caldeian priest. He has retained some of his religious knowledge but has become absolutely ruthless. A powerful and feared drug dealer possessing money, influence and slaves, he desires to return to Caldeia and seek revenge.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d4, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d6, Sorcery d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: Connections (Crime), First Strike, Level Headed, Rich

Hindrances: Vengeful

Gear: Long iron sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4), light armor (+1), Lotus concoction of *Healing* (2 doses).

Special Abilities:

- **Magic Dabbler:** Although not a sorcerer, Nayt has some magical training. He knows the *boost/lower trait* Power (Caldeian invocations) and has 5 Power Points. He doesn't roll the Wild Die when activating such a power.

- **Sorcerous Ritual:** Nayt found the invocation to bound a Yarakon in an ancient tome. To cast, he must be within 6" of the creature and recite the incantation, which requires a Sorcery roll and one full round. For each success and raise, he earns a Domination Token. Taking control of the creature requires 5 tokens. The invocation is in Imperial Syranthian and understandable by everyone (see sidebar).

NAYT'S INVOCATION

"Slaver of Worlds, Mouth to another Universe, with these words I bind you,

Slaver of Worlds, Gate of Teeth, with these words I command you,

Slaver of Worlds, Vortex to the Other-side, with these words I enslave you,

As long as my eyes see this sun and my feet walk on this ground, you will stay in this world under my command."

TRICARNIAN SOLDIER-EUNUCH

Prized slaves bred by the Tricarnians to act as bodyguards or shock troops. They are brave, bold, and absolutely loyal to their master.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d4, Throwing d8

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: Brave, Combat Reflexes

Hindrances: Loyal

Gear: Short bronze sword (Str+d6), light armor (+1), small shield (+1), bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48, RoF: 1).

Special Abilities:

- **Soldier-Eunuch:** This castrated slave warrior was trained under a terrible regime of physical abuse and painkilling Lotus concoctions for most of his life, and trifling wounds mean nothing to him (gain the Hardy Ability).

YELLOWFINGERS

The first thing I noticed was the smell – sweet and intense, like rotting flowers. Then I saw them approach, the tall, slender figures moving with a strange waddling gait resembling that of a mantis. At this point the Phalanx's Decurion cried out "Raise your javelins!"

And the battle against the undead horde began.

– from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

Habitat/Location: Anywhere Grave Lotus grows, especially in the Cairnlands.

Description: Yellowfingers are a type of undead created by the parasitic infestation of corpses. They owe their names to an early symptom of the plague, yellow mold growing between the fingers. In later stages the mould disappears and the fungal parasite spreads within the host. Then the rotting process stops, and the person's flesh thins and their bones mutate. The corpse develops cranial crests and the coccyx enlarges to emerge from the skin like a tail. Fingers and toes fuse together into strong claws. Finally, the Yellowfinger wakes, craving human flesh. They are nocturnal, and fall into a comatose state similar to sleep by day.

The source of these abominations is Grave Lotus, odorous weeds with bright yellow flowers that grow on hilltops. The Cairnlanders smoke them as a bland intoxicant, and the women dry the flowers to decorate the Cairns where they live to cover the smell of rotting flesh.

The dangerous parasite responsible for the undead infestation remains in improperly dried flowers, thriving in the damp Cairns, and eventually infecting the corpses of the Ancestors.

By the time the first Yellowfingers awake it is usually too late and the infection has spread to all the corpses in the Cairn, flooding it with undead Ancestors eager to eat their grandchildren.

YELLOWFINGERS

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d4

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Special Abilities:

- **Armor +1:** Hard skin.

- **Claws:** Str+d4.

- **Devastating Bite:** Str+d6, AP 2. Cannot be used with Frenzy. If the bite causes a Wound, the victim must immediately roll on the Injury table. The effect of the Injury lasts until the wound is cured.

- **Fear:** Yellowfingers are hideous and cause a Fear Check.
- **Improved Frenzy:** A Yellowfinger can make two claw attacks each round without multi-action penalty.
- **Quick:** A Yellowfinger is lighting fast. If dealt a 5 or lower card, it discards and redraws.
- **Undead:** +2 Toughness, +2 to recovering from being Shaken; only called shots to the head do extra damage.

SCENARIO — THE PRICE OF PEACE

REQUIREMENTS

This adventure is set in the Cairnlands, but can be relocated anywhere in the northern lands a Cairn is present.

ADVENTURE HOOK — AMBASSADORS

The heroes are traveling through an area of the Cairnlands they don't know. Crossing a field of very tall grass, several painted people emerge from the grass and surround them. They are a large group of strangely peaceful Cairnlander warriors. One of them, a skinny fellow wielding a skull-topped scepter, speaks:

"Hail strangers, and welcome to the lands of the Severed Hands. I am Deaf Oak, chief of this tribe. I warn you, if you continue this direction you will reach the territory of the Black Horns, a very ferocious clan."

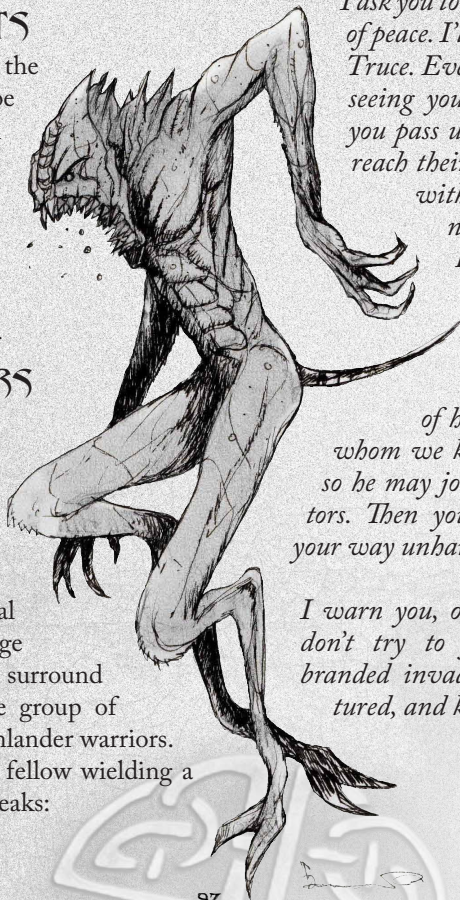
Sadly the heroes' destination lies in that direction and a detour would cost them a great deal of extra time and effort.

Deaf Oak continues. "If you are truly bent on entering the Black Horns' lands, maybe we can help each other. A blood feud rages between the Severed Hands and the Black Horns and caused many deaths on both sides. It is time to end the feud, but any of our tribe who enters their land will be killed on sight."

I ask you to be our ambassadors of peace. I'll give you a Staff of Truce. Even the Black Horns, seeing you wield it, will let you pass unharmed until you reach their Cairn and parley with their chief. His name is Bone Mace.

Report my peace offering and bear a sign of our good will. We return the body of his son, Goat's Foot, whom we killed a month ago, so he may join his clan's Ancestors. Then you can continue on your way unharmed..

I warn you, once in their lands, don't try to flee. You will be branded invaders, pursued, captured, and killed."



ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Severed Hands, as their name hints, aren't the most honorable of clans. Their cattle-rustling is the cause of their ongoing enmity with the Black Horns. In the past, the strength of the two clans was balanced and neither had an advantage. But recently a Yellowfinger infection broke out in the Black Horns' Cairn. The undead killed almost all their living relatives, swelling the ranks of infected dead.

The only survivors were three relatives of the old chief: Afterbirth, Marrow and Sinew, the wife, daughter and granddaughter of Bone Mace. The women are Ghoulbloods (see *Beasts and Barbarians*) and have nothing to fear from undead. The three women have taken control of the clan and at night send their undead relatives to take revenge on the Severed Hands. The rival clan is terrified, and by sending the heroes with the body of the dead chief's son, they hope to have peace.

But there is an important local custom Deaf Oak hasn't mentioned. In exchanges like this one, those carrying the Staff of Truce are offerings to the enemy clan as "payment" for the peace.

Usually they are enslaved, but in a clan comprised of undead their fate will be much worse.

ADVENTURE DEVELOPMENT

The heroes receive the Staff of Truce, a ceremonial spear decorated with feathers, human bones and animal skins, and are shown the way to the Black Horns' Cairn. Goat's Foot's body is in two pieces: his head, which the Severed Hands embalmed, and his body, sewn into a skin sack..

Riding at a normal pace, the party reaches the Black Horns' Cairn at dusk. Deaf Oak

warns them not to waste time on the road, as spending the night outdoors isn't safe though he doesn't explain why.

Once in the Black Horns' land, the heroes have several encounters with hints as to what awaits them.

IN A GHASTLY LAND

Butchered Herds. After a couple of hours on the road the party spots crows circling in the sky. Investigation reveals a herd of goats butchered in a field, left to rot. A Survival roll reveals they were killed three days ago by clawed beasts, but the wounds are very different from those caused by common predators.

Inspecting them further, or with a raise on the Survival roll, the heroes notice each goat bears two overlapping marks. The oldest is a stylized horn, while the second, more recent, resembles a hand.

The Severed Hands stole these beasts from the Black Horns and re-marked them. The three Ghoulblood relatives sent their undead relatives to recover the goats, killing the Severed Hands' shepherds. Then, having no use for such a large herd, they butchered them in spite to prevent the Severed Hands from recapturing them.

Abandoned Crops. The heroes move on and see the fields are untended and overgrown, the meager crops left to rot. A successful Tracking roll reveals strange, three-clawed tracks, compatible with those of the creatures that killed the goats.

THE SHY SHEPHERD

In the afternoon the party hears goats bleating nearby. Looking around, they

see a hill full of yellow wildflowers where three goats are grazing. The beasts are tended by a scrawny boy with long grayish hair, busy picking flowers. The boy is actually a girl, Sinew, the youngest of the three Ghoulblood relatives, and she is picking Grave Lotus flowers. The girl is very shy and runs off. If the heroes are on horseback, they can catch her easily, otherwise they must complete a short Chase based on Agility.

When captured, Sinew reveals her name and claims to be the granddaughter of Bone Mace, so mistreating her isn't a good idea. The girl can be convinced to lead the party to her Cairn, but she refuses to speak about what is going on. If questioned about where the other clan members are, she says "They are at war," a convenient truth. She isn't shocked by the heroes returning her uncle's body.

Examining the yellow flowers with Lotustmastery or Survival at -4 identifies them as a type of Lotus.

A KING AMONG HORSES

The last encounter occurs near a rough hut not far from fields. The heroes hear a horse whining and witness a strange scene. A splendid stallion is surrounded and being attacked by a pack of thin, feral dogs.

If Sinew is with the party, she comments, "That's Blaze, my grandfather's horse." The stallion was stabled in the Cairn but couldn't stand the smell of the undead and fled. The dogs are the faithful companions of the tribe, but have become feral. If the party interferes, they attack.

After the dogs are slain, the horse moves away but doesn't go far. The party can recapture him with a Riding roll.

(M) Feral Dogs (2 per hero): Use the Wolf stats. See page 55.

(WC) Blaze (1): See page 103.

THE LAWS OF HOSPITALITY

Late in the afternoon the party reaches the Cairn, a sort of burial mound with a heavy wooden gate. The gate is open and unguarded. The heroes know entering without being announced isn't polite, so they should call out.

After a few minutes a woman in her mid-twenties, with the same grayish hair and skin as Sinew, comes through the dark gate holding a torch. Marrow asks the heroes what they want. Once they mention the peace offering, she asks them to wait while she consults her father.

After some moments, the woman returns with a bowl of stewed meat. "My father welcomes the peace bringers," she says and then, as tradition requires, she offers you the food.

With a Common Knowledge roll (no roll is necessary for a Cairnlander hero), the party remember the local custom: eating someone's food guarantees protection under their roof until the next dawn or dusk.

The food is good, and Marrow takes a mouthful of it to calm the heroes if necessary. The party is led into the Cairn. It is arranged like an underground castle, with stables, a well, and so on. It seems a safe place, if a little creepy. If the characters rescued Blaze, Marrow thanks them and the beast is returned to the stables, though it doesn't look happy about it.

GM HINT: ESCAPE!

There are plenty of hints the night in the Cairn won't be a pleasant one. Some players, driven by curiosity, will remain, but others will decide to escape. If so, use one of the following situations:

Trapped! *The Cairn's gate is sealed, and it is too sturdy to be bashed in without a Heavy Weapon. The party must find an alternative escape route or be in the cairn when the Yellowfingers awake.*

Fugitives in the Night. *The heroes leave the Cairn but lose the protection of the Staff of Truce. During the night they are attacked by multiple groups of Yellowfingers, one led by the three sisters.*

The group is taken to a common room with benches to rest, and told they'll meet Bone Mace during the evening banquet in two hours. They are brought water by Marrow and Sinew (if the heroes didn't meet her, the girl comes back for evening meal). No one else is around. If questioned about it, Marrow says:

"The men are patrolling the borders. We are at war with the Severed Hands".

EXPLORING THE CAIRN

The heroes can use this time to rest or look around. Each exploration attempt requires half an hour and a group Stealth roll by all participants. If someone scores a 1 on the skill die, one of the women finds them and asks them, politely but firmly, to return to their quarters. Otherwise, draw a card from the Action Deck to determine the location they find. All locations are found only once unless stated otherwise. If a card number is dealt twice, the party finds nothing interesting.

CAIRN LOCATIONS TABLE

CARD	LOCATION
2	<i>Lurkers in Shadows.</i> The heroes travel down a very dark passage (Pitch Darkness condition if they have no torches. If they have torches, they suffer -4 to Stealth rolls). Some Yellowfingers, awakened by the smell of blood, attack the party! (M) Yellowfingers (1 per hero): See page 96.
3	<i>Empty Room.</i> Nothing interesting.
4-5	<i>Ancestor's Stone Bed.</i> The party finds a bed of stone with a corpse lying on it. It is one of the Ancestors. If the card dealt is red, it is a common corpse, though perfectly mummified. If black, the corpse is infected by Yellowfingers and a Notice (-2) or Healing roll spots the strange mold between its fingers. Finally, if the card number is even, the corpse has an interesting trinket or tool (value: 1d4x5 Moons). This location can be found multiple times.
6	<i>Well.</i> The main water supply of the Cairn. The water is good, though a little muddy. Being at the very center of the mound, it is easy to reach other locations from here. The party draws two cards the next round of exploration and explores both.
7	<i>Stables.</i> If the party rescued Blaze, the horse is held here and seems very nervous. A Riding or Notice (-4) roll reveals the beast fears the smell coming from the nearby Kennel. Reaching the Kennel from here doesn't require a roll. The goat pens are all empty.

CARD	LOCATION	CARD	LOCATION
8	<i>Bejeweled Bones.</i> In a niche, the party finds a human skull and two shin bones, bejeweled and silver-plated. They belong to a famous Ancestor and are quite precious (500 Moons). They are also cursed, and cause the Bad Luck Hindrance to whoever takes them until they are returned to their proper place.	Q	<i>Room of the Forlorn Spirits.</i> The door of this room is made of stone and very heavy (Strength roll to open). Inside are various large urns containing the remains of very old Ancestors. There is an aura of danger in this place, and it is haunted by bodiless spirits (detectable with <i>detect arcana</i>). The specters cannot harm the party directly, but if someone approaches an urn they make it explode for 2d6 damage in a Large Burst Template and the room fills with an unsavory air. The room contains twelve urns.
9	<i>Armory.</i> The door to this room is locked (Lockpicking roll required). Inside is an assortment of average quality bronze weapons plus a heavy armor corselet stolen from a Phalanx infantryman centuries ago.	K	<i>Kennel.</i> This foul-smelling room used to house the hounds of the tribe. All the dogs have gone wild (as the party discovered before) except a black bloodhound, Death, who remained here waiting for its master and died of hunger. The Yellowfingers infected it, and now the terrible creature infests this place. (WC) Death, Undead Bloodhound (1): Use the Wolf stats, adding Size +1 and the Undead Special Ability. It is a Wild Card. See page 55.
10	<i>Dryer.</i> This smoky room was used to prepare meat for the winter, but there are no carcasses now. Instead, the room is filled with yellow flowers waiting to be turned into Lotus potions. Among them a Lotusmaster can find two doses of Refined Lotus with a Notice roll.	A	<i>Aunt Sourmilk.</i> The party find a room with an Ancestor's stone bed (see entry 4-5) occupied by an old woman's corpse. After a moment the old crone starts to cough! She is alive, but so ill and decrepit the undead don't attack her. She is querulous and absent-minded but can tell the heroes what happened in this place.
J	<i>Baths.</i> The Ancestors of this Cairn were very civilized and built massive baths. The heroes find one of these rooms. The water isn't heated anymore but one of the three relatives, Afterbirth, is bathing in a big pool. If there is more than one explorer, she covers herself and asks them to go away. If the explorer is male and alone, she tries to seduce him. Two Yellowfingers are hiding on the other side of the pool. They take advantage distracted hero and try to kill him while Afterbirth escapes. (M) Yellowfingers (1 per hero): See page 96.		

CARD	LOCATION
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Joker

Banquet Room. The door is locked (–2 to Lockpicking rolls). Bone Mace sitting in his chair within (see **Banquet of Peace** below). The heroes realize he is dead, and their situation (see sidebar). Bone Mace is armed with his infamous trademark weapon, a warclub made from the bone of a forgotten beast (Str+d8+1, AP 1, weighs only 50%), and three Severed Heads (see *Beasts & Barbarians*) hang from his belt.

BANQUET OF PEACE

When night falls, the party is called to the banquet held in the main Cairn hall. A goat is being roasted over a roaring fire and a table large enough for several dozen warriors has been made ready.

The heroes are the only guests, while the chief, Bone Mace, sits silently in his massive seat. Marrow and Sinew tend the roast on the fire, while the forty-year-old Afterbirth serves as personal cupbearer to her husband and stands next to him.

Afterbirth is very ceremonious and repeats the heroes' names and mission to her husband, but Bone Mace sits in silence.

During the somber banquet, the party realizes the truth. Bone Mace is dead, and has been for some time given his bloated body. He died from a wild gash to the neck, only partially covered by his cloak. An attentive hero (Notice roll) can see yellow mould growing between his fingers.

Afterbirth speaks on behalf of her husband, putting her ears to Bone Mace's mouth and pretending to repeat his words aloud. She refers to the heroes as "the Severed Hands' gifts".

The heroes are asked to present their proposal on behalf of the Severed Hands. The players didn't receive a precise mandate and are unprepared to negotiate the terms of the peace. This is a good moment for some role-playing; give a Bennie to the speaker for a good presentation.

After the heroes' speech Bone Mace (or, more accurately, his wife) accepts the deal.

You hear the sound of the gate opening and footsteps approaching.

"The warriors have returned," Afterbirth says, smiling. "They fought valiantly and they too deserve their share of our enemies' gifts." A group of gaunt, undead creatures appears, their mouths full of teeth and their terrible, empty eyes hungry.

"We'll tell the Severed Hands we appreciate their gifts. The Peace is sealed, my brothers, come and take your share!" Afterbirth shouts.

At this point the party understands THEY are the gifts sent by the Severed Hands to appease their enemies, not the bones of Goat's Foot!

The undead are protective of their Ghoul-blood relatives, and are willing to throw themselves onto incoming enemy blades to save them (use the Fanatics setting rules). If the party manages to take one of them hostage, the monsters stop and allow the party to escape. The tactic only works with Sinew; Afterbirth and Marrow are fanatical and would rather kill themselves than be taken hostage.

(M) Yellowfingers (2 per hero): See page 96.

(WC) Three Relatives (3): See page 103.

Reinforcements. Every round after the fourth spent in the Cairn, d6-2 undead join the fight.

Once outside the Cairn the heroes would be wise to bar the gate behind them and ride away from this cursed place as fast as they can! It is up to the Game Master if the undead pursue them (see the Escape! sidebar).

AFTERMATH

Once away from the Cairn the adventure is over, but what happens when the monsters get free? Will they chase the heroes as far as the borders of their land, or beyond? What should they do with Sinew, Marrow or Afterbirth if they managed somehow to capture them? Finally, especially vengeful characters might wish to take revenge on the Severed Hands who tricked them into such a terrible adventure.

The heroes earn no reward unless they manage to escape with Blaze, the magnificent stallion.

CREATURES



BLAZE

An intelligent and beautiful horse, worthy of a king.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8

Pace: 12; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Edges: Danger Sense

Hindrances: —

Special Abilities

• **Fleet-Footed:** Horses roll a d8 when running instead of a d6.

• **Kick:** Str.

• **Size** +2



THREE RELATIVES

Sinew, Marrow and Afterbirth are the three living relatives of Bone Mace, a feared Cairnlander chief. Pale, emaciated and with grayish hair, they aren't pretty, but rather feared and respected by both the living and undead. The blood of the Ancestors flows strong in their veins.

Note: the Three Relatives have comparable stats, but a single special ability characterizes each of them.

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

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Ghoulblood, Noble

Hindrances: Vengeful

Gear: Iron dagger (Str+d4), robes.

Special Abilities:

• **Covenant:** The Three Relatives are so close they act as a single being, sharing three Bennies like a single Wild Card. When one passes out, the others lose one Vigor step.

• **Afterbirth:** The wife of Bone Mace makes her fellow undead relatives stronger with her mere presence. She has the *boost/lower trait* Power, 15 Power Points and uses Spirit as Arcane Skill. This power only affects the undead.

• **Marrow:** The daughter of Bone Mace sings with the voice of the banshees. She has the *fear* Power, 10 Power Points, and uses Spirit as Arcane Skill.

• **Sinew:** The granddaughter of Bone Mace is the twisted heart of her undead family. She has the Command Edge, but it applies only to the undead.



8/7/19



PLAYER APPENDIX

DISCIPLES OF THE BLACK TEMPLE

"They emerged from the darkness, as pale as ghosts in night's black shroud. Their hands, curved like claws, wielded staffs of polished black wood. The banquet hall of Lord Timas fell silent, as if death herself had arrived.

"Your time has come, Lord Timas," said one of the mysterious newcomers softly. Then, he advanced toward the lord's table.

Lord Timas, our host, shrank back in his seat with blind terror in his eyes: "You cannot! I paid your master and I'll pay you twice more. Please, go away!"

With an evil smile on his gaunt face, the evil warlock brushed Lord Timas' chest with the point of his staff.

The nobleman cried in pain and underwent an incredible transformation before our very eyes. His hair turned white and soon fell off, his skin became lined with wrinkles, his muscles lost their tone and finally, with a low moan, he passed away. In the space of three heartbeats the healthy nobleman was reduced to a withered corpse.

"This is the fate of those who displease the Lord of the Black Temple," the warlock said. Then, he and his companions turned back and disappeared into the night again."

from the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

In Caldeia, buried in the age-old jungle, there is a temple with gates made of shiny black stone. The common people and even the most powerful priests keep away, and dare not even whisper its name, because it is the lair of Vutal-Ra, one of the greatest sorcerers in Caldeia.

Some say he is the illegitimate son of King Caldaio the Cruel and will be king when the ruler of Caldeia finally dies.

Others believe him to be much older, a priest of the Keronian Empire, surviving until today thanks to a mighty artifact (see below).

Whatever his origins, Vutal-Ra is one of the most powerful wizards of the southern lands and the source of his great magic is the dreaded Takala-Na-Talaka, the Tree of Death, which is said to have been stolen from the garden of Death itself.

Vutal-Ra never leaves his temple, but has a sect of followers, the Disciples of the Black Temple, who carry out his orders all over Caldeia and are sometimes seen even further away, running secret errands on behalf of their master. These fearsome men, selected as boys and trained since childhood, mostly act as Vutal-Ra's assassins and spies. The sorcerer grants them great powers and teaches them the Art of the Black Staff, a particular type of magic deriving from the Tree itself, but he demands absolute loyalty in return.

There are rumors that some of these men have betrayed their master and now wander, hunted and alone, across the Dominions, always sleeping with one eye open, because Vutal-Ra's revenge might be slow but it is merciless.

PLAYING A DISCIPLE OF THE BLACK TEMPLE

The Disciples of the Black Temple can be used as great enemies in a campaign, but this supplement focuses on a different approach, allowing the players to play them! As always, *Savage Worlds* lets you create any type of character you want, but we suggest two main approaches to playing a Disciple: a faithful disciple, who must obey Vutal-Ra's orders, or a renegade disciple, one daring or mad enough to betray his former master and become a lone adventurer.

Both types of character offer great gaming opportunities.

HERO'S JOURNAL: BECOMING A RENEGADE

A Disciple of the Black Staff can become a renegade during the game, betraying his evil master or refusing to obey his orders. By doing so, he acquires great freedom but also gains mortal enemies, his former brothers and the immensely powerful Vutal-Ra.

A Renegade Disciple immediately loses the Worshipper of the Tree of Death Edge and must start watching his back constantly.

This is the price to pay for betraying the order...

NEW EDGES

DISCIPLE/BENEGADE OF THE BLACK TEMPLE (BACKGROUND)

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d6+, Stealth d6+, Sorcery d6+

This Edge is a new Arcane Background representing the time spent under the tutelage of the Lord of the Black Temple, Vutal-Ra. This Edge works exactly like the Sorcery Arcane Background from the *Beasts and Barbarians Golden Edition* book, but with a different list of Powers (see The Art of Black Staff on page 109).

As they have practiced with their trademark weapon for many years, the Disciples are great warriors. When wielding their black staff, they can use Sorcery instead of Fighting. They also calculate Parry using Sorcery, but they cannot use this rule to disregard the skill requirements of other Edges. If, for example, an Edge requires Fighting d8+, the Disciple must have that skill in order to take it.

As a drawback, a Disciple receives the Loyal Hindrance for free (it doesn't count toward the normal limit and grants no additional benefit). The Disciple must be warned that Vutal-Ra is a demanding master, who sooner or later will ask his pupil to go on challenging missions (see below).

Renegades, instead, have displeased their master. Hence, they replace Loyal with the Enemy (Major) Hindrance (it doesn't count in the limit as above) and must continuously watch their backs, because the Lord of the Black Temple will certainly seek revenge...Both Disciples and Renegades start the game with a Black Staff for free.

WORSHIPPER OF THE TREE OF DEATH (WEIRD)

Requirements: Novice, Disciple of the Black Temple

The Disciple spends long hours staring into his Pyramid of Petrified Wood (see Gear), which is essential for this Edge. This artifact allows him to contact (or be contacted by) his evil master and receive additional help when needed. At the beginning of a scenario, the Disciple draws a card from the Action Deck and, depending on its suit, receives one of the following abilities, which last for the whole adventure.

Once he achieves the Veteran Rank, he draws two cards and enjoys both effects.

Clubs – Blessing of the Tree of Death. The Black Staff of the Disciple is charged with the evil energy of the Takala-Na-Talaka itself. For the remainder of the adventure it becomes a magical weapon that pulsates in the hands of the user when danger arises, granting him the Danger Sense Edge.

Spades – Blessing of Darkness. The Disciple receives +2 to Stealth rolls and the Rapid Recharge Edge while standing in the dark (or Improved Rapid Recharge if he already has the basic version of the Edge).

Hearts – Temple Hound. The Pyramid summons a Temple Hound (see Creatures below), which is under the control of the Disciple until the end of the scenario. It is a Henchman or Right Hand (player's choice).

Diamonds – Gift of the Mortal Flesh. By contemplating the Pyramid, the Disciple suddenly understands that his body is a mere illusion and that his magic can control and shape it. He can raise one Trait by one die step, at the cost of one Charisma point due to his aloofness and detachment from common life. Both the raised trait and the Charisma penalty last for the whole adventure.

A character becoming a Renegade of the Black Temple immediately loses this Edge.

MASTER OF THE STAFF (POWER)

Requirements: Heroic, Disciple/Renegade of the Black Temple, Smarts d8+, Sorcery d8+, Spirit d8+

Through years of study and meditation, the Disciple finally unlocks the very essence of the Black Staff and can use it to leech energy from living beings. Every time the Disciple kills an intelligent being (Smarts not (A)), he is allowed a free Sorcery (-4) roll, which doesn't count as an action. In case of success, he can choose one of the following effects: recovering 5 Power Points, a Wound, or a Fatigue level.

MAGIC

ART OF THE BLACK STAFF

Arcane Skill: Sorcery (Smarts)

Starting Power Points: 10

Starting Powers: 1

Available Powers: *armor, beast friend, boost/lower trait, burrow, darksight, deflection, disguise, drain power points, draining touch (N), detect/conceal arcana, entangle, fear, invisibility, legerdemain, obscure, puppet, shapechange, slumber, smite, speak language, stun, wall walker, warrior's gift.*

This new arcane background is automatically acquired by the character when taking the Disciple/Renegade of the Black Temple Edge. The Art of the Black Staff is a somewhat modified and reduced version of standard sorcery: Vutal-Ra wants his disciples to be strong, but not strong enough to compete with his own powers. It follows the same rules used for the Sorcery Arcane Background (wounding oneself to gain more power, Backlash), but with an important addition: without his staff, a Disciple suffers -4 to any Sorcery roll.

Vutal-Ra only teaches a small portion of his knowledge, but his pupils are always ready to learn more. If, during his adventures, a Disciple finds a Power appearing on the Sorcery list but not on the Art of the Black Staff list, he can try to learn it with a penalty of -4 to the learning roll.

The Art of the Black Staff is specifically linked to certain trappings (see the sidebar).

HERO'S JOURNAL: THE SECRETS OF THE DARK STAFF

Vutal-Ra's followers are known to be masters of shapes and capable of melting the flesh of living beings at will. Their art, once practiced by the Keronian lords but now almost lost, allows them to take on the appearance of whoever they want and to turn their victims into withered shells. They are also fabled to suddenly appear and disappear from shadows, like ghosts.

But their greatest power lies in their staves, which are rumored to be made with the very branches of the Tree of Death.

Here are some examples of trappings suited to the Art of the Black Staff, along with any related rule modifications. Naturally, Disciples can also use normal sorcery trappings.

Staff Touch. *Disciples often use their staffs to hit their enemies with spells. With a single Sorcery roll, a Disciple can both hit his target (using Sorcery instead of Fighting), dealing staff damage, and activate a spell. As a drawback, this process requires extra concentration, so the Sorcery roll suffers a -1 penalty in place of the customary multi-action penalty. Obviously, without his black staff, a Disciple cannot cast a spell with this trapping.*

Master of Shapes. *This trapping causes a major physical mutation: flesh melts or develops scales, limbs turn into tentacles or claws, and so on. The basic duration of the spell is doubled, but it can only be cast on oneself.*

Lord of Shadows. *The Disciples are known to suddenly appear and disappear, which contributes to their fearsome reputation. They can do so thanks to top-notch stealth techniques and to*

a life spent in the darkness of their unholy temple. A power with a Shadow Lord trapping adds the Light modifier of the environment where it is cast as a positive bonus to the Sorcery roll. So, a spell cast in Dim Light (-1) receives +1 to the roll, in Darkness (-2) it has +2, and so on. As a drawback, a spell with a Shadow Lord trapping cannot be cast in full light.

EXAMPLE OF DARK STAFF

TRAPPINGS IN USE

Draining Touch (Eviscerating Touch). *By touching an opponent with his black staff, the Disciple causes his internal organs to twist and become compressed (popping out of the body if the victim is Incapacitated by the magic). The sorcerer does a single Sorcery (-1) roll to both hit his target and cast the spell.*

Legerdemain (Touch of Death from Afar). *The Disciple can use his staff as an extension of his will. With this spell, by making a single Sorcery (-1) roll and paying its cost, he can deliver a staff attack at a distance (Reach = Smarts). The same roll is used to both activate the spell and hit.*

Disguise (Skin Molding). *The Disciple can mold his own skin in ways unknown to any other sorcerer and maintain the spell much longer. The basic duration of the spell is doubled, but it can only be cast on oneself.*

Burrow (Path of Shadows). *The Disciple can move from an area of shadow to the next with amazing skill. A Disciple using this power literally melts away in a shadow to reappear in another. He adds the Light modifier as a positive number to his Sorcery roll. As a drawback, this power cannot be used when no shadows or no darkness are present (GM's judgment).*

MODIFIED POWERS

SHAPECHANGE

The shapechange power works exactly as described in the Savage Worlds core rules, but the table of creatures usually chosen by Disciples of the Black Staff is different.

COST	RANK	CREATURE
3	Novice	Rat, Bat, Snake (Venomous)
4	Seasoned	Fighting Bird, Jackal (use Dog/Wolf stats), Swarm (Small)*
5	Veteran	Snake (Constrictor), Giant Spider, Tsa-Gara
6	Heroic	Swarm (Large)*, Giant Scorpion
7	Legendary	Shadow Bat, Fanged Ape

Notes

(*) Taking the shape of a Swarm is physically exhausting. When reverting to his natural shape, a sorcerer must make a Vigor (-2) roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. With a critical failure, he also suffers a Wound.

GEAR

This chapter describes equipment exclusive to the Disciples of the Dark Temple. All these items, unless carried by a Disciple, are considered Rare.

MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

TYPE	DAMAGE	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Polearm				
Black Staff	Spi+d6	1	special	+1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, see Notes, Rare

ARMOR TABLE

TYPE	ARMOR	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Black Robe	0	-	100	See Notes

MUNDANE ITEMS TABLE

ITEM	COST	WEIGHT	NOTE
Special Adventuring Gear			
Petrified Wood Pyramid	100	-	See Notes
Takala Juice (Lotus of Feigned Death)	200/Dose	-	See Notes

ITEMS DESCRIPTIONS

Black Staff. These staffs are made of polished black wood, with absolutely no decoration. They work exactly like a Sorcerer's Staff, but in the hands of a Disciple of the Black Temple they deliver terrible spiritual blows, using Spirit instead of Strength to deal damage. They are extremely hard (Toughness: 10), and their Quality of Material is equivalent to steel (see *Beasts and Barbarians Golden Edition*, page 101).

In the hands of a non-Disciple sorcerer these staffs retain their power but are very dangerous. If the mage rolls a 1 on the Sorcery die, regardless of the Wild Die, while wielding such an item, he permanently loses a Power Point, in addition to any Sorcery Critical Table Effect. The

staffs have no power when wielded by a non-sorcerer character.

Black Robe. These plain, heavy robes are dyed using a particular flower growing in the jungle around the temple, and they are jet-black. The user receives +1 to any Stealth roll while in darkness, and +1 to Intimidation rolls. As a drawback, any person wearing such a robe in Caldeia or Tricarnia is automatically identified as a Disciple of the Black Temple. With a Common Knowledge roll, any sorcerer also knows this.

Petrified Wood Pyramid. This object is a small (6" by 6") tetrahedron made of polished petrified wood. It is said to have been shaped from a piece of the Tree of Death itself. Disciples staring into its

dark surface can perform particular rituals (they can use the Worshipper of the Tree of Death Edge) to contact their master, who regularly uses this method to issue his orders. Renegades of the order should get rid of these artifacts as soon as possible, because it is said that Vutal-Ra can track them with extreme precision, regardless of distance.

Takala Juice. This dense, cloudy liquid is said to be the distilled juice of the very Tree of Death. Nobody, except Vutal-Ra and few of his disciples, knows the recipe, but it most likely includes some very unusual type of Lotus and other strange ingredients. An individual drinking it falls into deep slumber, indistinguishable from death, and cannot wake up natural-

ly. The effect lasts 4d6 hours, at the end of which the user is fully rested (recovers all Fatigue and Power Points) and can make an additional Natural Healing roll. The Juice must be used with great caution (Smarts or Lotustumastery roll to administer it), because if the wrong dose is taken (critical failure), the user can sleep for days, weeks, months, or even years (GM's choice)!

HERO'S JOURNAL: CRAFTING A BLACK STAFF

For a Disciple losing his Black Staff is a catastrophe, even worse if he is a Renegade, because without it he is almost powerless and must find a new one as soon as possible. Luckily, the Black Staffs aren't actually made with wood from the Tree of Death, but with other, more common woods, treated with many strange Lotus extracts and exotic ingredients and upon which ancient spells are recited. In gaming terms, crafting a new Black Staff costs 500 Moons in materials plus 100 Moons per Rank of the user. It requires 1d6 days and a Sorcery roll. In case of failure, the staff isn't any good and the money is wasted. With a success it works well, while with one or more raises the item is created in half the time. This rule should be applied only if a staff must be built during a scenario. It is assumed that, between adventures, a Disciple can craft a suitable replacement without any roll and at no cost.

CREATURES

TEMPLE HOUND

People say that the Tricarnians are the worst slavers of the Dominions, twisting their servants in unimaginable ways, but they have obviously never seen a Hound of the Black Temple. Originally these wretched men were strong slaves given to the Temple by the faithful, but they were twisted and reduced to two-legged dogs, trembling at the very sight of their masters. They still resemble people, and some of them can even speak, but they behave like dogs. They are used as trackers and guards.

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

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d4, Tracking d12.

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

Gear: Spiked collar, iron claws (Str+d6).

Special Abilities:

- **Mutated Aspect:** Temple Hounds are truly hideous to look upon, so they have the Ugly Hindrance.

- **Sniffers:** Temple Hounds have a supernaturally developed sense of smell. They follow tracks as easily as dogs and have the Alertness Edge.

GAME MASTER APPENDIX

This section is for the Game Master only and will help him in using a Disciple character in his stories.

VOICES

Instead of describing the Black Temple, its evil lord and his disciples, this section presents a series of rumors circulating on the subject. The Game Master can decide which of them are true and which are false, or tweak any of them in order to create his personal version of the Black Temple.



murdering the previous Vutal-Ra and taking his place.

4. Vutal-Ra is one of the last Keronian sorcerers (maybe the last one) in the Dominions. He survived the Fall of the Dread Star, cursed by the gods to out-live everyone he loved.
5. Three of the Disciples are superior to the other ones. They are called the Eye, the Hand, and the Heart of Vutal-Ra and are the only counselors of the evil sorcerer.

6. Becoming a Disciple requires three secrets trial; the last one always consists of killing another Disciple.

7. In truth, no Disciple serves Vutal-Ra willingly. They are all slaves, their souls bound and chained through wicked magic.

8. Vutal-Ra never leaves his den because he displeased Caldaios the Cruel, the King of Caldeia, and only in the

darkness of the Black Temple is he protected from his rage.

9. Vutal-Ra is the real ruler of Caldeia. He is the most faithful servant of King Caldaios and everything he does is done for the good of the kingdom.
10. The Eye, the Hand, and the Heart of Vutal-Ra are ancient relics hidden in faraway countries which, if brought together, have the power to kill the sorcerer. He has been looking for them for centuries.
11. The Black Temple is an enormous labyrinth and only the Disciples and their master can find their way without getting lost forever or being de-

RUMORS

1. Deep within the Black Temple, a scary place shrouded in perpetual darkness, there is an evil garden where an ancient tree grows unseen. A supernatural being from another world survives in perpetual agony, impaled on the thorns of the tree. This is the Tree of Death.
2. The Tree of Death is a petrified plant, which somehow continues to live but must be periodically nurtured with the blood of sacrificial victims.
3. Vutal-Ra is not a name but a title. He is always the oldest member of the order and the position is achieved by

voured by the hideous creatures lurking in its shadows.

12. The Black Temple is actually a tomb where Vutal-Ra, an undead creature, spends most of his time sleeping under the effect of the Takala Juice and dreaming of a past world. May the gods be merciful on those who dare wake him up.

MISSIONS TABLE

Disciples will sooner or later be asked by their master to complete a mission of some type. Vutal-Ra has a wide web of interests all over the Dominions, so the Disciples are often sent on errands to distant countries. These missions are side quests and sub-plots explicitly created for Disciples, but the Game Master can decide to involve the whole party in them. They should be designed as normal adventures but, if the GM is short of ideas, he can always draw a card from the Action Deck and use the table below to get some inspiration.

Failing a mission is bad news. Vutal-Ra isn't a forgiving master and he loves inflicting painful tortures on anyone who displeases him. He can take the Black Staff from a Disciple for some time, cursing him with a festering wound (i.e. Hindrance or *lower trait* power lasting for a whole scenario). In some cases, if he feels very merciful, he can offer the Disciple a second – and last – chance...

Deuce – Suicide Mission. This mission basically requires the Disciple to sacrifice himself. Vutal-Ra expects total dedication from his followers and now is the time to show it. The sacrifice must be part of a ritual performed in a particular place or at a given moment and may require some other participants too. When this card is dealt, the Game Master can decide that

the ritual is only a way to test the character's loyalty and Vutal-Ra will intervene to stop the sacrifice and reward the follower in a special way. If suicide is actually required... well, it is time for the hero to become a Renegade!

Three – Scaring. The character is asked to scare someone to death, in order to convince them to do something for the Black Temple. The targets can be common people or important individuals, like a king or a nobleman. In these cases, scaring them requires something more elaborate than yelling *boo* at them.

Four – Aiding. Vutal-Ra has a number of friends and supporters, usually as evil and wicked as himself. This mission consists in helping one of them (draw another card and choose another mission, to be completed for Vutal-Ra's friend).

Five – Stealing. The character must steal an important item and deliver it to his master. It can be an ancient tome of magic, a slave, or something more difficult, like a ship or a whole army! In a stealing mission the location of the object is usually known (otherwise it is a Finding mission, see below).

Six – Finding. The character is asked to find something hidden or lost. It can be a powerful relic or a forgotten secret. It can also be a person, hiding from the rage of the Lord of the Black Temple. What must be done with the object can vary, but finding it must be an important part of the scenario.

Seven – Hiding. This mission requires the character to hide something or someone. It can be a powerful relic or piece of knowledge which can damage Vutal-Ra, or even a person in danger, like the last heir of a dynasty. Finding a suitable hid-

ing place and taking the object or person there should be part of the adventure.

Eight – Seducing. Some people must be lulled and seduced to obey orders. This might involve love and sex, but can also be something very different: kings and princes are seduced by power, heroes by fame and glory. Everyone has a weak spot and the task of the Disciple consists of finding and exploiting it.

Nine – Restoring. This mission consists in restoring something. It might involve bringing a fallen noble back to power, sanctifying the desecrated altar of an evil deity, or even an occasional good deed, like helping a good person in need. Vutal-Ra is centuries old and doesn't think as common mortals do...

Ten – Destroying. The character is asked to destroy something. It can be a specific object like a magical item, an organization like a minor noble house, the reputation of a man, or something even weirder.

Jack – Betraying. Never trust a man, especially if he is a Disciple of the Black Temple! One of the most hateful missions a Disciple might be asked to perform consists in earning someone's trust and then betraying them in some wicked way. Alternatively, the character might be asked to betray one of his comrades. The Game Master should be very careful when using the latter option, as it can cause tension between the players.

Queen – Infiltration. This mission consists in becoming part of some organization or gaining access to a place. The Disciple might be asked to become the counselor of a powerful lord, a member of a cult, or even an apparent traitor to the Black Temple! This mission is usually the first step in a bigger task, which requires using the position thus achieved for some nefarious purpose.

King – Major Event. The mission occurs during a major event or consists of triggering it. Examples are an invasion, a royal marriage, a rebellion, a declaration of peace or war between two great powers, or even something of magical nature (for example celebrating a particular ritual to cause a famine). If the mission takes place during the triggered event, draw another card, which represents the real mission. So if you draw a four (Aiding), the character could be asked to save an important person in a city hit by a plague.

Ace – Murder. Someone has to die and the Disciple must deliver the blow. The difficulty of a murder mission can vary greatly: must the killing be overt or secret? Must someone be framed for it? Is the victim aware that someone is going to try and assassinate him?

Joker – Complex Mission. The mission is very elaborate! Draw two cards and try to combine them.

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The mysterious Moloke-tanu hunting in the tall grass of the Ivory Savannah...

The Yellowfingers lurking in the darkest tombs of the Cairnlands...

The Yarakon, or Great Devourers, dreaming memories of a fallen empire...

Ten monsters of the Dread Sea Dominions, each with a dedicated Savage Tale, await you within.

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Grab your battleaxe, ready your bow, and prepare to face the Creatures of the Dread Sea Dominions!

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 G R A M E L

