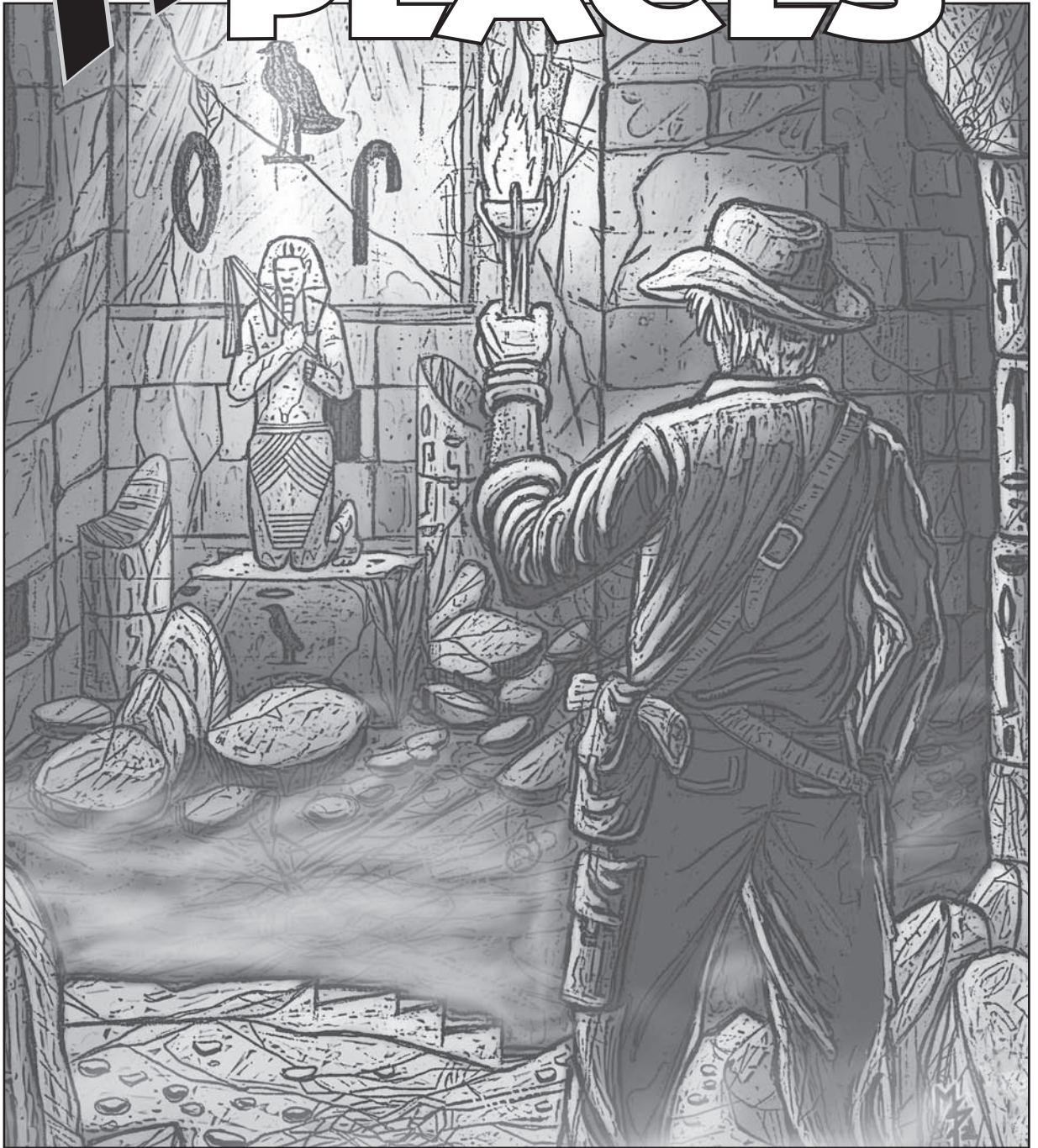


THRILLING PLACES



Rob Hudson

THRILLING PLACES

A Locations Book for *Pulp Hero*

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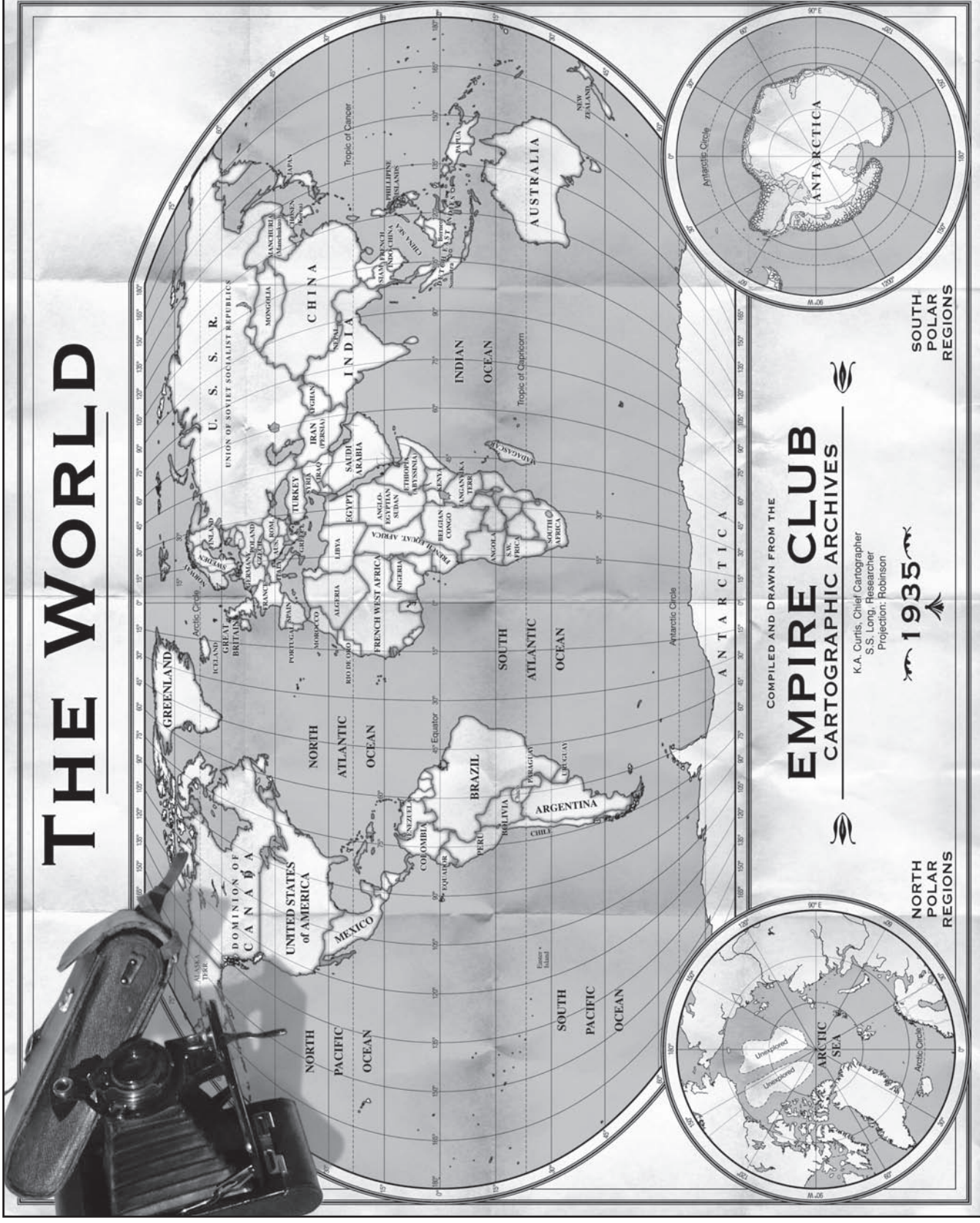
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THE WORLD



COMPILED AND DRAWN FROM THE
EMPIRE CLUB
CARTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES

K.A. Curtis, Chief Cartographer
S.S. Long, Researcher
Projection: Robinson

1935

SOUTH
POLAR
REGIONS

NORTH
POLAR
REGIONS

INTRODUCTION



One of the wonderful things about the pulps is that the heroes tended to go all over the world. For the price of a nickel, the reader could be transported to exotic locations he could never visit in real life: the South Seas; darkest Africa; ancient European castles; South American jungles. Even better were the strange fictional locations authors came up with — lost cities like Opar, danger-laden dens of iniquity in Chinatown, trap-filled tombs and ruins containing fabulous treasures.

Coming up with enough locations like that for a *Pulp Hero* campaign can tax the mind of even the most creative GM. To make things easier on him, *Thrilling Places* describes in detail over a dozen locations primed and ready for Pulp adventure. They range from buildings in the heart of the Big City that a hero might walk past every day without knowing how unusual they are to lost islands and cities modern men have never seen. They are:

- the Grant Building, a possibly-haunted office building
- Pranamoltar, volcano city of the alien Mole Men
- the Island of the Pale White Lady, where an insidious cult worships a foul, ancient goddess
- Laussat Plantation, where a mad scientist performs fiendish experiments among the crumbling buildings
- K'hull Island, home to a strange tribe, living dinosaurs, and a gigantic gorilla
- the Pleistocene Plateau, a Siberian highland where the Ice Age still exists
- the Street of the Emerald Bird, a section of Chinatown with a dangerous secret
- Neos Themiscyra, African home of the last surviving Amazons
- the Pharoah Club, a swank nightclub with an Egyptian theme
- Schloss Eisenwolf, an old German castle that may contain a fabulous mystic artifact
- the Royal Viridian Theatre, a luxurious cinema with mob connections
- the Temple of the Dragon, where the Sanctified Elder teaches martial arts secrets to worthy students
- the tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu, an Egyptian sorcerer-priest served by an ancient order of followers
- Xınca-Hol, a lost city of giant bat-riding, blow-gun-wielding Central American pygmies

In addition to an extensive description, each location comes with maps of all the prominent buildings and locales. Last but not least, the book concludes with a section of briefly-described minor locations ready for the GM to drop into his campaign.

So strap on your gun and your machete, check your supplies, and get ready for adventure — there are *Thrilling Places* to explore!

THE GRANT BUILDING



Found at the corner of Beck Avenue and Van Buren Street in the Worthington District of Hudson City (although you can site it in any appropriate neighborhood in any major city in the US), the Grant Building is home to one of Hudson City's most well-known private eyes, Vance Danner. Only eight blocks — but the wrong eight blocks — from City Hall, it exists on the shadowed fringes of the bright lights of the halls of power.

DESCRIPTION

Built in 1890 by a consortium of real estate speculators, the Grant Building is a 10-story (20", or 135 feet, high) office building left behind by the business district it was designed to serve. Constructed before the days of steel reinforcement for concrete, it has a heavy, massive feel to it that more modern buildings lack. The plain exterior is faced in a smooth, dark stone that assumes a black, oily look when it rains, making the structure seem to be more like a menacing living thing than merely a building. (Less poetic souls observe that the building's stone facing merely absorbed too much soot and smoke during the Independence Day Fire of 1895 and became indelibly stained by it.) Stonework of a lighter, though still dark, gray stone worked in five-sided geometric patterns surrounds the narrow windows. The 18-inch wide ledges running under the windows on the structure's two street sides are made from the same gray stone and have the same design worked into them on the top and bottom. The roof has a heavy cornice with small crenellations running along the street sides, and the street-side corner has a circular, open-topped turret large enough to hold two people standing in close quarters; it projects four feet out past the edge of the building.

Now approaching its fifth decade, "the Grant" (as locals call it) is poised on the edge, overlooking the point of no return. Once part of the thriving downtown business district, the building fell prey to the inevitable expansion of the district and now resides on the outskirts of respectability — it's close enough to the current center of business and power that people still know the name and are willing to do business with companies and individuals housed there, but only just. No "A-list" company would take offices there; only companies on the way up... or down. It has just enough paying tenants to remain open, but not enough to make repairing it a worthwhile endeavor. The investment of some capital could bring it back from the edge, but the current owners appear to see no profit in it.

The building's main entrance is off Van Buren Street, through a set of always-unlocked double doors recessed two feet back off the sidewalk. The building's name is on a tarnished bronze plaque set into the stonework to the right of the doors, and a faded black awning extends out over the main doors and several feet to each side. The first floor along both streets has long glass windows that display a diner; the diner's entrance is just to the left of the awning's coverage on Van Buren. A secondary entrance with its own awning allows access to the building's back stairs and the diner's service entrance from Beck Avenue just before one reaches the alley that runs behind the building. The door to this entrance used to have a buzzer system to summon a doorman to open it, but it ceased working right after the Great Crash and hasn't been repaired; residents just use their keys and deliverymen wave through the window to catch the attention of the diner staff. The door is solid and the lock well-maintained, but characters with Lockpicking take no penalties to open it (although they have to work in plain sight on a fairly busy street).

A 10-foot wide alley runs behind the Grant, separating it from its western neighbor on Beck Avenue, the Talmadge Building, a six-story structure containing a small family-owned bank struggling to survive the Depression, several equally-struggling small investment brokers and accountants, and a single, more prosperous, loan shark. The Grant's fire escape runs down the back wall into the alley; one of its ladders is extended and rusted into place. Fuel oil for the furnace is delivered in the alleyway near Beck; other building-related supplies come in through a set of double doors about 70 feet (11") down the alley with a chained and padlocked iron grate over them. The eight-story building to the north along Van Buren Street, the Bracewood Building, contains a series of shops on the ground floor. Above them are a dance studio, a struggling publishing house that puts out a wide range of inexpensive pulp magazines, a small-time bookie operation, and a photography studio specializing in "art" photos.

The building's roof is in surprisingly good shape — the owners had to make repairs three years earlier so they could put in a new water tank (and thus avoid being fined for code violations). The new tank, resembling a wooden barrel of immense size with a pointed conical roof, stands on four metal legs in the northwest corner of the building, next to the rooftop shed housing for the elevator machinery. On the other side of the machinery shed, also against the back of the building, stands a forty-foot (6") radio antenna used by

the building's largest tenant, KSL Radio. Access to the roof is through locked doors at the top of both the service and main stairwells. In good weather, some tenants bring lunches or dinners (and occasionally sweethearts) to the roof to dine in the open air even though this is against building policy.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Within the building, the four largest tenants — KSL Radio, Superior Insurance Services, the Broadway Secretarial School, and Joe's Diner — receive preferential treatment with regards to maintenance, ensuring they have uninterrupted lighting, heat, and other services. Their floors and offices are cleaned first every evening (and on some nights they're the only tenants who receive janitorial service), and their requests always go to the top of the building staff's "to do" lists regardless of how many other tasks are on the lists and how long they've been there.

On floors not occupied by those tenants, service is somewhat spottier. The hallways and offices are frequently unswept, the trash sometimes goes unemptied unless the tenants do it themselves, and light bulbs frequently burn out and go unreplaced for days or even weeks depending on their location. The main stairs are always well-lit, but the service stairs normally have at least one landing or flight that lacks a working light thanks to tenants "borrowing" light bulbs to circumvent the need to wait for them. No unused office has working bulbs unless the building manager plans to show it to a potential tenant (in which case he has it cleaned beforehand).

The heating system works surprisingly well given its age, although it occasionally turns itself on during the summer for no apparent reason. During the summer, cooling is accomplished by opening windows and using fans, although even this doesn't help if the heaters decide to turn on. If that happens, tenants who can afford to do so close early or let the majority of their staff go to escape the oppressive heat. With the recent replacement of the water tank on the roof, the water pressure is good — too good for the old and often less skillfully-repaired pipes and fixtures, so leaks have become a constant problem. Many offices have a sink, and a few have private washrooms, but the main bathrooms are in the northwest corners of the building. The doors are always locked and have small signs to indicate if the occupant is male or female, but secretaries or female staff on the floors without additional facilities tend to go in groups so there will be someone outside the door to prevent potential embarrassment or worse.

The building's basic electrical system has fewer problems than any of the other building utilities thanks to the rewiring necessary to handle the power requirements of the radio

station. Consequently, even the smallest tenant rarely suffers a loss of power during the day... but at night, when KSL broadcasts, it's a different story: brownouts and flickering lights are common enough that no one even calls to complain anymore. During broadcast hours, the building officially locks down one of the two elevators (assuming they're both running, often a large assumption) to avoid problems that might result from a lack of power to drive them both.

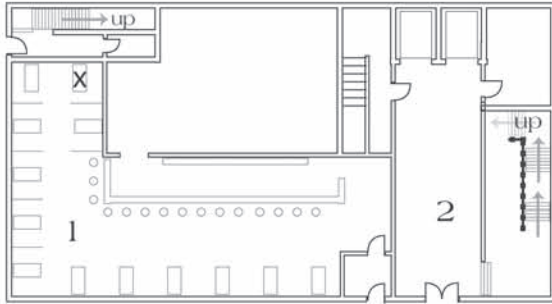
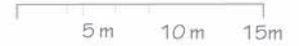
The service stairs in the southwest corner of the building require a different key to enter the building on each floor from the stairs side. Tenants exiting do not require a key.

BUILDING LAYOUT

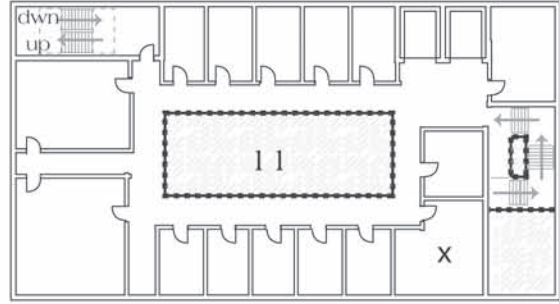
(All unlabeled offices are vacant)

1. **Joe's Diner.** The booth marked with an "x" is the one local mobster Alvin "the Plumber" Shayne always uses when he and his gunsels stop in for his nightly slice of pie and cup of coffee.
2. **Main Lobby**
3. **Swiftly Messengers**
4. **Cannon, Braden & Horowitz**
5. **Madame Ayeesha's**
6. **Franklin's Files**
7. **Round The Clock Answering Service**
8. **Danner Detective Agency** (see below)
- 8a. **Danner's Apartment** (see below)
9. **Broadway Secretarial School.** The main classroom is the large room on the east side; there are four "mock offices" set up to give students practice in an office environment. Rebecca's office is the one marked with an "x."
10. **Superior Insurance Services.** This floor contains secretaries, clerks, meeting rooms, and file storage. Secretarial desks are arranged like a checkerboard in the open area in the middle of the floor. A spiral stair in the southeast corner leads up to the 6th floor.
11. **Superior Insurance Services.** Insurance agent and executive offices are on this floor surrounding open atrium looking down onto secretarial desks below. A spiral stair in the southeast corner leads down to the 5th floor. The "x" marks Arthur Kendall's office.
12. **KSL Radio.** Business offices and receptionist are on this floor. Writers' offices along west wall.
13. **KSL Radio.** Equipment and prop storage are on this floor, plus actual broadcast equipment in central room.
14. **KSL Radio.** Broadcast studios along east wall, extra restrooms in southwest corner.

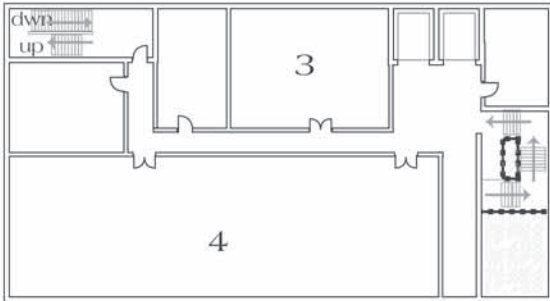
The Grant Building



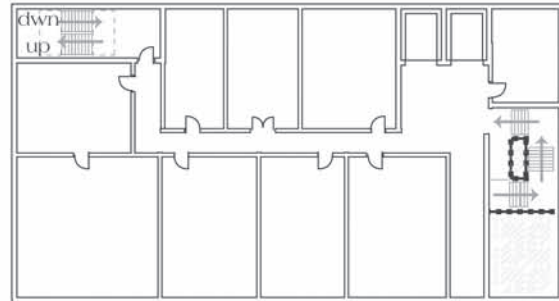
First Floor



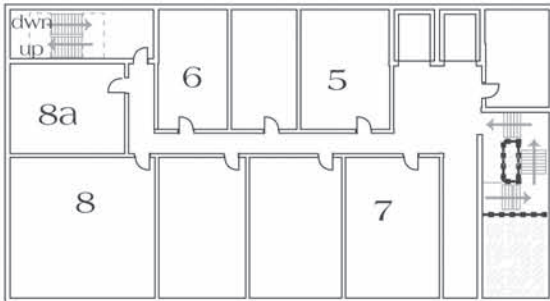
Sixth Floor



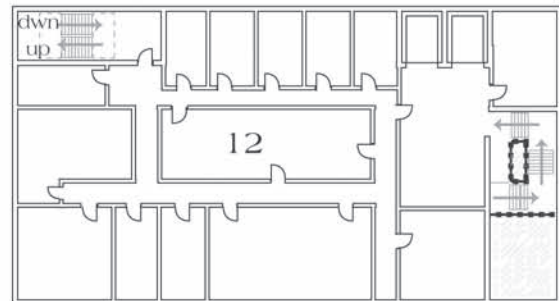
Second Floor



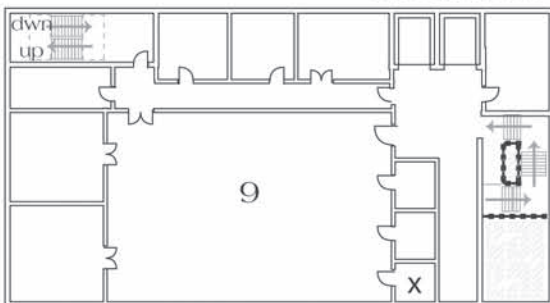
Seventh Floor



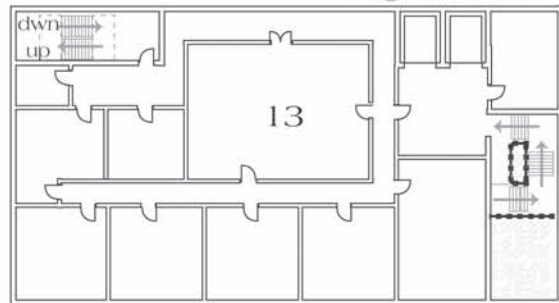
Third Floor



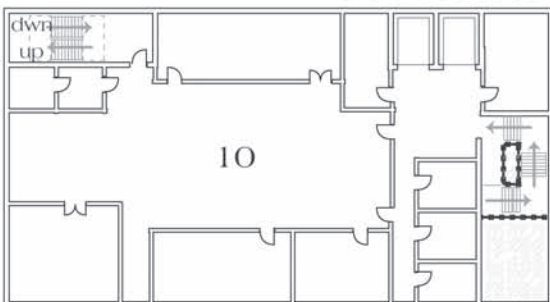
Eighth Floor



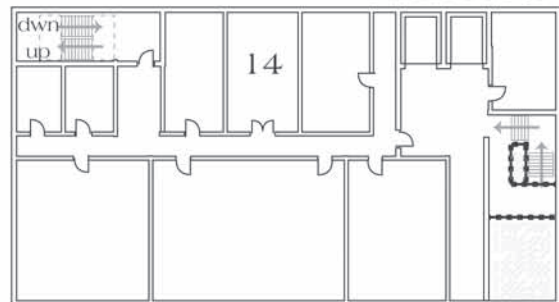
Fourth Floor



Ninth Floor



Fifth Floor



Tenth Floor

TENANTS

FIRST FLOOR

Joe's Diner almost entirely occupies the first floor. Booths line the exterior walls next to the windows and fill the dead-end southwest corner, and a long counter with permanently-affixed stools runs down the center of the room. Access to the kitchens is through doors to either end of the counter and a pair of wide-slot windows through which food is passed by the cooks. The kitchens and food storage are clean enough to pass inspection when the city inspector bothers to come by, but only just. The food is generally unspectacular but filling and inexpensive, so the Diner rarely lacks steady customers. Joe's pies are a pleasant surprise, though; they're good enough that runners are often sent to the diner to buy them for resale in a number of the city's better hotels, and at least one moderately-successful local mobster (Alvin "the Plumber" Shayne) regularly comes by for a slice or two after dining further uptown.

The building lobby contains a small shoe-shine stand run by an elderly man named Moses who's been there so long even the oldest tenants can't recall a time when he wasn't around. A concierge desk — frequently unmanned — stands against the south wall opposite the main stairs. Under the stairs is a newsstand owned and operated by the building manager, James Grayson, to supplement his income. He sells magazines, newspapers, and a few brands of candy to visitors and regulars, usually spending more time there than at the concierge desk opposite. The two elevators stand at the back of the lobby on the west wall, the elevator operators (currently Darryl and Ned Grayson, James's nephews) occasionally lock off one of the elevators and swap out to take naps inside it in a tipped-back chair. A rarely-used service door leading to the basement stairs and the cramped office of the building maintenance engineer, Alonzo Terrizili, is on the south wall opposite the door to the restroom.

SECOND FLOOR

The second floor has only two current tenants: Swifty Messengers, a bicycle messenger service; and Cannon, Braden & Horowitz, a small six-man law firm.

Swifty Messengers occupies the first two offices down the west side of the floor's hallway, having converted the space into a single large office. They employ an ever-changing staff of teenaged boys (and occasionally a few girls) as cyclist messengers; it's not uncommon to see someone in one of Swifty's trademark blue uniforms and pillbox hats on a bicycle pedaling like mad a dozen or more blocks away. There are always messengers going and coming during business hours. The bicycles are company property and stored in the office overnight, messengers must maintain their own uniforms.

Cannon, Braden & Horowitz, recently split off from a larger firm, occupies all of the office space

along the east side of the building. The lawyers' specialty is civil law, particularly business-related topics like contracts, but they're hungry enough for a headline-grabbing trial to boost their client base that they'll consider handling criminal work if the price (and headline) is right, regardless of their client's guilt or innocence. They've employed Vance Danner in some of their cases, appreciating his ability to find out information from boardrooms across the city, and have represented Superior Insurance in a few matters.

THIRD FLOOR

The third floor is the most occupied floor in the building not rented by a single firm, with four tenants: Madame Ayeesha's, a fortune teller and psychic; the Danner Detective Agency; Franklin's Files, a clipping service; and Round-The-Clock Answering, a 24-hour answering service.

Madame Ayeesha's, which has one of the middle offices against the west wall, is actually owned by a young Turkish woman named Behiye bint Kemal who wears clever makeup and a wig to appear much older than she really is. She inherited the business and most of her clientele from her grandmother; she has a dedicated group of regular patrons who believe she, as her grandmother did, indeed has "the gift." The interior of her office is decorated in an exotic, Near Eastern style with curtains, wall hangings, and incense.

Franklin's Files, which occupies the last office on the west side, is a small, one-man operation run by John Franklin, an older man now retired from his career as a newspaper reporter on the business beat. He was injured during the Great Crash when a broker committed suicide by leaping out of his office window and landed on Franklin as he was exiting the building, breaking both of Franklin's legs and leaving him with a severe limp and the need to use a cane to get around. There's always a huge stack of newspapers by the office door in the morning. He's negotiating to rent the vacant office between his current one and Madam Ayeesha's to expand his file storage space, as it threatens to take the entirety of his current office.

Round-The-Clock Answering, owned by a heavysset German immigrant named Dieter Hoffman and his wife Martine, rents the first two offices on the east side of the floor. The Hoffmans employ a large staff of women, all recently arrived to America and able to speak understandable English, to answer calls and take messages for anyone who will pay their fee. Most employees are German or of German extraction, and it isn't unusual to hear several of them talking to each other in German as they move up and down the halls or stairs. All of the businesses in the Grant use Hoffman's service because he gives a discount to other tenants, but he has a fair number of other clients as well, mostly businessmen and professionals.

The Danner Detective Agency, which occupies the two offices at the south end of the building, employs only two people — Vance Danner, and his secretary Bethany Morris — despite the large space it occupies. Danner has the most varied clientele

of any business in the Grant and often does work for some of the other tenants, especially Superior Insurance, Cannon, Braden & Horowitz, and the Broadway Secretarial School. It's an open secret among the other long-term tenants on his floor that Danner lives in the second, smaller office by the service stairs in defiance of both city code and building policy, but the building manager seems oblivious to this. The other tenants think Danner's either paying Grayson off, is blackmailing him to ignore the violation, or secretly owns the entire building and has told Grayson to ignore it. He's been responsible for three gunfights and over twenty fistfights in the public areas of the building since moving in five years ago and remains unapologetic about any of them. Several of the building's tenants consider Danner a menace, and some hire him regularly, but all admit the building would be a duller place without him. (See below for more details about Danner and his agency.)

FOURTH FLOOR

The Broadway Secretarial School, a respected local institution which has been in the Grant Building for fifteen years now, rents the entire fourth floor. To have a secretary from the Broadway School is something of a status symbol among local business circles and there's usually a waiting list for graduates from the 1-year program. The owner, Rebecca Kennedy, was a showgirl of some renown (and notoriety) in her younger years and started the school with funds she scandalously received in the will of a "dear friend." As tough a taskmaster as the dance instructors she once studied under, she's all business when it comes to the school, its reputation, and the girls she accepts. She presents a draconian front to any gentlemen attempting to see one of her students during the 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM class day. Persistent visitors, especially unwanted ones, receive visits from Vance Danner requesting they turn their attentions elsewhere. All her girls are told to go to Danner if they're in trouble or need help, leading to rumors among the students that she and the younger detective are, or were at one time, secretly an item.

FIFTH AND SIXTH FLOORS

Both of these floors are leased by the building's oldest client, Superior Insurance Services, which has been the bulwark client of the Grant since 1900. Superior is a privately-owned full-service insurance agency capable of underwriting policies on anything from long-term business insurance, to temporary policies covering art exhibits, to individual life insurance policies. Its rates are a bit on the steep side for business-related issues, but still competitive, while its personal policies are more in line with average rates. The company has a large, aggressive staff of agents who are constantly on the go, looking for new clients and doing what it takes to keep the ones they already have happy. Superior maintains a strict policy of always investigating any major claim, a practice that has kept it in business after the Crash, and it has several private investigators (including Vance Danner) "on call." The

owners, the Halliwell family, rarely appear at the offices, leaving day-to-day operational control in the hands of Arthur Kendall, a humorless man who employees claim has an actuarial table instead of a heart and ink in his veins instead of blood.

SEVENTH FLOOR

The entire seventh floor has been vacant since 1927 when a series of seven gruesome murders were committed, one a month beginning in January, and striking at every business on the floor. The police were helpless to stop the killings; despite placing uniformed officers on the floor and undercover officers in the businesses, all they accomplished was to lose two officers to the killer or killers. The killings suddenly stopped suddenly in July of that year when the Raven released a statement to the press alleging he'd ended the murder spree, but he provided no further information about why the killings had taken place or who was behind them. All of the tenants had either moved or gone out of business by that time, and the floor has remained empty ever since despite numerous attempts to rent offices to a variety of clients. The janitorial staff frequently reports that the shadows "don't seem right" on this floor, and complain they're being watched by someone or something they can't see when cleaning it — which happens only when the building manager tries to show offices on this floor to someone he hopes will rent them despite the floor's reputation.

EIGHTH, NINTH AND TENTH FLOORS

The top three floors are occupied by the Grant's newest major client, KSL Radio, which has held them for the past two years. KSL is a low-wattage station, broadcasting from its antenna on the building's roof with a range of approximately ten miles. It broadcasts in the evening from 5:00 PM until 11:00 PM during the week, and 5:00 PM until 1:00 AM on the weekends, presenting a variety of live music, comedy acts, news, and radio dramas during that time. It's popular with many local advertisers because of its reasonable rates and willingness to go the extra mile to push a sponsor's products during programming.

Most of KSL's fare is standard stuff, but it has two stand-out shows: "Stump The Band" and "Quoth The Raven," both among the most widely listened-to shows in the city. "Stump The Band" is a Tuesday and Friday night call-in show where listeners call in with the name of a song or piece of music that follows the theme of the night (usually things like "Jazz" or "Big Band," but occasionally as specific as "Beethoven" or "Christmas") and challenge the band of the night to play it; those who "Stump The Band" win a prize from one of the show's sponsors. KSL employs a large number of musicians on per-show temporary basis, depending on the theme of the show. "Quoth The Raven" is a Wednesday night radio drama that purports to reveal cases "direct from the secret files found in the Raven's Roost." Most listeners don't really believe the cases presented are real, especially the ones involving particularly spooky or outré oppo-

PLOT SEEDS

The master criminal the Raven and Vance Danner fought has decided now is the time for revenge. He kidnaps several of the radio station's writers to force them to surrender the Raven's secrets to him. For insurance, he's also kidnapped Danner's secretary and has Danner running from payphone to payphone all over town answering calls to keep her alive as a way to make certain the detective doesn't interfere again. Since the Raven seems to be out of town at the moment, Danner hasn't got anyone to turn to for help — until he accidentally bumps into one of the characters on his way to the next phone and slips him a message asking for help.

Building Manager James Grayson is a happy man — he's finally rented the seventh floor to a new tenant. One of the characters' contacts decided to move out of his sleazy back alley offices and rent space in a more respectable building. The characters learn of the floor's history, but their contact waves it off as unimportant — at least, he does until his new receptionist is found dead at her desk. Is it a coincidence? Can the characters find the Raven and get the truth from him about the earlier seven murders? Can their friend break his lease?

Great news for Hudson City: the Governor is coming to town! And he's bringing with him several of the richest and most influential men in the state, all of whom are interested in investing in some urban renewal for Hudson City. Their

nents, but the shows are well-written and acted, and consistently exciting enough it doesn't seem to matter. (There are those, however, who maintain all the cases presented are true, but have been fictionalized just enough to protect the innocent.) Once the writing staff and actors found themselves the on-air object of a master criminal's attentions when one of their scripts came too close to a plan he was actually about to set into motion. This led to both the building's resident detective, Vance Danner, and the actual Raven arriving to rescue them when each realized independently the events being broadcast were not scripted — they were really happening. The (unintentionally) double-length episode remains the show's most listened-to broadcast.

THE DANNER DETECTIVE AGENCY

Clients enter Danner's office, located at the south end of the building, through his secretary's office. The latter contains the requisite beat-up desk with telephone and typewriter, a coat tree, one guest chair, and a plant. Danner's secretary Bethany tends to both this plant and the plants scattered around Danner's office, so they're the only things in the place that don't look careworn. In a holster concealed in the kneehole of Bethany's desk is her pistol — a Colt .45 automatic. She's privately amused that her gun is larger than Danner's and won't hesitate to use it if a visitor becomes violent.

Danner's office is vaguely L-shaped with windows on two walls. His desk, located diagonally across from the door, commands the office and lets Danner see everything happening in it. Visitors, assuming they get past Bethany, must cross the majority of the floor before reaching the client chairs in front of the desk, giving Danner an opportunity to size them up without appearing to. The two dark leather-upholstered club chairs flank a small table.

Against the wall to the right of the door stand two large bookcases that flank a framed poster from one of the *Ziegfeld Follies* in which Rebecca Kennedy danced. Both bookcases hold an eclectic collection of books that actually appear to have been read.

A small potted tree stands under the first window on the south wall, with Danner's credenza and another plant framed by the central window. Danner's desk chair is tucked into the angle formed by the corner. By pushing back from the desk he can protect himself from anyone taking a pot shot through any of the windows. Directly across from the door against the east wall is a worn leather sofa flanked by more plants.

Filing cabinets line both the wall formed by Bethany's office and the northern wall of Danner's office. Atop the end cabinet is a hot plate with a perpetually brewing pot of coffee on it; Bethany believes it is, in fact, the same pot of coffee that's been on the plate for the past six years, reheated every morning, and with additional water and

coffee added to the brew as necessary. At least one police detective, having had a cup from the pot, commented it is "obviously the real reason Danner never sleeps. After a couple cups of this, no one could." Just to the right of the filing cabinets is a small restroom.

Danner's apartment is reached through a concealed door behind the more southern of the bookcases against the west wall. Triggered by a concealed mechanism, the bookcase pivots into Danner's secret sanctum. (Characters suffer a -6 to Concealment rolls to find the secret panel; opening it requires a Lock-picking roll, or an INT Roll at -3, unless Danner tells them how to do it.) After someone shifts the bookcase from against the wall, it's easy to locate the sliding panel. The apartment is sparsely furnished with an upholstered wing-back chair with an ottoman, a bed, a dresser, a chest of drawers, an armoire (which serves as his closet), and more bookcases. Directly across from the door, tucked into the southwest corner of the room, is a small, utilitarian bathroom.

The piece of furniture in the apartment that gets the most use is the wing-back chair. With its conveniently-placed side table and reading lamp, it's where Danner spends many of his long nights curled in the chair enjoying the company of a good book. The windows opening into the apartment are both covered by heavy shades and blinds so no light can be seen from outside. The door to the hallway is blocked by a bookcase, and anyone peeking in through the keyhole will, thanks to a cunningly painted illusion (-6 to PER Rolls to realize it's a fake) see only a dusty empty office.

Danner has several weapons concealed around his office and apartment. A snub-nosed .38 occupies one of his desk drawers; there's another in one of the filing cabinets. Tucked into a small carved box in one of the bookcases is a .22 automatic, and a shotgun resides behind the credenza. Yet another .38 is kept under the table beside his reading chair, and another .22 can be found in the medicine cabinet above the sink.

INDIVIDUALS

VANCE DANNER

13 STR	15 DEX	20 CON	15 BODY
15 INT	15 EGO	16 PRE	12 COM
6 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	7 REC
40 END	32 STUN		

Abilities: Life Support (Diminished Sleep: only needs to sleep 8 hours per week); +2 PER Rolls; +1with .38 Revolver; +2 HTH; Fisticuffs/Dirty Infighting; Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED); Contact: Graduates Of Broadway Secretarial School 11-; Contact: Janitor at Public Library; Contact: Police Detective 11-; Contact: Underworld Stoolies 11-; CK: Hudson City 14-; Combat Driving 12-; Concealment 12-; Criminology 12-; Deduction 12-; Interrogation 12-; Languages: German (Basic), French (Basic); PS: Private Detective 13-; Shadowing 13-; Stealth 12-; Streetwise 13-; WF: Small Arms; Fringe Benefit: Private Investigator's License

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by the HCPD); Hunted (his latest adversary or target of investigation)

Notes: Vance Danner intended to be a cop, one of Hudson City's finest, just like his father, until a German grenade in the Great War rewrote his life story — the Department wouldn't take him because of his "disability." Odd that such a small piece of metal could make such a huge change. It didn't even leave a big scar.

What it did leave was Danner with the worst case of insomnia on record — he hasn't truly slept since. For about eight hours a week, he rests — his eyes closed, relaxing — and the rest of the time he's awake. Working, walking the streets, going to movies, listening to the radio, or reading. He reads a lot.

Since his dreams of being a police officer were gone, Danner decided to become a private investigator, figuring that the motto of one of the best investigation agencies in the country — the Pinkertons — made him the prefect investigator. After all, like them, he never sleeps.

BETHANY MORRIS

8 STR	12 DEX	12 CON	10 BODY
15 INT	14 EGO	16 PRE	14 COM
3 PD	2 ED	2 SPD	4 REC
24 END	20 STUN		

Abilities: Bureaucratics 12-; Conversation 12-; High Society 12-; KS: Secretarial Sciences 11-; Paramedics 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Secretary 11-; WF: Small Arms; Eidetic Memory

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Feature: Uses Slang; Psychological Limitation: Secretly In Love With Vance Danner; Social Limitation: Secret

Notes: From the time she was a teenager, Bethany Morris wanted to be a secretary. So she studied, trained, attended the Broadway Secretarial School, and then she got the perfect job — secretary to that hotshot gumshoe Vance Danner. Everything was falling into place until her mother really balled up her plans — she got married again. And not just any Joe, but a real butter and eggs man, with pockets full of long green. Now Bethany lives a double life. By day, she's Danner's girl Friday, keeping everything at the office jake. By night she gets dolled up in her new glad rags and keeps company with the high hats of Hudson City. With any luck, Vance won't ever find out. But if she does get made — how's she going to tell him her new old man owns the Grant?

"JAZZY JERRY" ROBINSON

8 STR	14 DEX	15 CON	10 BODY
13 INT	12 EGO	13 PRE	8 COM
5 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	5 REC
30 END	27 STUN		

Abilities: +2 with all PER Rolls; Sprinter (+3" Running); +1 to DCV; What's It Worth to Ya? (+10 PRE, Only to Protect Against Presence Attacks, Only When Selling Information); Conversation 12-; CK: Hudson City 12-; CK: New York City 12-; KS: Police Procedure 11-; KS: Hudson City Underworld 12-; KS: Jazz Music 12-; KS: Underworld Hangouts 12-; Lockpicking 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Informant 12-; PS: Play Piano 11-; PS: Singing 8-; Shadowing 13-; Stealth 14-; Streetwise 12-; WF: Small Arms

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Feature: Constantly Humming or Singing Jazz Tunes; Psychological Limitation: Greedy; Psychological Limitation: Physical Coward; Psychological Limitation: Hates Mobsters; Reputation: Struggling Jazz Singer

Notes: Life hasn't always been easy for Jerry Robinson, but he always keeps his chin up. Of course, he keeps it up so he can spot trouble coming sooner — because if he sees it coming, he can beat feet in the opposite direction.

Jerry grew up in a lower middle-class neighborhood in Hudson City. He was a scrawny kid whose only physical asset was fast feet. It didn't help that his father was a police sergeant, who couldn't understand his son's lack of courage. Despite frequent family squabbles, Jerry idolized his father and shared a love of music with him. As he improved his skill with the piano, he could bask in his parents' approval. He was attending a music school in New York City and struggling to expand his vocal talents when he received word his father had been killed while protecting a witness against Hudson City mobsters. Jerry had to drop out of school and return home to help his mother. While his voice remained below par, his piano skills were sufficient to gain him frequent employment. It really rankled that he had to leave school before getting proper vocal training. Piano players are a dime a half-dozen; it's the jazz singers who really get the girls.

Jerry is a likeable guy with a hatred for mobsters and their callous attitude. He knew he didn't have the guts to make them pay for his father's death... but there were those who could. Jerry parlayed his non-threatening nature and amiability into a low-level presence in the Hudson City underworld. He plays piano in mob hangouts, speakeasies, small social gatherings and bar mitzvahs. He gathers information from a careless boast here, an overheard conversation there, and pulls it all together into a form useful to crimebusters. Then he sells it for as much as he can get (after all, he still has his mother to support). He occasionally works with the police, but much prefers to pass information to private detectives, masked mystery-men, and the like — the payoff is usually better and he doesn't have to worry about crooked cops identifying him to the Mob. Vance Danner is a favorite client because when he passes news to him some hoods always seem to get busted up. What Jerry would really like, though, is to start funneling information to the Raven — he might even be willing to give him a discount.

Continued from last page

tour route takes them down Beck Avenue and Van Buren Street, right past the Grant Building. Everyone's excited, and the occupants of the building have been checking out the roof for good places to watch the Governor drives by. But someone's been poking around in the turret, and there are rumors of death threats against either the governor or one of the money men. Can the characters figure out what's going on in time to save the governor's life from a rifleman?

THE HIDDEN CITY OF PRANAMOLTAR



The glacial ice layer and forbidding coastline of Greenland, one of the most inhospitable regions of the planet, hides a menace not of this Earth. The dwindling descendants of a crashed expedition from beyond the stars have lurked there for centuries, concealed in their subterranean volcanic lair and living in fear of discovery. Their current leader has begun to wonder if perhaps the time for fear is done, and the time for action — and conquest — has come before his people are no longer capable of it.

HISTORY

Pranamoltar was founded in 1607 AD, the same year colonists created the settlement of Jamestown in what would become America. Both cities were established by small groups of individuals at the end of a voyage of great length and danger — but Pranamoltar's founders, the Molians, had traveled further and faced more dangers than the settlers at Jamestown could even imagine. They were not Humans — they were, in fact, travelers from another world.

The *Pranamoltar*, a long-range survey and exploration ship was loaded with scientific equipment and manned by the best minds of the Molian people. They'd traveled incalculable distances, studying planet after planet in the hopes of locating a new homeworld for their people so they might escape a coming stellaro-seismic disaster that threatened their native planet. Earth seemed ideal: it had a suitable climate, plenty of stable land masses to build their underground cities in, no monstrously large predators like the ones which had driven their forefathers underground millennia before, and, best of all, an appealing and potentially-compatible native species that needed only technological gifts to become allies and partners.

As the explorers prepared to transmit their findings back to their endangered homeworld, disaster struck. To use their long-range communications systems the Molians had to deactivate their ship's protective screens — and in those few minutes of danger a small asteroid slipped past the ship's excited personnel and struck her, destroying vital systems and sending the ship spiraling down to the planet below. Enough power remained to attempt an emergency landing in the wide-open tundra of what would become northern Canada — only to fail as the ship overshot and instead plowed into the extreme eastern coast of Greenland, breaking up and killing most of the crew.

The survivors were mostly younger members of the expedition and children born on the long voyage who'd been sent to the vessel's crash shelters, and a group of the Molian's servitor race, the Mole Men. They faced a battle for survival in a hostile climate, a destroyed ship, and the loss of most of the crew who knew how to repair and maintain the ship's intact technology. Using what remained of some of the ship's geological deep survey equipment they quickly excavated a city that they named for their crashed ship. They brought the remains of their ship underground so that no trace of their presence remained except for the scars on the glacial ice, which healed in short order. Once everyone was safely underground, the surviving Molians began making themselves as comfortable as possible in their new home. They slowly fell into a downward spiral as the few remaining scientists and technicians gradually died off, leaving each generation with less knowledge of its past and the secrets of Molian technology than the previous one.

PRANAMOLTAR'S EXTERIOR

Pranamoltar is located along the eastern coast of Greenland, five miles inland from a narrow bay halfway between Cape Brewster to the south and Shannon Island to the north. (Some maps refer to the area as "King Christian X Land.") Built within and beneath the collapsed cone of an extinct volcano (the cone actually collapsed from the digging process that created the city), it's completely underground; it's not visible from the air, and characters could literally walk over it without ever knowing it's there. Every access point has been concealed to prevent detection (a skill learned on the Molian homeworld to prevent the monsters that roamed the surface from locating their cities): the city's air shafts are in crevices where increased air flow won't be noticed (-6 to Concealment rolls); thermal vents are in areas with hot springs, or are underwater (-6 to Concealment rolls); and all doors, viewports, elevators, and hatches are so blended into the local terrain that locating them casually is essentially impossible, and searching for them isn't much more likely to succeed (-8 to Concealment rolls).

The natural terrain surrounding the city is barren and rocky, with little ground cover or vegetation other than mosses, lichens, small patches of tough grass, and the occasional scrub tree. There are a number of hot springs, none exceptionally large, but no other signs of any geologic activity

(a beneficial effect of the Molian's power tap has been to stabilize the area seismically). There are few animals larger than rabbits, other rodents, and the birds which occasionally nest in the rocks around the area. The area's general lack of exploitable resources or arable land has helped keep Pranamoltar hidden.

PRANAMOLTAR INFRASTRUCTURE

The tunnels where the Mole Men toil to keep Pranamoltar functioning are deep in the Earth and largely unlit; characters making their way through the more remote parts of the tunnels without a light source are effectively blind. In more traveled areas dim lights are spaced some distance apart to provide plenty of light for the Workers and the occasional Molian to see by (-4 penalty to Sight PER Rolls). Areas primarily inhabited by the Molians are more brightly lit, roughly equivalent to pre-dawn or twilight on the surface. Characters suffer only a -1 penalty to Sight PER Rolls for the first hour or so until their eyes adjust; characters with Nightvision experience no penalties at all.

The temperatures within the Molian base are uniformly warm: Molian-inhabited areas typically have a temperature of 25° C (78° F) year-round thanks to the volcanic core tap's necessary venting. Areas inhabited by the Mole Men frequently reach temperatures of 43° C (110° F) due to their greater proximity to the core tap. Characters dressed for the arctic conditions outside are in danger of suffering heat exhaustion or heat prostration if they don't shed some layers. (See pages 441-442 of the *HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* for rules about overheating.) Outside the Molian base, the temperatures plummet (it's above the Arctic Circle), quickly reaching winter lows near -60° C (-76° F) (and frequently lower once the wind starts to blow) and rarely rising above 4° C (40° F) during the summer months.

Air is drawn down into the city through concealed vents, warmed by passage through the core tap, and circulated through the city by large fans. Most Molians don't think about the ventilation system at all, and characters using it to hide in and/or to move around the city will probably get away with it — at least for a little while. If convinced such a thing were happening, the High Mentarch could seal off individual sections and flood them with freezing arctic air or steam-laced air directly from the core tap to force characters out or eliminate them.

Power to the base comes from a power tap that draws heat from the still-active core of the volcano and uses it to turn banks of turbines to provide power. The core tap requires constant supervision by the Molians to open and close the vents that direct the heat to the turbines lest too much pressure build up and the volcano erupt. Needless to say, such an event would completely destroy the base and all within it. If this seems like a desirable outcome to the characters, they can trigger an erup-

tion by deciphering the power tap's controls and closing all the vents. (Fifteen minutes of time and a Systems Operations roll at -4 would do it; clever characters may try to trick the High Mentarch into giving them a tour so they can see the tap in operation beforehand, which reduces the Systems Operation penalty to -1.) If the characters can keep the vents closed for thirty minutes (an alarm sounds after fifteen minutes, and again every five minutes after that, but with a successful Systems Operations roll at -2 the characters can disconnect it), then the eruption is inevitable — even opening all the vents at once won't stop it. The actual eruption occurs shortly thereafter at an appropriately dramatic moment.

PRANAMOLTAR DESCRIPTION

The city of the Molians is built in a series of descending concentric rings linked by open-sided elevators and gently sloping ramps. The general form of the city follows the outline of the volcanic cone the aliens converted to create their city, with the core tap at the deepest point underground, the generators and the city's power radiator above that, followed in order by the environmental and support levels, living areas, laboratories, and finally a storage level for raw materials, including the remaining wreckage from their ship that hasn't already been incorporated into the city.

The interior walls, depending on the area's purpose, are either of smoothed and polished native stone or have been lined with a layer of silver metal ripped from the crashed ship's superstructure. Constantly-inhabited areas, laboratories, and vital machinery are protected by the metal walls (DEF 14, BODY 20), while less significant or infrequently-visited areas make do with Dyna-Drill polished stone (DEF 7, BODY 12).

Pranamoltar's internal doors were all salvaged from internal doors on the ship (DEF 8, BODY 10) and retract with a hum back into the walls when opened; they're made in four wedge-shaped sections that withdraw separately, and which resemble a toothed maw closing when they come together. Exterior doors and window shutters, aside from their camouflage (see above), are all reinforced (DEF 12, BODY 10) and have locks keyed to electronic pulses from a small signaler about the size and shape of a cigarette lighter that each Molian carries. A signaler stores many key "signatures" and serves as an access control device, permitting only those with the correct pulse-codes into restricted areas. The few rooms with exterior windows all are on the inside of the volcanic cone, where light escaping through one will not betray the city, and are salvaged viewports from the ship which were specially treated to survive the rigors of space (DEF 8, BODY 8) and remain optically clear.

The lowest level, where the city's power tap is situated, is also the smallest level in terms of actual size, since it contains nothing more than the core tap itself, the control room overlooking the tap,

and the vent mechanisms to channel the heat to the generators. There's normally a Molian technician on duty here at all times to oversee the core tap; the position switches out every eight hours. If the heroes get loose in the city the High Mentarch sends a few troops down to the control room to ensure its security.

The generator and power radiator level has the highest ceilings of any level in the city, a necessity given the large turbines the heat from the power tap spins to generate the city's power. There are walkways and catwalks that run between and above all of the turbines. Once the turbines are switched on, the winds around the catwalks are very strong and dangerous (Telekinesis 10-20 STR), making them a good place for a dramatic fight with characters struggling to avoid being pulled or pushed into the deadly turbines below by the winds and their opponents. The power radiators for the city are in this level as well; they look like 5" (32 foot) tall inverted Christmas trees made up of a series of translucent red discs stacked on a central rod. The discs spin in opposite directions when active, occasionally passing a spark between them. There are ten power radiators on the level spaced around the ring equidistantly. There are always a few Molian technicians here monitoring things; they use safety lines clipped to their belts when on the catwalks.

The next level up holds all the mechanisms for circulating air and water and providing other necessary systems for the city, including the hydroponics gardens that supply most of the food. Since it mostly contains automated machinery from the ship's life support systems that requires little maintenance, this level is typically unoccupied by Molians except for occasional patrols of soldiers, individuals gathering food from a tank, or a technician doing a sweep. It is, however, the main level that gives access to the maze of Mole Man tunnels in the surrounding rock, and there are always several of them moving around here on their way to or from work.

On the next level are the Molian living areas. Most rooms are spacious and roomy, with ceilings as high as the average Molian can stand them — about 10 feet — without getting the willies. Furniture is light and open in appearance and feel (DEF 3, BODY 3), often little more than a metal framework with seats and shelves on or within it; it's usually surfaced in a transparent material tinted in a subdued pastel tone. Molian beds are extremely comfortable; being mattress-shaped containers filled with a gelatin-like liquid slightly thicker than water mounted into a solid frame (they're adapted from the ship's acceleration couches). Molians eat in their quarters, cooking for themselves or their families; there are cooking surfaces in each set of quarters.

Laboratories occupy the almost the entirety of the next level, although they're mostly empty and unused now except for the High Mentarch's personal laboratory, the largest room on the level. His laboratory is always full of noise and activity as he, his daughter, and his two assistants continue to try to rediscover the secrets of Molian technology which were lost during and after the crash. It has two levels. Open-sided catwalks criss-cross the upper one, connecting one side of the room to the other; the room itself contains strange machinery covered in dials, switches, lights, and so on. The second-largest room on the level holds the city's massive Televisor unit and the controls to direct it. Both the High Mentarch and his daughter are often there using the device (although their purposes in doing so are not the same, whatever the High Mentarch believes). There are also several holding cells adapted from specimen confinement units in the ship's life sciences department on the laboratory level. They're apparently featureless metal cubes on the inside (DEF 14, BODY 20) once the doors are closed, but they have the capacity to erect internal Dyna-Shield walls (Force Wall 10 PD/10 ED) which can be used to section off parts of the cells and separate individuals inside if desired (an exceptionally cruel guard might amuse himself by making a sectioned area increasingly smaller to torment a prisoner, but if so he'd better hope they don't escape while he's there!). Guards are trained to section off the area around the interior of the door before opening it to prevent escapes, but since no one living has actually *used* a cell to contain someone, they might forget and give the heroes a chance to rush them.

Above that, there's only the storage level containing the as-yet unused remains of the crashed ship, items salvaged from it, and spare parts for the city's larger devices. There are several items of interest among the stored materials, including the ship's surviving exploratory vehicle (Use the General Lee IV Variant Tank on page 32 of *The HERO System Vehicle Sourcebook* but add Tunneling 12" through DEF 12 material; remove all the weapons and replace them with an RKA 7d6 Dyna-Cannon and a pair of "burrowing missiles" with Indirect to reflect their ability to attack from different angles through the Earth; and add Life support (Self-Contained Breathing; Safe Environments: High Pressure, High Radiation, and Intense Heat).) The vehicle is currently deemed useless by the High Mentarch due to a lack of power radiator to make operating it viable, but heroes can likely find some use for it if they can locate a soldier with the pulse-code to open it and start it up.

INHABITANTS

The only inhabitants of Pranamoltar are the surviving Molians (scarcely more than a few hundred now) and the significantly larger population of their Mole Man worker force, a separate species from their homeworld used as heavy laborers.

Molians

The Molians, like many Pulp alien races, are essentially visually identical to Humans — there's no obvious visible characteristics like antennae or extra eyes to differentiate the two species. There are some internal differences in organ shape and location, but they could, if they wanted to, pass for human on the streets of Hudson City with a change of clothes (although why they might wish to do so is a question characters should consider...).

As a rule, Molians have a uniformly similar appearance that's partly a racial trait and partly a result of the limited population pool available to them since their ship's crash. They're an attractive people who possess aristocratic features that, in Humans, would be considered more Nordic than anything else. All Molians (both male and female) stand between 5'5" and 5'8" in height; there are no exceptionally short or tall members of the species. Molian hair ranges from sandy to platinum blonde, and both sexes commonly have a "widow's peak." All Molians have extremely fair skin (almost, but not quite pallid, much like the "prison tan" convicts acquire in solitary confinement). Because of their overall racial physical similarity, Molians normally consider individuals who look "different" from their racial type — especially those with very dark hair and/or tanned to olive skin — to be exotic and attractive. Molian eyes are all dark brown and possess pupils so large they almost eclipse the iris, giving them superior vision in lowered lighting conditions, but making them slightly more vulnerable to the effects of sudden bright lights than Humans.

Due to the selection process that assembled the crew of the *Pranamoltar*, the current Molians all have a slightly higher average intelligence and force of personality than a typical Human possesses. This has been declining steadily in the last few centuries, a fact the High Mentarchs have spent much time worrying over. But the most intriguing trait that distinguishes them from Humans is that Molians need less sleep than Humans. A Molian typically only sleeps one hour a night, which leaves him a much greater waking activity span than virtually any Human possesses. Most Molians fill this extra time with leisure activities, a practice that has led to their becoming a decadent and complacent group. Occasionally one of their number escapes this cycle and fills his or her time with activities that serve a purpose other than self-gratification, but that number grows smaller with each successive generation.

Molians almost without exception suffer from agoraphobia: they become fearful, stressed, and uncomfortable once they're outside of their underground home and under the open sky. The Molians

MOLIAN PACKAGE DEAL

Abilities

Cost	Ability
2	+2 INT
2	+2 PRE
1	+2 COM
5	Nightvision
1	Wakefulness (<i>Pulp Hero</i> , page 296)
3	Language: English (fluent conversation; Molianic is Native)
3	Systems Operation
2	WF: Molian Small Arms

Total Cost Of Package Abilities And Equipment: 19

Disadvantages

Value	Disadvantage
15	Psychological Limitation: Agoraphobia (Common, Strong)
10	Vulnerability: 1½ x Effect from Sight Group Flash attacks defined as bright light (Common)

Total Value Of Package Disadvantages: 25

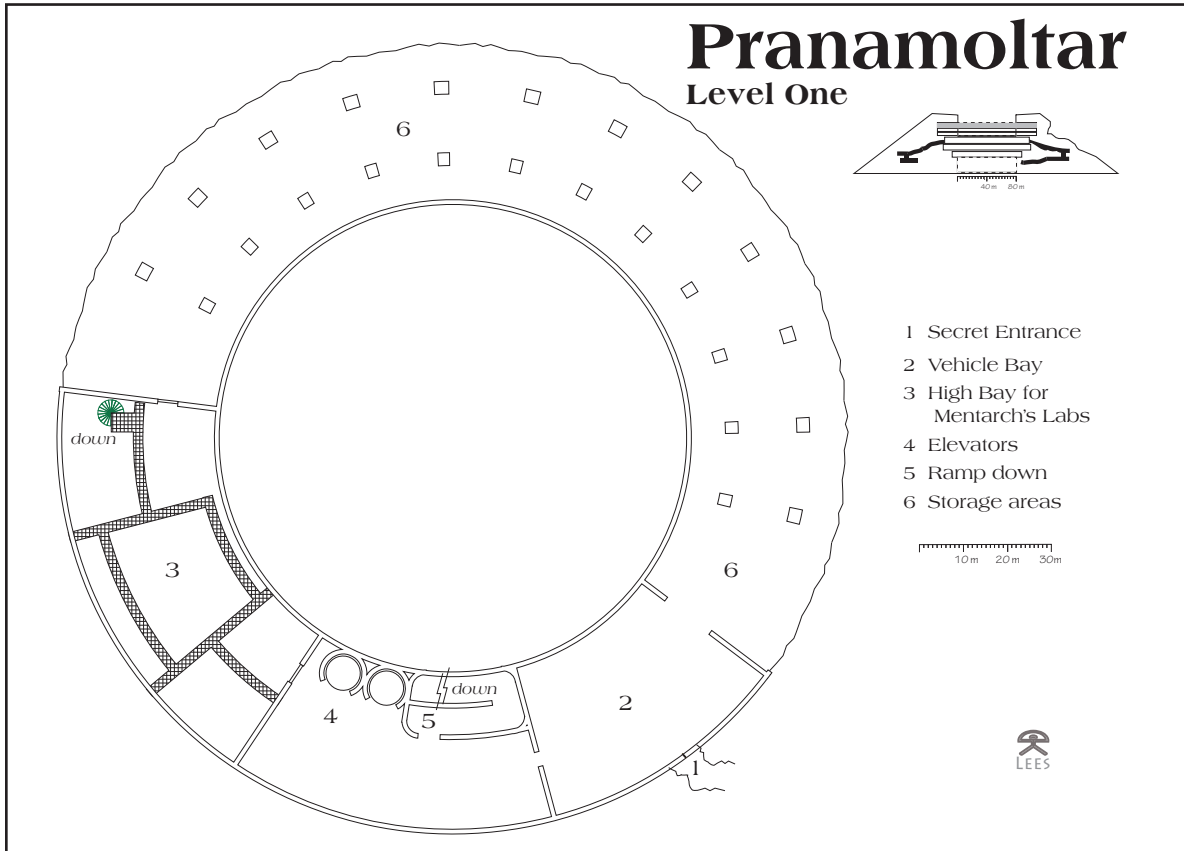
who still maintain discipline enough to be called soldiers (both male and female soldiers exist) are less likely to be affected by this (they've bought the Disadvantage down to "Common, Moderate").

CULTURE

The Molian civilization is ruled by the High Mentarch, a position passed down from individual to individual based on ability rather than family lineage. High Mentarchs are normally the smartest and most dedicated individuals of their generation, a necessity since it's their responsibility to keep the city functioning in spite of its inhabitants' best efforts to let things slide into ruin. The High Mentarch serves as the city's administrator, chief scientist, commander in chief, and any other position requiring someone to make decisions affecting the city and its inhabitants. He (or she, as there have been several female High Mentarchs) is in essence the only real power in the city.

Due to Molians' lack of need for sleep, there's no regular day/night cycle in the city — there are always people moving around to perform one task or another. Most individuals have a Mole Man or two following behind them at all times in case they need something done that involves heavy lifting or the like; Mole Men move around the city constantly, performing errands for their masters. Without the Mole Men the city would quickly and permanently grind to a halt, since there aren't enough Molians to keep everything running without their servitor race's assistance. Most Molians treat the Mole Men as invisible unless they need one to do something, much like Humans in upper-class homes act towards the servants. A few Molians are actively cruel towards the Mole Men, but they're rare and generally spotted and disciplined by the High Mentarch to prevent them from creating a situation that might lead to a Mole Man revolt (which would destroy the city).

Most of the time Molians dress in versions of the shipboard uniforms their ancestors wore: two-piece outfits composed of a hip-length belted tunic made from a clingy silvery grey fabric over pants of the same material that are tucked into low-topped boots.



The tunic has a high, round collar and fastens on the left side. Female versions of the outfit are cut slightly differently and accentuate the wearer's figure in ways many non-Molians find... distracting. Both genders attach weapons and devices to their belts with electrostatic patches that hold them as securely as a holster or pouch would; those who carry Dyna-Shields wear them on the left arm over the sleeve. The women wear their hair long and loose and the men wear theirs short; both genders occasionally use a thin metal fillet with a stylized starburst on a small disc at the front to hold their hair back. Instead of a fillet, members of the Molian military wear a silver skullcap with low central ridge running down the center (female soldiers braid their hair and let it hang down below the skullcap in back). When in the privacy of their quarters, Molians dress in unbelted flowing robes resembling caftans.

LANGUAGE

All Molians speak and understand English, although it's Elizabethan English and not the modern form since they learned it by the use of their ship's "Encephalo-Educator" and that was the form of the language it had programmed into it. (Sprinkle in some "thees" and "thous" and end some words with "st" — as in "Thou wouldst not dare, surface man!" — and you've got the hang of it.) Aside from the archaic but understandable word and sentence constructions, they possess a slight but noticeable accent listeners cannot place other than to say it sounds "pleasingly exotic." (Any character with SS: Linguistics can make a roll to determine that their accent comes from no known country or culture.)

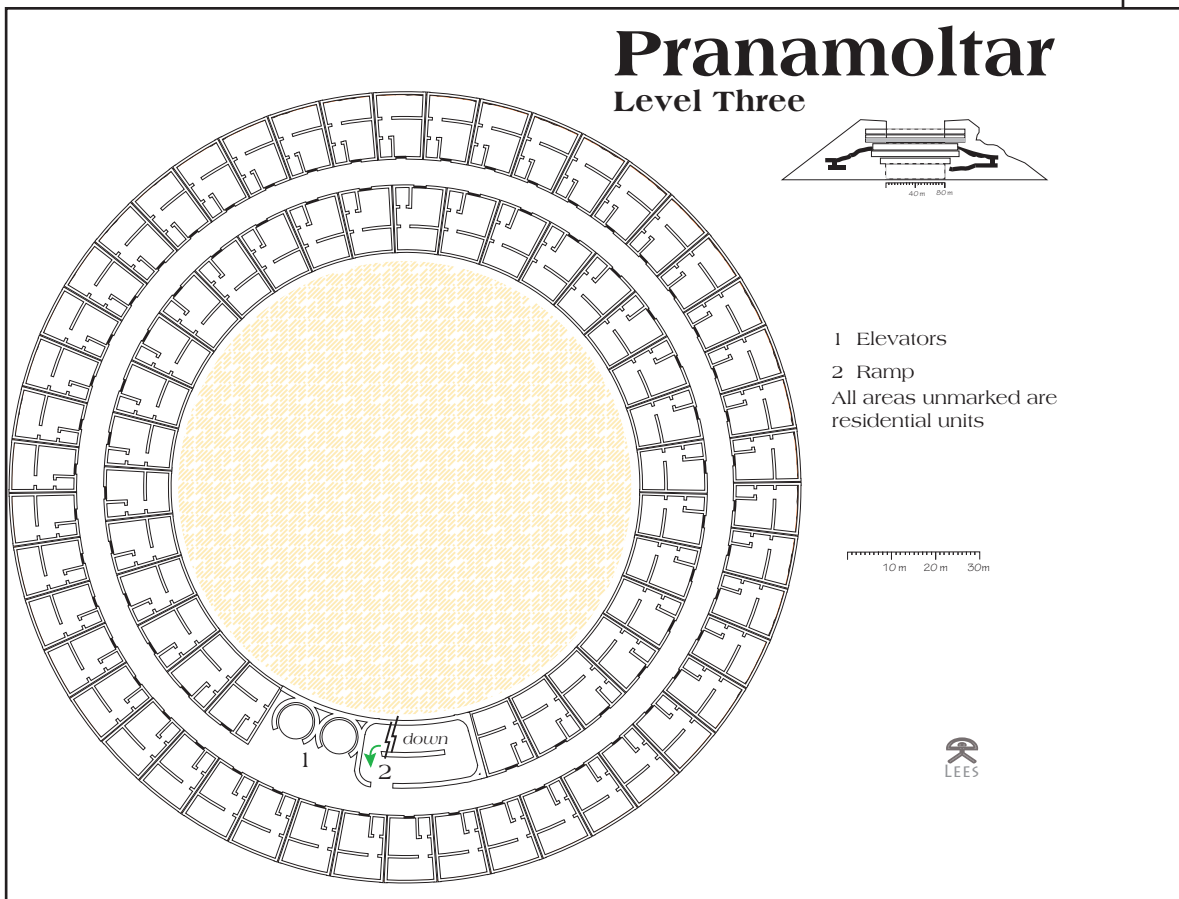
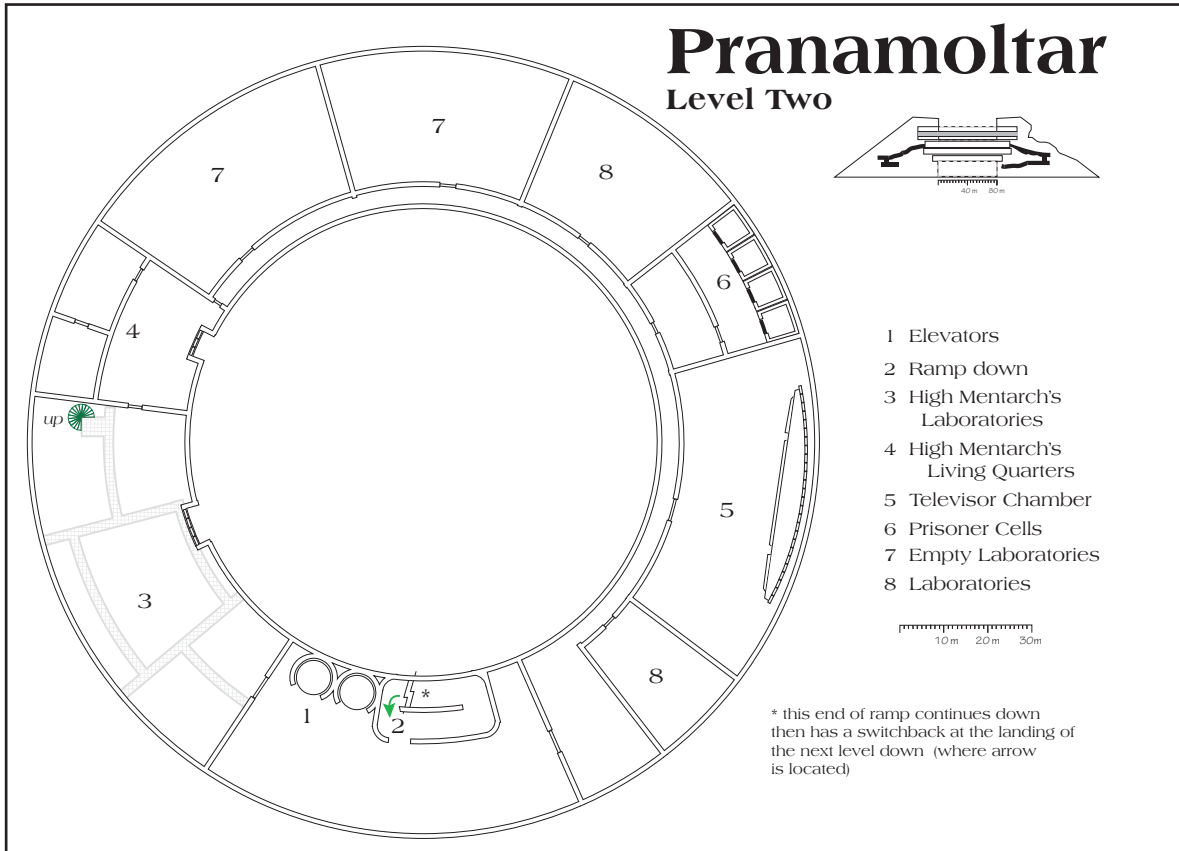
The actual Molian language, Molianic, is now used only for ceremonial occasions and to issue orders to the Mole Men. A character who can

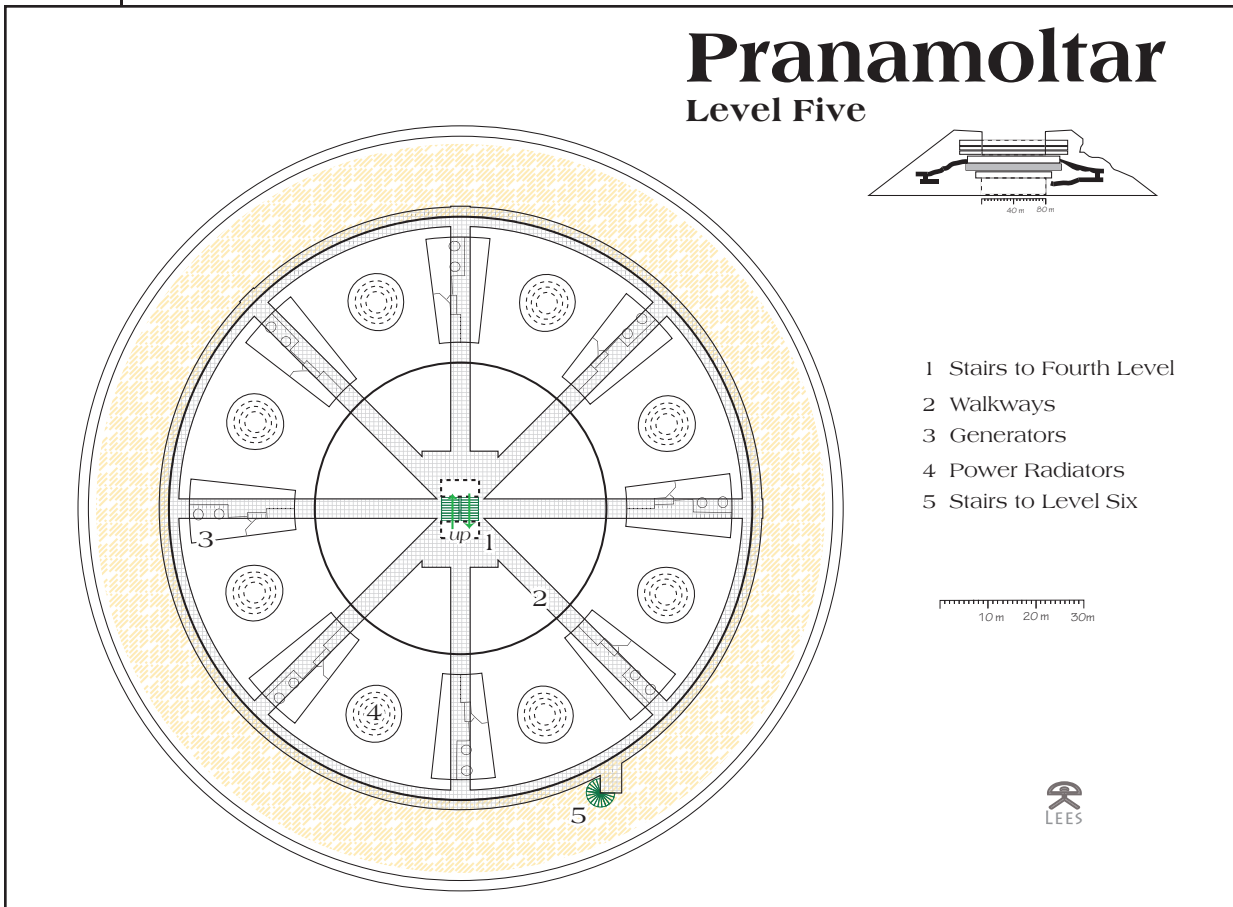
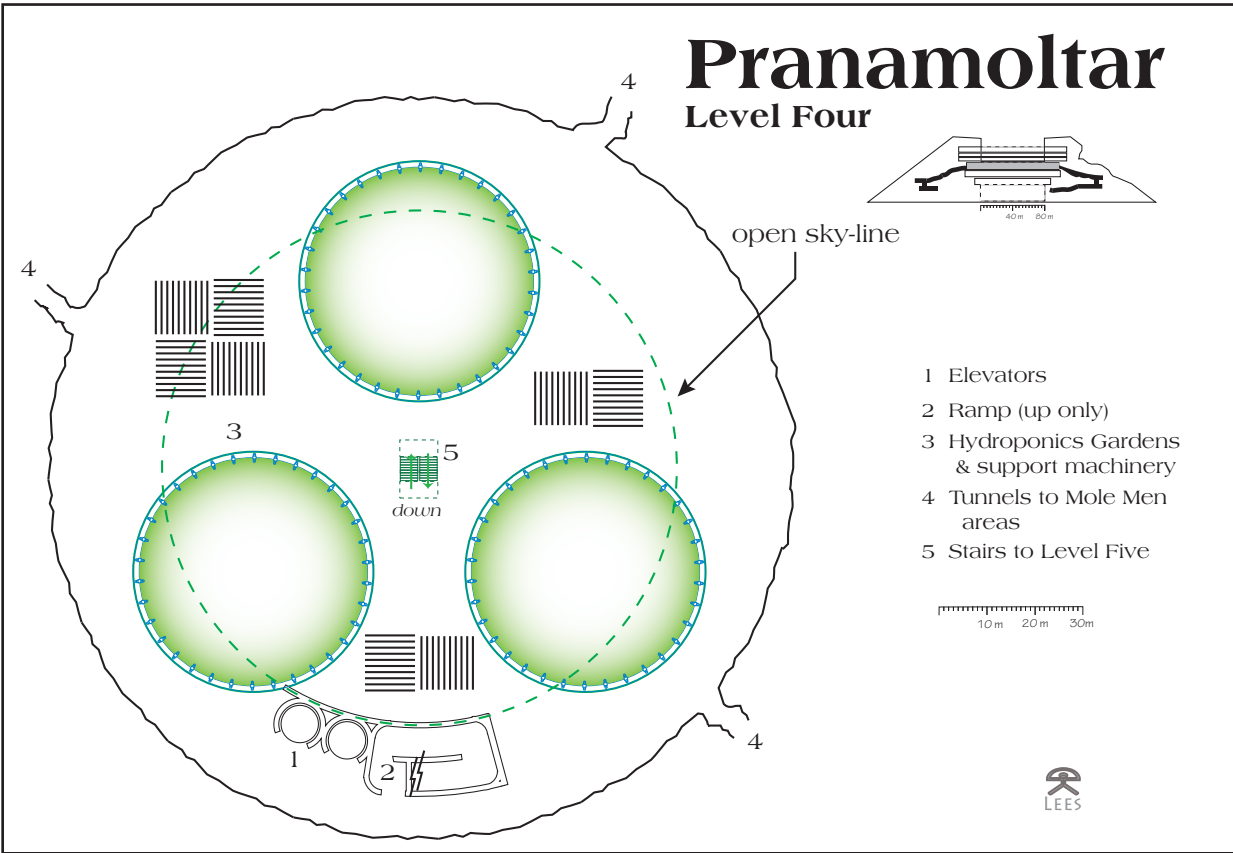
convince a Molian to teach it to him must pay +1 Character Point more than the usual cost for a given level of fluency. Molianic writing consists of wedge-shaped characters arranged in irregular geometric figures to form words; learning it involves mastering a large number of word-components. The Mole Men do not understand any other language but Molianic (and even that they cannot speak), although they seem capable of communicating between themselves through grunts and gestures.

WARFARE

Although the Molians aren't a warlike people, enough of them still possess sufficient self-determination and drive to allow the High Mentarch to field a unit of 50-60 soldiers. These soldiers typically spend more time supervising (depending on the soldier, "bullying" might be closer) the Mole Men and trying to look impressive to members of the opposite sex than anything else. However, they're all well-trained in tactics and teamwork, if lacking in practical combat experience, thanks to the existence of a surviving training tape from the expedition's defense forces. Their greatest weakness in a fight is a lack of any formal hand-to-hand combat training skills — they can brawl a little, but against a well-trained and experienced character with real skills in the fistic arts they're likely to be in trouble quickly.

Soldiers all carry Dyna-Guns, Dyna-Shields, and Lash Rods, all of which are described in more detail in the section on Molian Technology. Other, more powerful, weapons might be made available to them (Dyna-Rifles or the like), but they'd have to be manufactured by the High Mentarch once a need for them arose.





LOCATIONS

FIRST LEVEL

1. Hidden Access Doors To Outside
2. Garage for Exploratory Vehicle
3. Upper Area Of High Mentarch's Laboratory
4. Elevator
5. Ramp To Lower Levels
6. Storage

SECOND LEVEL

1. Elevator
2. Ramp To Upper And Lower Levels
3. High Mentarch's Laboratory (lower level)
4. High Mentarch's Living Quarters
5. Televisor Room
6. Prisoner Cells
7. Empty Laboratories
8. Laboratories

THIRD LEVEL

1. Elevator
2. Ramp To Upper And Lower Levels

All undesignated rooms are living quarters for the Molians.

FOURTH LEVEL

1. Elevator
2. Ramp to Upper Levels
3. Hydroponics Gardens and Supporting Machinery
4. Tunnels to Mole Men Areas
5. Stairs to Level Five

FIFTH LEVEL

1. Stairs to Level Four
2. Walkway
3. Generators
4. Power Radiators
5. Stairwell to Level Six (Volcano Core Tap Control Room)

LEVEL SIX

1. Stairwell to Level Five
2. Control Room
3. Heat Vents
4. Volcano Core Tap

INDIVIDUALS

HIGH MENTARCH SIVARAD

10	STR	15	DEX	14	CON	12	BODY
18	INT	15	EGO	15	PRE	14	COM
4	PD	4	ED	3	SPD	5	REC
28	END	25	STUN				

Abilities: Nightvision; Wakefulness; +1 with Intellect Skills; AK: Pranamoltar 13-; Electronics 13-; KS: Molian Science 13-; KS: Outer World 13-; Language: English (completely fluent, literate); Mechanics 13-; Oratory 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: High Mentarch 13-; SS: Chemistry 13-; SS: Electronics Engineering 13-; SS: Mechanical Engineering 13-; SS: Physics 13-; Systems Operations 14-; WF: Molian Small Arms; Fringe Benefit (Molian leader)

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Agoraphobia; Psychological Limitation: Loves/Protective Of Daughter; Psychological Limitation: Wants To Reverse His People's Decline; Social Limitation: Burdens Of Leadership; Vulnerability: 1½ x Effect from Sight Group Flashes (see Package Deal)

Notes: Sivarad is the latest in the line of High Mentarchs who have guided Pranamoltar while watching their society lose its knowledge and vigor. He's reached the point where he believes it may be necessary to open some kind of contact with the outside world. The Televisor reveals that Humans are developing their technology at an astonishing pace; he fears that in a few generations the Earthmen will have surpassed the Molians and his people will lose their only remaining advantage in dealing with the natives. To make matters worse, the last five years have seen increasing tensions among the Earth's nations, indicating another planetary war may be imminent.

Currently, the Mentarch is considering his options. He could try to contact a small group of surface dwellers, but expeditions to this area are few. Revealing his people's existence to the League Of Nations seems unwise — the purpose of that group is noble, but it's increasingly ineffectual. Another possibility would be to contact a single nation and make an alliance, but which to choose? A final option, suggested by a group of dilettantes calling themselves the Molian Supremacy League, would be to conquer the planet and rule it. He knows that making a direct attempt at conquest would fail (the Supremacy League's members seem to think the Earthmen would simply love to be ruled by superior beings such as themselves); however, it might be possible to acquire a hidden group of allies, provide them with limited Molian technology, and slowly gain power through them.

Sivarad has discussed these options with his daughter (about the only person whose opinion he values on such matters), but Mirilar also seems undecided and has given him no advice except to agree that a direct attempt at conquest is doomed to fail. Still, he feels the time is fast approaching when he must make some decision.

MIRILAR, MOLIAN “PRINCESS”

10 STR	15 DEX	16 CON	12 BODY
18 INT	14 EGO	14 PRE	18 COM
6 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
32 END	28 STUN		

Abilities: Nightvision; Wakefulness; +1 with PER Rolls; +1 HTH; +1 with Ranged Combat; AK: Pranamoltar 11-; Electronics 13-; KS: Molian Science 13-; KS: Outer World 13-; Language: English (completely fluent, literate); Mechanics 13-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Molian Soldier 11-; SS: Physics 13-; Stealth 12-; Systems Operations 14-; Tactics 8-; Teamwork 8-; WF: Molian Small Arms; Fringe Benefit (Leader’s daughter)

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Agoraphobia; Psychological Limitation: Resents Father’s Over-Protectiveness; Psychological Limitation: Wants To Live In The Outer World; Vulnerability: 1½ x Effect from Sight Group Flashes (see Package Deal)

Notes: Mirilar has grown up in Pranamoltar with all the advantages of the heights of Molian society. She’s long since grown bored with them. The outer world of the Humans seems far more interesting, with their energy, widely-varied cultures, art, and primitive-but-advancing technology. Her fellow Molians seem bland and dull by comparison. She spends a lot of time watching the surface on the Televisor, gathering information. Increasingly, she follows her own purpose and interests in doing so, rather than (as her father thinks) concentrating on information useful to Pranamoltar.

In fact, Mirilar has decided that she wants to dwell on the surface herself, visiting the many cities and natural wonders there. To this end she’s worked diligently to reduce her agoraphobia to a milder level (although she hasn’t completely overcome it yet). If she thought her father would agree, she would suggest that she visit the surface, either secretly or as an ambassador. Her increasing annoyance with his over-protective attitude is an additional reason to leave the city; Mirilar knows that he loves her, but is coming to regard him more as a jailer than a father. She’s likely to agree to help a visitor from the surface, particularly a handsome male who can promise to keep her people’s secrets and take her back to the outer world. She might even interview a prisoner herself, just to make such an offer.

Mirilar usually carries a Lash Rod. If venturing far from her quarters, she carries a Dyna-Gun and a Dyna-Shield.

KHARSH, THUGGISH GUARD

15 STR	14 DEX	15 CON	13 BODY
10 INT	12 EGO	12 PRE	10 COM
6 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
30 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: Nightvision; Wakefulness; 1 HTH; +1 with Ranged Combat; AK: Pranamoltar 11-; Language: English (completely fluent, literate); PS: Guard 11-; Systems Operations 11-; Tactics 8-; Tracking 8-; WF: Molian Small Arms

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Agoraphobia; Psychological Limitation: Lusts After Mentarch’s Daughter; Psychological Limitation: Sadistic Creep; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders; Vulnerability: 1½ x Effect from Sight Group Flashes (see Package Deal)

Notes: Kharsh is a guard with very little to do. He completed the defense force training tape but has grown bored with the military life. He was assigned to guard the holding cells, a particularly easy duty. He finds this boring also, but it lets him maltreat an occasional Mole Man in relative safety — he’s careful not to go too far since being disciplined three years ago for excessive cruelty. The other source of stress in his life is his unrequited lust for Mirilar, who has shown not the slightest interest in him. This is hardly surprising — she’s beautiful and has no lack of suitors, while he’s obnoxious and disliked even by his fellow guards.

Kharsh carries a Lash Rod and a Dyna-Shield.

AVERAGE MOLIAN SOLDIER

13 STR	14 DEX	15 CON	12 BODY
12 INT	12 EGO	12 PRE	12 COM
6 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
30 END	25 STUN		

Abilities: Nightvision; Wakefulness; +1 HTH; +1 with Ranged Combat; AK: Pranamoltar 12-; Language: English (completely fluent, literate); PS: Molian Soldier 11-; Systems Operations 11-; Tactics 8-; Teamwork 8-; WF: Molian Small Arms

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Agoraphobia; Psychological Limitation: Flirtatious; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders; Vulnerability: 1½ x Effect from Sight Group Flashes (see Package Deal)

Notes: The average Molian soldier, while more energetic than most of his people, still suffers in comparison to Human fighting men. They’re more interested in attracting the opposite sex, lording over the Mole Men, and the time-honored soldiers’ pursuit of avoiding unnecessary labor. Still, they’ll try to defend their home vigorously and will follow the Mentarch’s orders to the best of their abilities. Soldiers all carry Dyna-Guns, Dyna-Shields, and Lash Rods.

MOLE MAN WORKER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [2]
10	DEX	0	11-	OCV: 3/DCV: 3
20	CON	20	13-	
16	BODY	12	12-	
6	INT	-4	10-	PER Roll 10-
8	EGO	-4	10-	ECV: 2
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
8	PD	4		Total: 8 PD (3 rPD)
6	ED	2		Total: 6 ED (3 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
8	REC	0		
40	END	0		
36	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 43

Movement: Running: 4"/8"
Tunneling 1"/2"

Cost	Powers	END
20	<i>Powerful Digging Hands:</i> HKA 1d6+1 (2½d6 with STR)	2
9	<i>Powerful Digging Hands:</i> Tunneling 1" through DEF 8 materials; Extra Time (5 Minutes; -2)	3
3	<i>Tough Hide:</i> Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED)	0
5	<i>Adapted To The Dark:</i> Nightvision	0
37	<i>Adapted To The Dark:</i> Detect Physical Vibrations 12- (Touch Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Range, Targeting	0
-4	<i>Slow On Their Feet:</i> Running -2" (4" total)	

Talents

1 Bump Of Direction; Only While Underground (-1)

Skills

4 +2 OCV with Powerful Digging Hands
2 KS: Rock Types And Formations 11-
2 PS: Mining 11-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 79

Total Cost: 122

75+ Disadvantages

10 Physical Limitation: Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
10 Physical Limitation: Poor Eyesight (suffers -2 to all Sight PER Rolls in well-lit conditions) (Infrequent, Greatly Impairing)
10 Psychological Limitation: Slave Mentality (Common, Moderate)
20 Social Limitation: Servitor Race (Frequently, Severe)
20 Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Sight Group Flash attacks defined as bright light (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 155

Ecology: The Mole Men were a separate species on the Molian home planet that evolved on a different continent than the one the Molians called home. Pressed into service by the Molians as laborers thousands of years ago, they've filled that niche ever since.

The Mole Men present on Earth all came from the handful who accompanied the Molian scientific expedition as servants and laborers. But unlike their masters, they've increased in numbers to the point that even the Molians don't know precisely how many there are of them in the maze of dark tunnels surrounding Pranamoltar. The High Mentarch believes there are between 700 and 800 of the Mole Men, but the actual figure is closer to three times that (a fact which would fill him with a certain degree of trepidation if he learned it and might prompt some sort of drastic action to reduce their number — an action almost certain to trigger the uprising he'd be trying to prevent).

Mole Men are omnivores by nature, but the majority of their diet consists of slabs of the thick moss that grows in patches throughout the tunnels around the Molian base. They supplement this with the occasional rat caught in the tunnels and devoured on the spot, and periodic "snacks" gathered at one of the garbage disposal pits used by the Molians.

Personality/Motivation: Aside from obeying his Molian masters, a Mole Man's motivations are simple: eat, dig, sleep, dig, and so forth. It isn't that they're not capable of more as a race so much as it's that while under Molian control they simply don't need anything more; if left to their own devices for a long period of time (several centuries or so) they'd likely start to discover things like art and lose their racial *Near-Human Intelligence* Physical Limitation. But at present they've been a servitor race for so long they don't really understand there's anything else in life.

The Molian control over the Mole Men is not as complete and total as most of the Molians assume it to be. If sufficiently provoked, particularly by too-frequent use of a Molian Lash Rod or other physical violence, a Mole Man gets angry enough to strike back at one of his masters. The more intelligent Molians understand this, but even they sometimes forget when they grow angry and/or frustrated.

Due to the way they process sounds and vibrations, the sounds of Human screams (particularly female Human screams) produce a series of sensations the average Mole Man finds very pleasing, much like a Human would enjoy a well-performed concert or popular song on the radio. If presented with the



opportunity, most Mole Men happily loom, menace, or otherwise provoke anyone not dressed in Molian garb — particularly women — to listen to the “music” they make. If a particularly well-voiced target appears, she might easily find herself surrounded by a dozen or more Mole Men, all poking and prodding her to keep the “concert” going. The Molians consider this to be somewhat amusing and are likely to allow it to continue with captives until it appears someone is about to get hurt or provoke a fight with the Mole Men.

Powers/Tactics: Neither particularly skittish nor particularly aggressive, Mole Men defend themselves if attacked, or attack on the orders of their Molian masters, but if left to their own devices tend to ignore most occurrences around them that do not seem to directly affect them. In combat their default tactic is to loom out of the darkness, close, and attack with swings of their clawed hands until their opponents flee or they’re ordered to stop. If ordered to do so by one of the Molians, they instead attempt to grapple and restrain their opponents using their great STR. Their digging claws are strong enough that they can tunnel through dirt and stone or slash at their opponents, but the shape of their hands makes it impossible for them to handle weapons or normal tools. Because they can’t see well in lit areas they flee from fights in such places unless ordered to stay and fight or cornered.

Aside from their enhanced ability to see in the dark, the soles of Mole Mens’ feet contain special nerve endings that allow them to process the vibrations moving through the earth all around them. They can tell individuals apart from their footsteps, detect differences in rock layers as their claws dig through them, and even engage opponents in total darkness based on their movements. Characters may try to avoid detection in this fashion by moving very slowly and carefully (maximum of 1” per Phase and a Stealth Roll at -2 each phase) or through special abilities like “Pass Without Trace” (*HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*, page 182).

Appearance: Tall and powerfully built, the typical Mole Man (differences between the genders are indistinguishable and uninteresting to anyone but another Mole Man) stands 6’0” tall and weighs close to 200 pounds. He has a humped mass of muscle on his back from digging that gives him an almost hunchbacked appearance although he walks upright. He has large, spade-like hands with thick, heavy claws on them, and equally large, clawed feet. His skin is a reddish brown in color and covered with small nodule-like lumps that take the place of hair, giving it a “warty” appearance. Mole Man eyes are very large and uniformly yellow with red irises and black pupils; they’re slanted at a different angle than Human eyes and have a heavy protective ridge of bone over them that curves down on either side and meets at the bridge of their wide nose. Mole Mens’ mouths are designed to open outward from side-to-side as opposed to up and down, and the hinging arrangement that makes this possible lends them a perpetually “grinning” appearance from some angles. They dress in sturdy shirts and pants made from a burlap-looking material that’s actually much more durable than it appears.

MOLIAN TECHNOLOGY

All Molian technology depends on a broadcast power system salvaged from the original power core of the crashed starship. There are no wires or cables conducting power to anything, only receptor units built into each device that literally pull the necessary power out of thin air. This has the effect of making many items of Molian technology very light and portable compared to similar ones of Human manufacture, since there’s no need for a power generation system or energy battery of any kind. It also means that as long as an item like a Dyna-Gun remains within the range of the power radiators supplied by the city’s generators, its supply of power is essentially limitless... but once outside the range of those power radiators it becomes a useless, inert device. (The exact range of the city’s power radiators isn’t specified because it’s intended as more of a dramatic effect and technological control mechanism for the GM than anything else; it shouldn’t be more than a few miles from the city at most.)

DYNA-GUN

The Molian’s standard-issue weapon is the Dyna-Gun, a pistol that fires bolts of “dynamized energy” at opponents. The weapon has a standard pistol configuration, looking much like an Earth flare pistol with a barrel that narrows down to a needle tip of red crystal. A line of jagged “fins” along the top of the barrel is the power receptor for the weapon. The bolts emitted by the weapon look like small red energy comets, with rounded leading edges that fall back into a narrowing tail. Dyna-Guns are normally carried attached to the belt with a kind of electrostatic patch that simply holds them there until the wearer grasps and draws the weapon.

Cost Power

13 *Dyna-Gun*: Energy Blast 6d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼), STR Minimum (8, STR Does Not Add/Subtract Damage; -1), Does Not Function Outside Range Of City’s Power Radiators (-¼)

DYNA-SHIELD

The standard Molian defense device is the Dyna-Shield, a bracer worn on the arm that projects a protective shield of dynamized energy in a 180° arc front of the user. The Dyna-Shield is powerful enough to stop most attacks, although occasional powerful ones do penetrate it. Attacks coming from outside the designated arc are unaffected by the Shield, which appears as a faint red barrier when active. The Dyna-Shield may be used to provide protection for others within its arc besides the wearer. Its weakness is that the user cannot fire through it with his Dyna-Gun, so he must choose to attack or defend in a given Phase. Additionally, individuals can’t move through a protected arc, and the barrier is ineffective against opponents in close combat since it’s erected a

short distance away from the user. The bracer itself covers most of the wearer's forearm and is a silver color; it has several equally-spaced elongated oval inserts of red crystal running along its length that glow when the shield is active.

Cost Power

- 33 *Dyna-Shield*: Force Wall (10 PD/10 ED), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½), No Range (has to be erected within 1" of user; -½), Does Not Function Outside Range Of City's Power Radiators (-¼)

LASH ROD

The only melee weapon used by the Molians, the Lash Rod is a short whip most commonly used as a "motivational tool" by the Molians supervising the Mole Men. It's composed of a short baton-like handle out of which the actual lash, a two-meter length of flexible energized wire, extends when the weapon is activated and into which it retracts when deactivated. It has a guard of sorts composed of a starburst of power receptors that form a ring around the end the wire unspools from. The lash sparks with power but does very little actual damage; the energized wire's light weight means it's impossible to increase the impact of the weapon so it's as effective in the hands of a muscular brute as a slender girl. It's worn attached to the waist by the same sort of electrostatic patch as the Dyna-Gun.

Cost Power

- 5 *Lash Rod*: RKA ½d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Limited Range (1"; -¼), STR Minimum (5, STR Minimum Doesn't Add To Damage; -¾), Does Not Function Outside Range Of City's Power Radiators (-¼)

TELEVISOR

The most impressive Molian device still functioning is the city's Televisor, a massive device that uses a system of dynamized light rays to bring back images and sounds from incredible distances and display them on a screen where they may be viewed and recorded. Originally part of the ship's communications and planetary survey system, the device's main use now is to allow the High Mentarch to keep track of developments within the city and to spy enviously on the teeming metropolises of Earth.

Physically the Televisor consists of a large screen, many banks of machinery that pass sparks back and forth between them while in operation, and a complex array of controls that must be monitored carefully to ensure the correct coordinates are viewed. (Using the Internal Observation Mode requires a Systems Operation roll at a -7 penalty, and Global Observation Mode a -9 penalty; users typically take Extra Time to reduce the penalties.) The Televisor's one weakness is an inability of the dynamized light rays to penetrate solid matter; it can, however, maneuver its viewpoint to peer through windows and portals, and, if it finds an open window or door, may move its viewpoint into and through a structure that way. It must trace an unbroken, unobstructed line to the structure's exterior though, and the simple act of closing a door along the

path breaks the connection. There are communicators designed to link to the Televisor and allow two-way conversations through it, but they haven't been used in centuries (HRRP with the standard Limitations of Molian devices and the Limitation *Only Through Televisor Connections* (-½)).

Cost Power

- 27 *Televisor*: Multipower, 96-point reserve; all OAF Immobile (-2), Requires a Systems Operation Roll (-½)
- 2u 1) *Internal Observation Mode*: Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Group), Mobile Perception Point (cannot move through solid objects), 4x Range (1,040"), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF Immobile (-2), Requires a Systems Operation Roll (-½)
- 3u 2) *Global Observation Mode*: Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Group), Mobile Perception Point (cannot move through solid objects), Megascala (1" = 1,000 km, can scale down to 1" = 1 km; +1¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF Immobile (-2), Requires a Systems Operation Roll (-½)

Total cost: 32 points.

ENCEPHALO-EDUCATOR

The encephalo-educator is one of the most remarkable items of technology left to the Molians. It takes the knowledge encoded on specialized metal-foil tapes stored on reels and imprints it directly into the Molian brain, shortcutting the learning process dramatically. Any skill for which a tape exists may be imprinted, even physical ones, although there will be a necessary assimilation period as the brain and body absorb the specially-coded information and practice accessing it. Mental skills are assimilated faster than physical ones, but a Molian becomes accustomed to even the most complex physical skills in little more than a month. Few tapes survived the crash, costing the Molians access to much of their technology, and they no longer possess the ability to make more. Aside from the tapes containing Molianic, English (the last tape manufactured), training instructions for soldiers, and various types of Molian scientific knowledge; all other surviving tapes concern Molian leisure activities like dancing.

Human minds are incompatible with the Molian encephalo-educator and cannot retain the information once it's imprinted for longer than INT/5 hours. Furthermore, the process is painful and potentially deadly to Humans: each tape imprinted by the device does 1d6 BODY (no defense applies) to a Human recipient. (It would certainly be in keeping with the spirit of the pulps for a hero to allow himself to be imprinted with the knowledge necessary to defuse or repair a Molian device, risking his life to save the city — or the world — from destruction!)

No game information is provided for the encephalo-educator — it's a plot device, not a real item of equipment.

PLOT SEEDS

One of the character's friends — a noted geologist — has made an amazing discovery while drilling core samples in the ice pack on Greenland: a giant meteorite appears to have struck Greenland not that long ago (a few hundreds of years), leaving a trail of metallic fragments and churned-up ice and soil as it skipped across the island. Are the characters interested in coming to the frozen land to help him follow the core sample trail to the meteorite? If they're busy or choose not to assist, what will they do when their friend and his expedition vanish off the face of the Earth?

Word reaches the characters that Baron Rickard von Kanzler (*Hero Plus Adventure 14: Four Fiends*) is planning an expedition to a remote area of Greenland. Why is a noted Nazi agent headed for such a desolate place? Could it be a feint to distract the characters from something more important? Can they take the chance that it isn't?

The members of the Molian Supremacy League, tired of being ignored by the High Mentarch, launch a plan to conquer the United States. Through diligent study they've devised a portable power radiator capable of connecting to a generator or electrical grid and broadcasting dyna energies for a five-mile radius. Stealing time on the Televisor when the Mentarch and his daughter are away, the League has made radio contact with a group of mobsters down on their luck. Determining that these surface men could be trusted up to a point, the Molians chose one of their number by lot to leave the city with the power radiator and a dozen Dyna-Guns. The League decided their member, using the code name Shadow King, would be safe enough from treachery since only he would be able to operate or repair the radiator. The gangsters, renaming themselves the Comet Mob, used the new weapons to eliminate their rivals and are now embarked on a rash of robberies to bankroll the Shadow King's plans. Meanwhile, the High Mentarch spotted the gangsters on their most recent raid and recognized his people's distinctive weapons. Aghast at the thought of the Molians' secrets being discovered in this way, he finally yielded to Mirilar's entreaties to allow her to handle the matter — she's the only one familiar enough with surface culture to pass among the Earthmen.

Thus the characters, who've been investigating the Comet Mob's crime wave, find themselves approached by an exotically attractive young woman who requests their assistance. She fears that her one of her father's inventions has been stolen and is being used by the Comet Mob (she apologizes, but says she has been instructed not to reveal his identity). If they agree to aid her, she has a locating device that may be able to track the gangsters back to their lair. She requests only that their weapons be given to her or destroyed. Will the characters trust her? Can they stop the Comet Mob, with or without her help? And, with her wish come true, will Mirilar be willing to return to her underground home?

OTHER MOLIAN TECHNOLOGY

Should you want to expand the technology available to the Molians and make them a more dangerous threat to the security of the world, the *HERO System* is there for you! The Detonation Ray and Engine-Stopping Ray from pages 319-20 of *Pulp Hero* are excellent examples of the kinds of devices the High Mentarch could assemble. Other of other devices he might create to threaten the world might include the Atmospheric Gas Cloud on page 113 of *VIPER* and the Earthquake Inducer on page 122 of *Champions*. Any devices like this would need to be altered by the addition of the *Does Not Function Outside Range Of City's Power Radiators* Limitation and have their ranges extended with the *MegaScale* Advantage so they could be targeted and fired from Pranamoltar, would require a power radiator system be set up close to the target area so they would function (as would Dyna-Guns and other devices), or would require they be "one-shot" devices with a hefty start-up time due to the need to draw huge amounts of power from the inefficient local Human power grid (thus giving the PCs the opportunity to prevent their use).

THE ISLAND OF THE PALE WHITE LADY



Northeast of the island of New Guinea, in the Solomon Sea, lies a small island north of the Trobriand Island chain and south of New Britain. Shunned and feared by the local islanders as a cursed place, it hides a terrifying secret of Earth-shattering proportions beneath its blue waters... and in the jungle-shrouded temple where native cultists worship the Pale White Lady under the light of the full moon.

GEOGRAPHY

The Island of the Pale White Lady is an irregularly-shaped flat coral island covered with rich, heavy soil well-suited to cultivation. Because of the sparse population and lack of agriculture, the vegetation has grown high and thick over most of the island, making passage across it difficult unless one follows an existing trail or hacks out a new one. There are beaches on all sides of the island, but the best ones are on the north and west coasts, parts of which are fringed by a reef. The water between the reefs and the island is blue, clear, and shallow enough that one can almost wade to the reefs at low tide. Beyond the shelter of the reefs the bottom drops off steeply, plunging into darkness after only a few dozen feet. The drop-off is especially pronounced on the eastern side of the island, particularly along the sides of the slender projecting arm that points to the northeast.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

There are two main seasons in the region: a dry season from May to October; and a rainy season from December to March. The average yearly rainfall is around 140 inches, usually spread out among constant showers, although there are occasional storms of great severity that blow through. Sailing in the open canoes used by the islanders is best undertaken during the inter-monsoons, from November to December and March to April. The island has a relatively uniform temperature of 21°-27° Celsius (70°-80° F) year-round, rarely deviating from that range in any way except upward.

WILDLIFE

The island's land-bound fauna include crocodiles (*The HERO System Bestiary*, page 149), parrots, and Torres Strait pigeons. The bush pig, a local variety of wild boar (use the Boar on page 140-141 of *The HERO System Bestiary*, but reduce STR to 10, remove the Bite and reduce the Tusk damage to ½d6 base damage) is prolific, and runs in small groups of three to six. Few other birds or large animals are found on the island.

A wide variety of fish and shellfish populate the reefs and shallow lagoons around the islands, and large schools of fish fill the deeper waters. Marine biologists might explain this by the relative lack of large oceanic predators such as sharks in the waters around the island, not unreasonably connecting the deeper, cooler waters surrounding the island to the scarcity. (In actuality, the Sytethiilar have hunted the local shark population to extinction over the centuries, and the only such predators appearing now are recently arrived transients.) Several types of rays, including stingrays, can also be found in the lagoons.

The lush vegetation on the island includes a great variety of native foodstuffs such as yams, tubers, bananas, various creepers, coconuts, sago, betel, and sugarcane. (Were it not for the presence of the cultists and their temple, the island would be, in fact, a much richer and more desirable home than most of the nearby inhabited islands.) Large trees are found only on the central core of the island, where the soil is deeper and the occasional storms do not vent as much force on them. The natives occasionally cut several down for use in making canoes and houseposts or repairing the Temple of the Pale White Lady.

PEOPLE

Locals from other islands believe the Island of the Pale White Lady is uninhabited except by the souls of the dead who await transport to the next life where the Pale White Lady dwells. Sightings of strange lights, unnatural shapes, and peculiar structures on the island are viewed as nothing more than proof of this. No one — living or dead — goes to it and returns.

Unfortunately, the locals are wrong; living worshippers of the Pale White Lady reside on the island (and, in secret, on several nearby islands, particularly the Trobriands). They're more of a Polynesian people in terms of physical appearance and cultural outlook than the majority of the other island populations throughout Melanesia. Many of them, if dressed appropriately, would be virtually indistinguishable from a native resident of Tahiti, Samoa, or even Hawaii. The cultists explain this by saying that the children of the Goddess guided them here in ages past to serve and worship her. Other islands tell stories of the kidnappings of canoeloads of their people by a terrifying race of water-demons.

Due to their lack of participation in inter-island trading and marriages, the cultists are an inbred lot. Many of them have visible deformities that twist their bodies in an outer reflection of the madness that lies within them.

Culture

Aside from their worship of the Pale White Lady, the cultists are much like other natives in the area culturally, although they do not trade or interact with other island populations in any way except to gather sacrifices for the goddess from them. They dress the same, have many of the same rituals and ceremonies (albeit with a twist that attributes good things to their goddess), and so forth. They're all become used to the sight of the Sytethiilar from early childhood, and their religious fanaticism has already warped their minds enough so they take no damage from seeing Syteth on the rare occasions when she emerges from the depths. Their shared, culturally-dictated image of the Pale White Lady is of a beautiful native woman with pure white skin and hair whose grass skirt seems to move of its own accord in the water, shielding her lower body from view.

One unusual point of interest that sharp-eyed characters might notice is the relative lack of elderly residents on the islands near the Island of the Pale White Lady. (Have them make a PER Roll at -3 initially, then if necessary successive rolls with the penalty decreasing by 1 point for each hour spent on the island.) Inquiries will be met with the simple explanation "they've gone to the sea" by most locals, but persistent inquiries to friendly individuals (perhaps a character's new wife!) away from large groups will elicit a more detailed explanation. There's a long-standing tradition among the local islands that elderly residents who feel the

pangs of age and decide that they're becoming a burden on their families, must go and sit on a specific remote beach (a different one on each island) for the seven nights before the full moon to await the Children of Lythilli (their name for Syteth, absorbed into local mythology as the goddess of the underworld). The Children will carry them off to the Island of the Pale White Lady to await transport to the next life. If, on the morning of the full moon, a person hasn't been carried off, it's taken as a sign that it isn't his time yet and he's welcomed back into his family. No native understands what really happens on the Island, and none willingly go there — the island is considered taboo, a place only for the dead awaiting transport to the afterlife.

DIET

On and off the Island of the Pale White Lady the local diet is a rich and varied one, changing little from island to island. The main and only cooked meal is at sunset, after the gardening has been completed, and generally consists of yams, taro, and occasionally fish, wild fowl, pork, or sea-bird eggs. During the day, breadfruit, bananas, and green coconuts and their milk may be eaten while working. Other secondary foods include limes, oranges, nuts, maize, clams, oysters, cockles, mussels, other shellfish, crayfish, rock cod, prawns (a delicacy), dugong, and turtle. Lizards, grubs, and other insects are also eaten. Betel chewed with lime is the popular stimulant.

Fishing is a specialty of coastal villages, where it's the predominant mode of subsistence. Fishermen organize themselves into detachments, each led by a headman who owns the canoe, performs the magic to ensure a successful catch, and reaps the main share of the catch. Fishing techniques include the use of nets, hooks, lines, traps, spears, and poison. The cultists actually fish less than the residents of other islands, since the Sytethiilar bring a variety of fish to the village each day so there's time to properly worship Syteth and to secure sacrifices for her.

STRUCTURES

The natives' dwellings are rectangular log frames, covered over with steeply-pitched, thatched roofs that reach to the ground. The yam storage houses, usually located across a street from the dwellings, are built on piles and are often larger and more elaborate than the dwellings. Those of chiefs and noblemen may be decorated with carved and painted boards. Settlements are arranged in two or more concentric half circles facing a central ceremonial plaza used for community-wide rituals. The first ring consists of the yam houses, and the second ring of the dwellings that face them. Adolescent and adult unmarried males and females live in bachelor houses separate from their natal families. The chief's house often stands in the center of the half circle of storehouses facing the plaza. Behind the houses are the gardens, and beyond those the groves of fruit trees.

TRADE

Trading is an important part of Oceanic island life, and villagers greet all arriving visitors as potential trading partners with a ceremonial display that concludes with the scantily (and often scandalously) clad most eligible and desirable young women in the village approaching arrivals with gifts. (This practical tradition not only encourages frequent visits and thus frequent trade, but also helps keep the local gene pool from growing too small by encouraging cross-island marriages.) Successful trading visits, and indeed, virtually any visit from outsiders, are viewed as a reason for celebration, so characters can expect to be entertained and feasted like royalty. The overall round of trading is known as “Kula” or “the Kula Exchange”; it follows common trade routes called “Kula circles.” (Naturally, none of this holds true on the Island of the Pale White Lady, where the residents don’t mingle with other islanders and view visitors as sacrifices to their goddess. The Island isn’t part of any Kula circle.)

Gift-giving is an integral part of the local culture, and exchanges will be offered as a matter of course. Characters may make a SS: Anthropology Roll at -2 to determine appropriate return gifts (see sidebar). Speaking to any European resident of the area or hiring a local guide prior to landing on a native island will alert them to this facet of local culture and give them an idea of appropriate return gifts with a simple INT Roll.

LANGUAGE

The cultists, as well as the natives who live on the surrounding islands, all speak various dialects that spring from the central Samoan language family. A speaker of Samoan can communicate easily with them, although vocabulary differences may occasionally require an INT Roll to grasp obscure concepts successfully. A few natives on some islands have basic conversation in a European language (usually English, French, German, or Dutch), especially if they’ve had contact with missionaries or traders. Few, if any, natives are literate (unless perhaps they were educated by a missionary).

The Sytethiilar speak a horrid, hissing language heavy on sibilants that cannot be properly duplicated by the human vocal apparatus. The written form of their language uses a system of cursive, multi-branched characters that resembles nothing so much as seaweed waving in an ocean current (it’s actually derived from the movements of the tentacular fringe that circles their goddess’s mouth). There’s an unsettling, disturbing quality about the writing that makes it seem somehow *wrong*, as if the characters shouldn’t be examining it. Any character who does more than make a cursory glance at the writing loses 1 point of PRE for purposes of resisting or making Presence Attacks by or against worshippers of the Pale White Lady. The lost PRE returns after the end of the adventure. Any character who has the *Unimpressed* Heroic Talent (*Pulp Hero*, page 276), the *Fearless* Talent (*Fantasy Hero*, page 106), or some similar ability is immune to this effect. Characters with Universal Translator may make a roll at -4 to gain comprehension of what the eel-men say or write but cannot respond back ver-

bally. But they may wish they couldn’t comprehend the Sytethiilar: their greater level of understanding costs them 1 point of PRE per attempt (either spoken or written) to a maximum of 3 points.

WARFARE

Due to a lack of actual formal warfare in the islands for centuries, both the cultists and the local natives are relatively unsophisticated when it comes to combat. Residents of nearby islands tend to engage in a certain amount of upfront ceremonial posturing before getting down to any actual fighting, but they’re willing to skip that in stressful situations (such as a grievous insult). In ordinary situations, first they posture, then they throw spears at the enemy, then they charge the enemy, then they whack the enemy with a war club, repeating the last step as needed. In less formal combat they typically forego the posturing, spear-throwing, and charge, moving straight to the war club.

The cultists, having nothing to gain by posturing displays or stand-up fights, attack by ambush almost exclusively. Only if encountered defending their village or the Temple of the Pale White Lady will they fight a stand-up battle. When doing so they fight with a frenzied fury (+1 OCV, +5 STR). When supported by the Sytethiilar, the cultists become a deadlier threat thanks to the eel-men’s superior ranged weapons and physical abilities, particular when fighting at night.

Both local islanders and the cultists use these weapons: spears (HKA 1d6+1, STR MIN 10, +1” Reach, Can Be Thrown) that are more typically thrown than wielded as melee weapons; war clubs (5d6 N, STR MIN 12, 1½ H); and knives (HKA ½d6, STR MIN 4, Can Be Thrown). Neither group wears armor of any sort, although wicker shields (+1 DCV, STR MIN 5, no bash attack) are not uncommon. The Sytethiilar utilize their own weapons, described below.

Religion

For the natives of nearby islands, religion, in the sense of dealings with the supernatural world, is almost completely concerned with the magic that is used to influence the outcome of gardening, fishing, and Kula endeavors. There are quite a few missionaries that live on or tour the islands, and it isn’t considered unusual to find villages that are predominantly Christian but that still follow traditional island ceremonies in addition to more recognizable Christian ones.

THE CULT OF THE PALE WHITE LADY

The cultists, on the other hand, practice horrific rites involving human sacrifice and the worship of Syteth. They regularly tour the surrounding islands on the days before the full moon in the company of groups of Sytethiilar and collect the elderly individuals they find there for sacrifice to Syteth. The Sytethiilar swim ashore, grab the unsuspecting old folk, and bring them out to waiting canoes. The cultists then take them back to the Island of the Pale White Lady to await the

THE PERILS OF GIFT GIVING

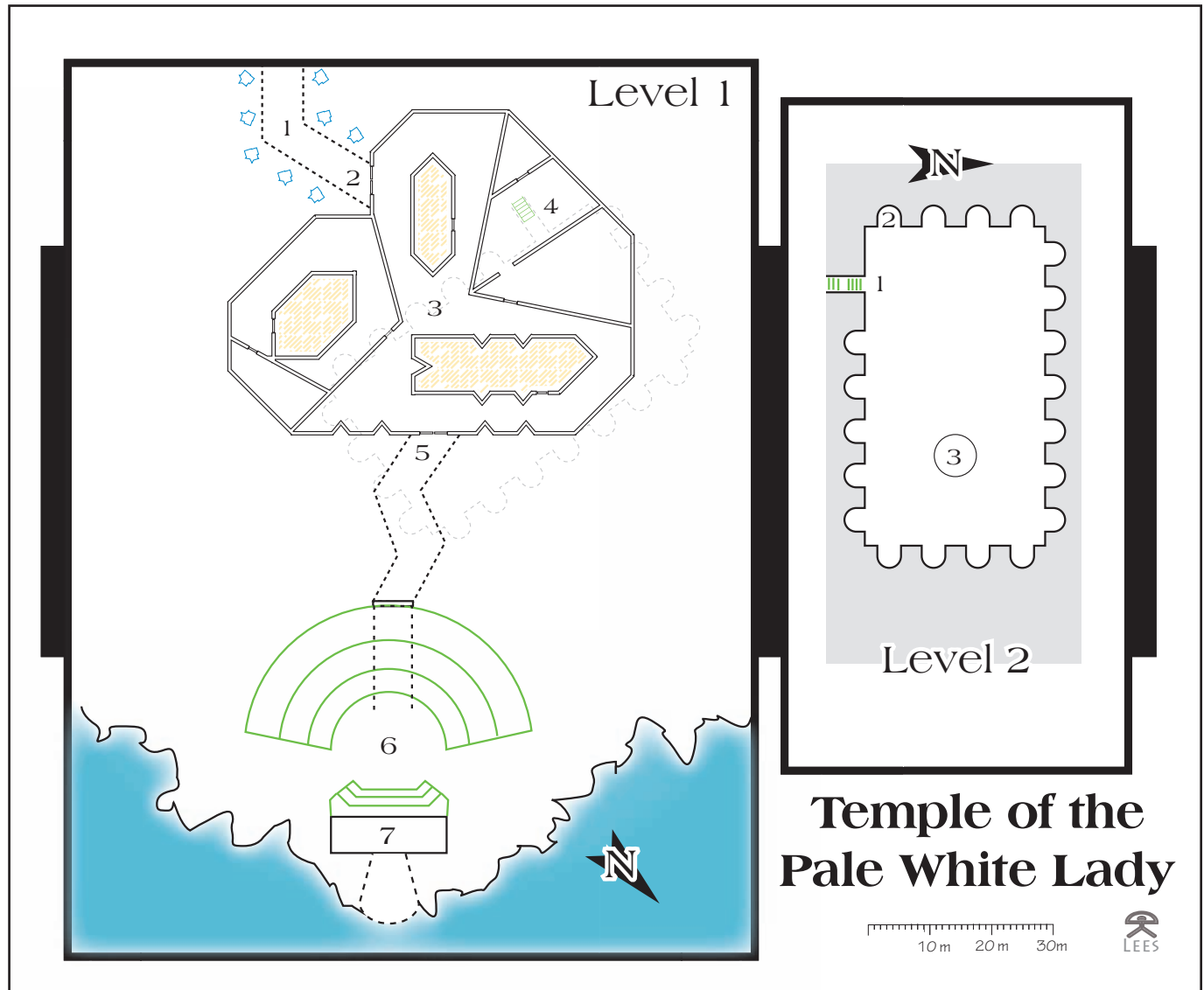
The rules and nuances that govern the complex system of ceremonial reciprocity that the islanders practice are large enough to fill a good-sized book all by themselves. In short, the idea of the system is that each gift has a ceremonially and culturally appropriate response-gift that must be offered in return to avoid insult and bad luck. Failing to give the correct response-gift is a bad thing, something that can reflect poorly on an entire village. Refusing a gift is even worse, as it’s equivalent to telling the giver that they’re not worthy of participating in the gift exchange process with — a deadly insult that can only be washed away in blood.

Characters who offer a gift that does not fit within the existing system, either because of its rarity or (in the natives’ eyes) uniqueness, or who offer a similarly rare or unique gift in response to one given them, place the receiver of the gift in a quandary, requiring him to offer them the most valuable of his possessions, lest he be marked as a “bad giver” and both he and his village suffer for it. In such a situation, the gift-giving character may find himself offered the village’s most eligible young woman as a wife with the wedding to take place immediately (local chiefs have the power to make binding marriages with only a few words)... with the price of refusal being a deadly battle breaking out on the spot!



full moon. Old souls are of more use to Syteth in anchoring herself to this dimension, because they've accumulated more experiences that tie them to it, so both the cultists and the Sytethiilar consider grey/white hair to be a sign of a sacrifice's suitability. Having never encountered people with blonde hair before, they're likely to consider them suitable sacrifices as well. Particularly desirable would be men with such hair that appeared to be physically fit and healthy, since

it would be assumed they'd make fine mates for Syteth and good fathers for a new generation of Sytethiilar. To obtain such potent sacrifices they'd be willing to snatch victims off the decks of ships at sea, or pursue them further onto land than they would normally.



Temple of the Pale White Lady

The cultists hold the sacrifices at the temple until the full moon, at which time the high priest casts a spell on them that allows them to breathe and see underwater and survive the pressures and temperatures of the depths. The victim's hands and feet are bound, rocks are tied to their feet, and they're ceremonially dropped off the edge of the cliff outside the Temple of the Pale White Lady to sink down into the depths where Syteth awaits them. The spell ensures that sacrificial victims are alive and able to see the Goddess as she comes for them, a great honor in the cult's eyes. (Sacrifices are, of course, free to disagree with this interpretation as long as they're able.) The cliff face has numerous projecting ledges and projections underwater; it isn't unusual for a sacrifice to land on, or be caught by, one of them, giving companions time to dive off the cliff and attempt a rescue. If the sacrifice takes too long to arrive, a group of Sytethiilar swim up to see what the problem is, complicating a potential rescue attempt. If they don't return, or if Syteth detects an unusual disturbance, she emerges from the depths herself to investigate.

TEMPLE OF THE PALE WHITE LADY

Built from slabs of black basalt raised up from deep under the ocean by Syteth herself, the temple is a vine-covered collection of (a) jutting monoliths carved with prayers to the Goddess by generations of Sytethiilar and cultists and (b) unevenly shaped rooms with walls that meet in angles no human architect would consider using. When seen by daylight it's oppressive and disturbing; if viewed it by night, with torches or other artificial lights that generate many shadows, it's sinister and terrifying.

THE TEMPLE

- 1. Approach:** Lined with ever-so-slightly unsymmetrical plinths of basalt covered with stylized carvings that seem to move slightly when seen out of the corner of one's eye, but remain motionless when directly observed, the approach is a sort of stone causeway leading into the temple proper.
- 2. Entrance:** More carvings like those on the Approach cover the entranceway, but the effect is more pronounced: non-cultists experience a

Presence Attack 3d6 (run away in terror) from the unnatural feel of the place as they attempt to enter. The door is a slab of stone raised from the sea bed hung on perfectly-balanced hinge pins; it swings open with just a touch. (This shows a level of technology far beyond anything the cultists should have.)

3. Main Temple: The walls of this building all seem to meet or jut out at bizarre angles; some walls slant out at the floor, some slant out at the ceiling, and some bulge out in the middle. There are numerous rooms, most of whose purposes are unclear to anyone not of the cult, and three open-air courtyards. Internal doors are slabs of stone that pivot easily on hinge pins. None of them have locks, although they're not always easy to spot (-1 to Concealment rolls). There are normally one or two cultists in the temple at any time of the day or night unless there's a sacrifice going on, in which case they're all at the amphitheatre except for the guards on captives that haven't been summoned for sacrifice yet. Characters spending more than a few Phases in the temple lose another 1 point of PRE as their minds struggle to sort out shadow from reality and the unnatural construction aesthetic hammers at their sanity.

4. Stairs To Lower Level

5. Sacrificial Path: Cultists lead sacrificial victims down this path to the altar. The path continues in darkness through the foundations of the amphitheatre and emerges on the other side in front of the altar.

6. Sacrificial Amphitheatre: A semi-circular space at the very point of the island; here sacrifices are dropped over the cliff to the sea to the sounds of the cultist's unnatural chants and the inhuman songs of the Sytethiilar. (Characters witnessing the ceremony suffer an additional loss of ½d6 PRE.) Stone benches line the arcs of the open structure, which is broken only by the passageway that allows through access for the sacrificial victims.

7. Sacrificial Altar: At the far end of the area, on the edge of the cliff, is a great rectangle of basalt that serves the cultists as an altar. Five wide steps lead up to the altar's raised surface. Here the high priest casts the spell on the victims that prepare them for the sacrifice. Then cultists tie three rocks to their feet and bind their hands. Then the cultists spin the victim around three times and push him off the edge of the altar so that he falls and lands on a slide whose surface is lined with smooth, slick volcanic glass treated with sacred oils. The victim slips down the slide, goes over the edge of the cliff, and falls into the dark waters below.

THE CHAMBER BELOW

Carved out of the living rock, the lower level of the temple consists of a single room where the cult holds captives for sacrifice. The ceiling is surprisingly high, reaching nearly 10 feet, and the ceiling and walls are arched and ribbed in a way that gives the unsettling impression that one is inside some living creature. Spending more than 1 Turn in this room costs characters another 1 point of PRE.

1. Stairs To Main Level

2. Cells: The hemispherical holding cells are barred with stout saplings lashed together (DEF 3, BODY 5). Sacrificial victims are allowed out to walk around the chamber under the watchful gaze of the cultists once a day and may clean themselves with water from the open pool in the floor of the room. Food is brought twice a day, morning and evening.

3. Pool: Fed by a freshwater spring, the pool falls into darkness very quickly as it drops down inside the cliff and emerges out into the ocean underwater. In the event of trouble, cultists are trained to throw a rock into the pool that strikes a metal plate a short distance down, summoning 1½d6 Sytethiilar who swim up through the pool in 3 Turns.

INDIVIDUALS

HIGH PRIEST MOMANALU

10 STR	15 DEX	15 CON	13 BODY
13 INT	15 EGO	14 PRE	8 COM
5 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
30 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: Strong Swimming (+2"); +1 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups; +1 HTH; AK: Local Area Islands 12-; KS: Syteth Doctrine 13-; Oratory 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Cult Leader 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Tropical) 12-; TF: Small Rowed Boats; WF: Common Melee Weapons; Fringe Benefit (cult high priest/leader)

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Demands Respect; Psychological Limitation: Lives to serve Pale White Lady and her Cult; Social Limitation: Burdens Of Cult Leadership

Notes: Momanalu inherited the position of high priest to the Pale White Lady from his uncle, as is considered proper among his people. He studied the ancient ritual knowledge passed down from the Goddess and participated in the sacrifices to her glory, until he learned to perform the magic granted to her priests. He has led the Cult of Syteth for some fifteen years now, serving his goddess with great faithfulness.

Momanalu is 5'5" and has added some extra pounds to his formerly wiry frame due to good living. Proud of his successful service, he sees himself as greatly favored by the Goddess and deserving of the best his tribe has to offer. He harshly punishes anyone who fails to accord him the respect he deserves, whether captives or his own people. An observant outsider may spot the traces of madness in his demeanor — and similar signs, to a lesser degree, among his fellow cultists.

AVEOLELA — THE BRIDE OF SYTETH

10 STR	15 DEX	14 CON	10 BODY
10 INT	12 EGO	12 PRE	16 COM
3 PD	3 ED	2 SPD	5 REC
28 END	22 STUN		

Abilities: +1 to Sight PER Rolls; Greater Sensitivity; AK: Local Area Islands 12-; Climbing 12-; KS: Local Folklore 11-; KS: Local Food Plants 11-; Language: English (Basic Conversation, Illiterate); PS: Primitive Cooking 12-; Seduction 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Tropical) 11-; TF: Small Rowed Boats; WF: Knife, Spear

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Family; Psychological Limitation: Unfamiliar with Modern Culture; Social Limitation: Minority; Social Limitation: Woman

Notes: Aveolela was born on an island in the chain near the Island of the Pale White Lady. When she was five years old, she contracted a rare disease. A visiting missionary doctor cured her and she recovered after a lengthy convalescence. Due to the high fevers she suffered during her illness, she was left with a bright white streak of hair at her left temple. She also developed a peculiar sixth sense that allowed her to notice the use of psychic powers or similar effects. It took several years before she figured out what caused her to feel these "mental vibrations," but she learned to connect them with manifestations of servants of Syteth.

Aveolela has become one of the most attractive girls on her island. She is 5'3" tall and well-proportioned. The white streak in her coal-black hair serves to distinguish her from her compatriots. She was captured when trying to persuade her great-aunt not to wait on the beach for the Children of Lythilli (she's tried to persuade the people of her village to abandon this practice, with limited success). Aveolela is suffering in her captivity from the close proximity of the dark magics of the Syteth cultists, and may pass out from the pain at inconvenient moments when being rescued.

TYPICAL CULTIST

12 STR	12 DEX	12 CON	12 BODY
10 INT	10 EGO	10 PRE	8 COM
5 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	4 REC
24 END	24 STUN		

Abilities: +1 HTH; AK: Local Area Islands 12-; KS: Cult of Syteth 11-; PS: Fisherman 11-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Marine) 12-; TF: Small Rowed Boats; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons; Fringe Benefit (Syteth Cultist)

75+ Disadvantages: Watched: Cult High Priest; Psychological Limitation: Lives to serve Pale White Lady and her Cult; Social Limitation: Subject to Orders

Notes: The cultists are primarily interested in capturing living victims for their Goddess, and in defending their temple and faith from interlopers. They've little further interest in interaction with other islanders or any passing adventurers. Their weapons are described above.

MOMANALU'S SPELLS

Momanalu only knows two spells (unless you want him to know more, in which case the *Fantasy Hero Grimoires*, *The Ultimate Mystic*, and *DEMON* all have many examples to add to his arsenal):

The Blessings Of Syteth:

This is the spell cast on sacrificial victims so they can survive until they sink far enough to encounter Syteth. A clever character might allow himself to be sacrificed to receive the spell so he can rescue a comrade who's already been dropped over the cliff.

Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater; Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold), Usable As Attack (+1), Line Of Sight Not Needed After Initial Use (+½) (20 Active Points); 1 Continuing Charge lasting 20 Minutes (-½), Extra Time (Extra Phase to cast; -¾) (total cost: 9 points) **plus** Night-vision, Usable As Attack (+1), Line Of Sight Not Needed After Initial Use (+½) (12 Active Points); 1 Continuing Charge lasting 20 Minutes (-½), Extra Time (Extra Phase to cast; -¾) (total cost: 5 points). Total cost of spell: 14 points.

Moray Madness: This spell is Momanalu's secret weapon. He bends over, crouching and retching for a Full Phase, and then literally coughs up a translucent white eel that flies through the air and slithers down the throat of the target, inflicting a senses-shattering mental shock to them.

Ego Attack 3d6 (30 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Visible (-¼). Total cost: 17 points.

SYTETHIILAR

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [3]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
15	CON	10	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	14-	PRE Attack: 3d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
8	PD	5		Total: 8 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	0		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
30	END	0		
28	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 42

Movement: Running: 4"/8"
Swimming: 8"/16"

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Lamprey-Like Bite:</i> HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR)	1
3	<i>Eel-Like Body:</i> +5 PD; Only Versus Blunt/Crushing Damage (-½)	0
8	<i>Both Gills And Lungs:</i> Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Oxygen; Safe Environment: High Pressure, Intense Cold)	0
6	<i>Swims Like An Eel:</i> Swimming +6" (8" total)	2
-4	<i>Difficulty On Land:</i> Running -2" (4" total)	
5	<i>Underwater Eyes:</i> Nightvision	0
5	<i>Eel's Senses:</i> Increased Arc Of Perception (240 degrees) for Sight Group	0
6	<i>Eel's Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
4	<i>Eel's Senses:</i> +2 PER with Smell/Taste Group	0
5	<i>Eel's Senses:</i> Tracking for Normal Smell	0
5	<i>Terrifying Threat Display:</i> +10 PRE; Only For Fear-Based Presence Attacks (-1)	0

Talents

4 *Eel-Like Body:* Double-Jointed

Skills

10 +2 HTH
3 Contortionist 12-
2 AK: Local Ocean Floor 11-
3 Stealth 12-
2 Survival (Marine) 11-
5 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons, Nets

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 82

Total Cost: 124

75+ Disadvantages

25 Psychological Limitation: Amoral, Inhuman Thought Processes (Very Common, Total)
25 Psychological Limitation: Unswervingly Loyal to Syteth (Very Common, Total)

Total Disadvantage Points: 125

Ecology: Despite their capacity to do so, the Sytethiilar have surprisingly little impact on the ecology around them. They normally live in deep, dark waters, below the level of light penetration. They make their homes in holes and crevices on the sides of seamounts, sunless caverns under the earth, or the foulest and most dank corners of the sewers beneath man's great metropolises. They hunt in packs, typically selecting large prey like whales that many of them can surround and attack at once; the round, puckered scars left by their hideous mouths are normally explained away as the results of a battle between their prey and a giant squid. There are no female Sytethiilar, each new generation of males is birthed by the goddess they serve, and fathered by a chosen human sacrifice in a ritual of sanity-destroying horror.

Personality/Motivation: The Sytethiilar have little in the way of personality or individuality in human terms. Their entire existence is bound up in serving the Pale White Lady. They follow her commands unquestioningly, even willingly walking or swimming to certain destruction if she so wills it. Because of that devotion and their inhuman origins, their minds work in ways that are at odds with normal human motivations, resulting in behavior that sometimes appears bizarre and random. For example, a Sytethiilar confronted by a kitten might flee in terror on one occasion, snatch it up and eat it on a second, and on a third occasion ignore it entirely. The exception to this is when they're acting on their Goddess's instructions, or on those of a designated human worshipper — then they behave more like automatons, unswervingly following the plans or instructions they receive.

Powers/Tactics: Perfectly adapted for their aquatic life, the Sytethiilar can dive to tremendous depths and endure the frigid temperatures there. Their skeletal structure is largely cartilaginous and extremely flexible, allowing them to flatten themselves and fit into spaces that nothing their size should be able to. Their bodies are designed to compress slightly to help equalize pressure, which also serves to make them more resistant to blunt impacts. Their eyes are set far enough back along the sides of their heads that their arc of vision is greatly increased, and are large enough to gather in any bit of light to see by. (Because of this, they rarely venture forth in the daytime; it isn't debilitating or blinding, but is quite uncomfortable.) Their sense of smell is on a level with a shark's, allowing them to track prey and other individuals by scent both underwater and on the surface. They swim by pressing their legs together and rotating their feet to form a horizontal surface, holding their arms and hands against their sides, and then propel themselves along by moving their entire body side to side in an S-shaped wave. Using that wavelike pattern, they can move forward or backward with equal ease. Seeing a Sytethiilar for the first time costs the viewer 1 point of PRE as described above; this loss is cumulative with other losses (such as for viewing Sytethiilar script or the temple), but characters don't accrue losses for seeing additional Sytethiilar after the first.

Conversely, the Sytethiilar don't function well on land. They suffer penalties of -2 DCV and -2 DCs with most attacks (though not their bite) when on the surface. If at all possible they retreat to the water to fight.

When engaging in combat, the Sytethiilar typically wield spears with odd, slightly ridged conical heads (HKA 1½d6, STR MIN 10, +1" Reach); nets woven from tough seaweed fibers (Entangle 3d6, 3 DEF, Entangle And Character Both Take Damage, One Hex, Range Based On STR, 1 Recoverable Charge); or slender, spring-powered dart throwers shaped like nautiloid shells that propel needle-tipped finned darts equally effectively in the water or on land (RKA 1d6+1, Armor Piercing, +1 Range Modifier, Extra Phase to reload, 10 Recoverable Charges). While feeding, or if in close combat and disarmed, they use their terrible bite to good effect, attempting to hang on and literally chew their way into a victim. The sight of their heads opening up to reveal the toothed maw within is enough to give the strongest man pause, and the Sytethiilar often accompany it with a hissing cry to startle and stun victims on land.

If left to their own devices, Sytethiilar prefer to strike when their targets are in or on the water. They net victims in the water, overturn canoes and other small boats so they can more easily get at the passengers, or swarm onto larger craft. They venture onto land to attack or plan an ambush only if they must (*i.e.*, if the Goddess or a designated cultist orders them to). Their obvious inhumanity makes it difficult for them to pass on land as anything remotely human, but a large trenchcoat, a pulled down fedora, and a dark or shadowy alley will allow them to pass unless examined too closely.

Appearance: The Sytethiilar are eel-like humanoids with elongated heads, unnaturally thin arms and legs, and a slender, muscular torso; they stand a uniform 5'7" in height. Their flat, black, pupilless eyes are larger and set further to the sides of their heads than a human's. They don't have external noses, just a pair of tube-like nostrils set where a human's nose would be. Their skin is stark, fishbelly white. They don't have fins, instead possessing fleshy ridges along the centers of their chests and backs, and the fronts and backs of their legs. Their hands have three long flexible fingers and a thumb; their feet lack toes, instead having three pointed protrusions linked by a thick muscular membrane, the middle point protrudes out further than the ones on the sides. When a Sytethiilar prepares to bite someone, its entire head appears to open wider than seems possible, displaying a funnel-like sucking mouth with concentric rings of sharp, boring teeth, like those of a lamprey. They wear no clothing, except sometimes a fringed cloth about their waists.

SYTETH, THE PALE WHITE LADY

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
50	STR	70	19-	Lift 25 tons; 10d6 [5]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
35	CON	80	16-	
35	BODY	80	16-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
30	EGO	60	15-	ECV: 10
35	PRE	40	16-	PRE Attack: 7d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
20	PD	20		Total: 28 PD (8 rPD)
15	ED	15		Total: 23 ED (8 rED)
3	SPD	2		Phases: 4, 8, 12
17	REC	0		
70	END	0		
78	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 396

Movement: Running: 0"/0"
Swimming: 22"/44"
Stretching 4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Bite:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR)	3
10	<i>Deadly Coils And Tail:</i> HA +3d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	1
65	<i>Horror From Beyond:</i> Drain EGO 2d6, Area of Effect (22" radius; +1¼), Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Month; +2), Continuous (+1), Personal Immunity (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Always On (-½), Only Affects Those That Can And Do Look At Syteth And Do Not Bear A Lythilli Talisman (-½)	0
30	<i>Tough Skin:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED), Hardened (+¼)	0
30	<i>Unnatural Vitality:</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
20	<i>Unnatural Vitality:</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%; Does Not Work Against Fire Or Electricity (-½)	0
18	<i>Unnatural Vitality:</i> Healing BODY 3d6 (Regeneration; 3 BODY per Turn), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Self Only (-½), Not Versus Fire Or Electricity (-½)	0
5	<i>Both Gills And Lungs:</i> Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Oxygen)	0
3	<i>Only Swims:</i> Life Support (Safe Environment: High Pressure, Intense Cold)	0
5	<i>Unnatural Vitality:</i> Life Support (Longevity: Immortality)	0
30	<i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -15"	0
-12	<i>No Land Movement:</i> Running -6" (0" total)	
37	<i>Swift Swimmer:</i> Swimming +20" (22" total)	2
5	<i>Tentacular Fringe:</i> Extra Limbs (lots)	0
24	<i>Tentacular Fringe:</i> Stretching 4", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Limited Body Parts (tentacles only; -¼)	0
17	<i>Many Selves:</i> Mind Link, specific group of up to 8 minds, can reach into other dimensions; Only With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1)	0

5	<i>Hyperdimensional Senses: Infrared Perception (Sight Group)</i>	0
5	<i>Hyperdimensional Senses: Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group)</i>	0
3	<i>Hyperdimensional Senses: Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group)</i>	0
22	<i>Hyperdimensional Senses: Spatial Awareness</i>	0
27	<i>Hyperdimensional Senses: Telescopic (+6 versus range for Sight, Hearing and Smell Groups)</i>	0
10	<i>Hyperdimensional Senses: Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees) for Sight Group</i>	0
9	<i>Hyperdimensional Senses: +3 with PER Rolls for all Sense Groups</i>	0

Skills

15	+3 HTH
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Total Powers & Skills Cost: 415

Total Cost: 811

75+ Disadvantages

25	Distinctive Feature: Thing-Man-Was-Not-Meant-To-Swim-With (Not Concealable, Extreme Reaction)
25	Psychological Limitation: Amoral, Inhuman Intelligence (Very Common, Total)
25	Psychological limitation: Seeks to Bring Its Totality Into Earth's Dimension (Very Common, Total)
15	Physical Limitation: Gargantuan (64m long; -10 DCV, +10 to PER Rolls to perceive) (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
10	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap (cannot leap) (Infrequent, Slightly Limiting)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Fire (Common)
5	Vulnerability: 1½ x BODY from Electricity (Uncommon)
611	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 811

Ecology: The entity known on Earth as Syteth is, in actuality, a hyperdimensional being existing completely outside Earth's space-time continuum. What terrestrial minds perceive as a complete entity is more akin to a probe sent sideways through space-time into Earth's dimension to prepare the way for the actual entity to cross over. (That's what the character sheet represents — one of the probes — Syteth in her full self being far more powerful than this.) The core entity has a total of eight such probes available, and once it inserts all eight into Earth's dimension they can perform a ritual that will shear through the ancient bindings and barriers that block entities of Syteth's sort from entering Earth's dimension and allow the Pale White Lady to fully enter... in the process destroying all mankind.

Currently, Syteth has only five probes in place spread around the globe in remote locations dictated by the alien, occult geometry which governs the ritual. The first is located in the dark waters beneath a small, deserted island near the Trobriand Islands; the second in a large lake hidden inside a sunless cavern beneath the mountains in upstate New York; the third in eastern Africa, in a lake that fills an

extinct volcano; the fourth resides in a remote Scottish loch; and the fifth is located deep in the waters off the Falkland Islands. In all of those locations, Syteth has human cults that provide sacrifices and assistance (usually thinking themselves the only such cult), and colonies of Sytethiilar or similar beings to serve her. Some cults are larger than others, and command more resources, but in all cases their main line of defense is remaining undetected.

Opening the way for a probe requires decades of ceremonies and sacrifices by residents of this dimension at specific locations, and the presence of a certain number of the Sytethiilar to act as a link. The remaining three sites (to be chosen by the GM) are all identified and preparations at them are underway. Syteth's human servants expect to be successful and breach the walls between the worlds within a few years.

Once here, the Pale White Lady's probe-selves eat voraciously for a while, then rest for months at a time before requiring food again. She rarely hunts for herself, depending on her Sytethiilar to provide for her, but her ocean-dwelling selves occasionally strike off on their own to hunt a whale or other large ocean creature and devour it to help sustain those who are trapped in their locations and cannot do so. Syteth requires regular human sacrifices as part of her sustenance, devouring their soul-essences along with their bodies and using that energy to help anchor her probe-selves to this dimension.

Personality/Motivation: Aside from the overriding desire to bring herself fully into this world, Syteth's motivations are as alien and inhuman as can be imagined. She eats, she rests, and she thinks unknowable thoughts in the quiet still waters as she waits for the day when she has inserted all her selves into this dimension and can bring herself fully over to feed and feed until even her bottomless hunger has been sated.

Powers/Tactics: The extensions of Syteth that are her probe-selves are powerful beyond the capacity of mere terrestrial matter. All of her selves are in contact with each other constantly, as they're really all the same entity. She's immensely strong, capable of capsizing and sinking vessels larger than herself, and supremely adapted to aquatic life. Her terrible jaws can kill a man with a single snap, and the irresistible tentacles that surround her mouth can snatch victims up and drag them down to die — or worse — beneath the waves. Terrestrial weapons are only partially effective against the substance that composes her unnatural flesh, particularly weapons designed to be man-portable such as guns or knives. Larger weapons of destruction such as torpedoes, naval cannon, and artillery are more capable of doing harm to her, but even they are blunted somewhat. The pseudo-flesh that composes her probe-selves repairs itself at a startling rate, closing wounds before the eyes of observers almost as fast as they can injure her. She's only truly vulnerable to the primal, elemental forces of fire and electricity, both of which sever the molecular bindings of the non-terrestrial material comprising her probe-selves.

Perhaps her most dangerous ability, however, is a side-effect of her probe-selves' hyperdimensional composition: the human mind is not constructed to absorb the extra levels of input that it receives through its visual receptors when looking at her. The corrupted information flow erodes the onlooker's sanity until it shatters and his mind assembles an image that it can accept when viewed through the lens of his new insanity. (For simplicity's sake, assume that once a character's EGO has been Drained to a negative number he's been driven mad by the effect; there's no need to keep counting up the Drain at that point.) For some unknowable reason, such assembled images are always perceived as female and white in color whatever form they take.

The only way to avoid this fate is to carry a Lythilli Talisman, a white gold and moonstone pendant originally created by a sorcerer who opposed Syteth in dim ages gone by to shield the wearer from this effect by imposing a filter on his perceptions. The talisman bears no other powers and isn't a terribly complex enchantment, just an unusual one unlikely to be recreated except on purpose. Details on the manufacture are difficult, but not impossible to find if one examines the proper libraries (the secretive Forbidden Collections of the Vatican, for example, or the rumored "Shadow Library" maintained by the Louvre), and any skilled mystic could make a dozen or so in as little as a month. There are a number of Lythilli Talismans extant in the world as well, usually in the collections of individuals like Dr. Yin Wu, but occasionally one surfaces in an estate auction and is sold as simple jewelry with no idea of its purpose or value.

Campaign Use: Syteth, the Pale White Lady, is a classic Pulp extradimensional horror complete with human extralists and twisted, inhuman servants. Unlike many such threats, she's designed so that a group of capable heroes can defeat her if they bring all their skill and power to bear. If the PCs can destroy all of Syteth's probe-selves, she'll abandon Earth's dimension and seek another dimension to attempt to invade where the residents aren't so persistently inimical to her.

Appearance: The Pale White Lady's actual hyperdimensional appearance is completely unknowable to human observers — looking directly at her causes the human mind to rebel and seek refuge in madness to avoid accepting what it perceives. In such a case, a viewer's perceptions are twisted to the point that she appears to be literally anything that fits within the lens of the viewer's insanity. If a viewer carries a Talisman of Lythilli, then Syteth (or, more accurately, one of her probe-selves) resembles a moray eel of immense size, 32" (416 feet) long and 3" (20 feet) in diameter, with black and silver eyes, albino white skin, and a fringe of constantly writhing tentacles around her mouth.

PLOT SEEDS

Gideon Fortune, noted adventurer, contacts the characters to ask them to search for one of his... acquaintances. He's heard that Li-Ming Jade, feared pirate of the China Seas, has disappeared. He would like to know if she's dead; one of her gifts to him was a carved jade flower she swore would change color if she were injured or killed. She was on her way from her usual stomping grounds to the Solomon Islands to exchange cargoes with another captain. Her ship was last reported south of New Britain, and there have been severe storms in the area. Fortune would go himself, but he broke his leg in an accident (stupid Mongolian taxi driver; what was he doing in New York anyway?), and cannot.

The PCs receive word from one of their contacts in the government that there's been a lot of Japanese naval activity in the Solomon Sea. Rumor has it that one of their new experimental submarines, full of new technology, has disappeared, and the characters are asked to "unofficially" investigate. When the characters get there, they learn that Ikeda Hideo (*Masterminds And Madmen*, page 146) is also investigating the disappearance. Can the characters work with Ikeda to combat the natives of the Island of the Pale White Lady? Can Ikeda convince the Japanese government to destroy the Lady herself?

The characters receive a call from a scientist friend working in the South Pacific. Between the phrases "totally unprecedented find," "stand the world of science on its ear," and "inspiration of an entire new field of study," the characters discern a request for them to fly to his island base of operations and begin searching for more specimens. On reaching their friend, they find him studying a bizarre and oddly disturbing eel-like humanoid. Their friend explains that it washed up on shore after a typhoon passed through the area. Additionally, he just received word from a friend, the skipper of a Dutch trawler, who reported bringing up a similar creature in the Solomon Sea, south of New Britain. What will the characters find when they accompany their friend there?

K'HULL ISLAND



The remote waters of the Indian Ocean hide another world behind walls of fog, fierce swirling storms, and malfunctioning compasses: a world where immortal monsters from the dawn of time still walk the earth, and shipwrecked survivors and castaway natives have banded together for survival... all under the watchful eyes of the islanders' god, the most powerful creature ever to walk the Earth: the mighty K'hong.

GEOGRAPHY

K'hull Island is the central island of a small archipelago situated along the Ninety East Ridge in the Indian Ocean. Northeast of Ille Amsterdam and southwest of the Cocoa Islands, the islands are larger than one might expect them to be even though the archipelago lies off the regularly-traveled shipping lanes. Hellish currents caused by the geothermal vents surrounding the islands are somewhat responsible, as is the rotating ring of constant and intense storms and sudden, shifting fogs created by the rising heat released by the vents which begin about twenty-five miles offshore of the islands. The rest of the reason for their unknown status is a magnetic disturbance caused by the mineral content of the islands in the archipelago. It's strong enough to distort compass readings — slowly at first, and then more powerfully as passing ships draw nearer, returning slowly to normal as they depart its area of influence.

Dominating the chain is K'hull Island, so named by the natives who dwell there in honor of their god. (The "K" prefix signifies "god" in their language, and "hull" means "home" or "dwelling"; thus, the island is "god's home.") Dominating the northern end of the 30-mile long, roughly kidney-shaped island is a mountain, a water-filled rocky cone — all that remains of the original volcano that started the chain's birth. Several lesser cones stand below it like a group of children at their parent's feet, and from there the island slopes gradually in steps and stages to the sea.

A series of smaller islands curl off from K'hull Island in a counterclockwise spiral, their number varying depending on pressures from within the earth's crust and whether any new vents have opened. Normally there are between ten and twelve of them, with only the seven oldest and largest (those closest to K'hull Island) having significant native life. Lines of cooled lava form ridges several meters below the surface of the ocean and link the

islands together, allowing passage between them for anything capable of walking along them and keeping its head above water, and creating a thriving reef ecosystem.

Although nothing out of the ordinary at first glance, these bits of land hold a secret: in the volcanic vents full of cooled molten rock are deposits of radioactive elements from deep within Earth's crust — elements that exist nowhere else on the surface of the globe. Those elements cause the magnetic distortion that scares ships away from the island chain and account for many of the archipelago's other peculiarities.

The seven larger islands are all lush, tropical paradises, with vegetation that renews itself at an astonishing rate in the rich volcanic soil. Fresh water is plentiful on K'hull Island itself thanks to the lake inside the extinct volcanic cone and the regular rains, but other sources bubble up here and there, carried by the geothermal vents that keep the island warm year 'round. Fish flock to the warm, shallow waters around the island, some of them varieties found elsewhere in the world only as fossils.

K'hull Island's northern end is all steep rocky cliffs and sheer drops, with currents powerful enough to dash any ship lacking powerful engines to pieces on the stone teeth that line the cliff bases. The southern end has several nice beaches and one hook-shaped peninsula where the local natives have built their village. The other islands in the chain are all similar in many ways, if smaller, and support an equally lush array of plant and animal life. There are smaller villages on the two nearest islands, both offshoots of the main population center on K'hull Island, where the people obtain resources not available on the big island.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The islands all enjoy hot, humid tropical weather with frequent rainstorms that spin off the storms ringing the archipelago. There are few clouds except during those storms. Warm breezes flow up from the south constantly to feed into the rotating band of storms and return days later, having circled the entire archipelago, to start the process over again. The storms that reach the islands always follow the same pattern. Although it's rare that a truly powerful storm makes it out of the ring around the island, it happens often enough that the local natives have learned to watch for the signs and take shelter when they detect such a storm on the way.

TERRAIN

All of the islands in the archipelago are volcanic in origin, but only K'hull Island and the two largest of the subsidiary islands have actual volcanic cones of significant size. None of the cones are active, nor have been in the living memory of the inhabitants, but plenty of active smaller fissures, fumaroles, vents, and the like are scattered around the islands. Most violent volcanic activity takes place below the surface of the ocean.

K'hull Island's highest point is 5,500 feet (846") above sea level on the rim of the volcanic cone on the northern end of the island. The volcano is backed on the ocean side by steep, jagged cliffs that plunge almost vertically into the ocean with only a few ledges and breaks where patches of vegetation cling stubbornly. Filling the cone is a lake that's constantly renewed by rainfall and a pair of springs that well up out of old lava tubes. Water escapes from the lake via several underground passages that form a pair of magnificent waterfalls on the landward side and feed a series of interconnected streams and pools across the length of the island.

The island slopes down to the south in stages marked by a series of sharp plateaus separated by dense jungle, each "step" having been formed by a successive eruptive stage. The plateaus contain many canyons and rifts, some passable via densely-growing vines and fallen trees, some not. The land in the southern third of the island begins to slope more gently and contains fewer canyons and other stark features. The southern beaches have many jagged rock formations as well, but they're more spread out and result in elevations that are sometimes only a dozen meters or so in height at the water's edge. In several places, the cliffs give way to gently sloped beaches carpeted with sand and volcanic ash.

The hook-shaped peninsula at the southern end of the island forms a bay that's dominated by a rocky spire jutting up out of the water roughly in its center. A scattering of "teeth" surround the spire and break the waves crashing onto it; this makes approaching the spire dangerous in anything larger than small oar-driven boats. An enormous wall of stone and timbers that predates the memory of even the oldest natives cuts the peninsula off from the rest of the island and protects the natives from the larger, more dangerous predators.

WILDLIFE

K'hull Island and the rest of its chain support an amazing array of life not found anywhere on the planet since the end of the Cretaceous Era. Keen-eyed scientists might observe that the odds of the animals present on the chain arising from parallel evolution are astronomical, leading to speculation they were brought here artificially by unknown means.

FAUNA

Aside from a tremendous variety of birds, insects, and other small creatures, the islands support several species of smaller dinosaurs, both carnivorous and herbivorous, ranging in size from cats to large dogs, plus a smattering of the larger breeds such as triceratops and stegosaurus. One island supports a herd of brontosaurii, albeit a smaller breed than the monsters that once lumbered across the mainland. There are a few large predators, the most notable being three tyrannosaurii that move back and forth between the islands along the rocky lava flows lying a few meters below the surface. The waters house a pack of plesiosaurs that stay relatively close to the islands and occasionally pluck natives from their canoes. There's at least one ancient turtle of enormous size that haunts the waters, its shell and sheer mass keeping the plesiosaurs at bay. Occasionally some creature like a car-sized crab comes to the surface, driven from the ocean by an erupting volcanic vent or deeper, more dangerous predators. The skies above the islands are home to a large flock of biplane-sized pteranodons that fearlessly challenge anything of a similar size that flies into their territory. They lair, mate, and raise their young on the cliffs at K'hull Island's northern end, but roam across the entire archipelago at will.

K'hull Island also contains a dwindling tribe of great apes, essentially identical to African mountain gorillas except for being three meters tall on the average. The apes prefer the jungle-covered slopes of the volcanoes but move around to avoid the predators as much as possible. They sometimes display a remarkable (and just barely pre-human) level of intelligence in day-to-day life. They can set crude traps and have mastered the art of throwing rocks to discourage predators. The human inhabitants of the island regard them with awe and treat them as the children of their god, going so far as to plant extra crops so the apes can raid their fields without causing hardships. The villagers leave offerings by the jungle for them when they make a particularly good catch or have an excess of food.

The natives' god, and the archipelago's most incredible resident, is K'hong, a great ape of gargantuan size and immeasurable power. He lairs inside a series of caverns at the peak of the extinct volcano on K'hull Island's northern tip and spends most of his time in solitary and peaceful foraging, interspersed with the occasional dominance struggle with the one of the dinosaurs. The most powerful creature to ever walk the planet, he rules over the archipelago with a gentle hand, preferring peace to

THE K'HULL EFFECT

Anyone dwelling on K'hull Island for ten uninterrupted years eats enough irradiated food and water to alter his cellular structure. In game terms, he gains the following powers:

Cost Power

- 1 *K'hull Effect*: Life Support (Longevity: ages at half normal rate)
- 9 *K'hull Effect*: Healing BODY 2d6 (Regeneration; 2 BODY per Day), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time + Increased Time Increment (1 day; -2¼), Self Only (-½)

Given the often brutal nature of life on K'hull Island, no human has yet survived long enough (and cannot ingest the required amount of irradiated material to compensate for the lack of time) to become altered as have the larger dinosaurs and K'hong, becoming truly immortal.

violence and caring nothing for man's claims to rule the world. In his world, *he* is the undisputed king.

Animal Character Sheets

For most of the creatures inhabiting K'hull Island you can use character sheets in *The Hero System Bestiary*: for the large gorillas use the Carnivorous Ape on page 40; Giant Crabs are on page 46; the dinosaurs are on pages 152-59 (though you might substitute the Eagle on page 136 with a "Large" Template for K'hull's more robust pteranodons, and use the dogs on pages 160-61 for various small predatory dinosaurs). For the Giant Turtle, use the character sheet on page 56. See the end of this section for K'hong's character sheet.

Thanks to advanced age and ingestion of enough irradiated material over the centuries, the largest dinosaurs — specifically the tyrannosaurs and the brontosaurus — possess an advanced version of the K'hull Effect (see sidebar and below). The changes in their cellular structure render them sterile and change the color of their eyes to blue. Smaller dinosaurs may, at the GM's discretion, have accrued a lesser level of the effect (similar to the one possessed by the natives).

Cost Power

- 33 *Advanced K'hull Effect*: Healing BODY 2d6 (Regeneration; 2 BODY per Turn), Can Heal Limbs, Resurrection (stopped by burning the body), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn: -1¼), Self Only (-½)
- 18 *Advanced K'hull Effect*: Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat; Immunity: all terrestrial diseases and biowarfare agents; Longevity: immune to aging)

FLORA

Much of the flora on the island is at least basically familiar, with many of the same fruits, flowers, and other plant life found throughout the jungles of other islands in the same geographic area thanks to millennia of seed transfer by winds, birds, and waves. There are, however, many species

now extinct elsewhere, and some which have never been previously described, especially as one moves further towards the volcanic cone at the northern end of the island.

PEOPLE

K'hull Island was originally settled by natives of Oceanic and proto-Malaysian stock. Over the centuries the villagers have intermingled with a variety of shipwrecked sailors, lending a somewhat blended appearance to their features. But *all* of them are healthy and extremely long-lived thanks to the radiation permeating the fabric of the island.

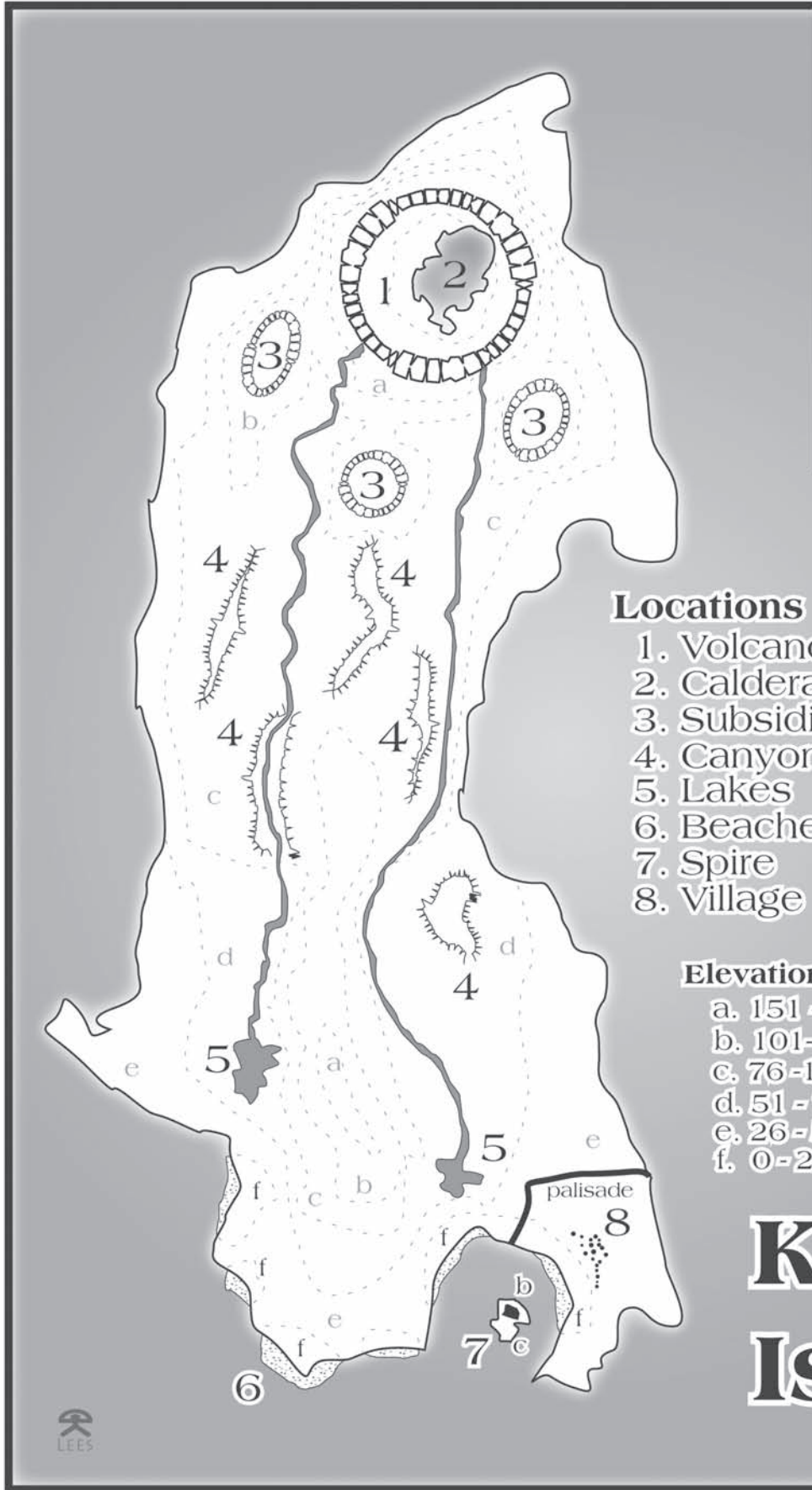
On the third largest island a single castaway lives a lonely, terrified existence, hiding from the predators at night and running from them during the day. An aviatrix attempting an around-the-world flight, Griffyn Halliburton tried to brave the ring of storms surrounding the archipelago, miraculously survived them — and crashed when a pteranodon attacked her plane and damaged the engine. She's lived a life on the run ever since. She knows there are natives, but fears they're cannibals; she isn't desperate enough yet to approach them.

Further out in the archipelago is a small outpost of equally-terrified Japanese sailors and marines who were stranded while scouting the islands for possible naval and air bases when their ship tore out its bottom on one of the treacherous lava ridges. They have a dwindling supply of ammunition for their firearms and a half-dozen remaining shells for a small deck gun salvaged from their ship. They don't know there are other humans nearby; if they learn about the natives, they'll probably try to dominate them.

CULTURE

Despite the periodic influence of the occasional strong-willed castaway (which, while sometimes profound and pervasive, usually fades rapidly upon the castaway's death), the islanders follow a simple tribal culture similar in many ways to cultures found throughout the area. They wear little in the way of clothing beyond natural-colored garments like short kilt-wraps that fall to just above the knee; they make their clothes from woven grass and other plant fibers. Experience has taught them not to wear bright colors, which attract the attention of the pteranodons (and worse). The women work flowers into their hair as a decoration, and hunters frequently do the same with vegetation and smear mud on their faces for camouflage while stalking game. Some groups may wear slightly different clothing as a custom handed down by a castaway ancestor, leading to oddities like a family whose members wear woven rush hats that look like Spanish morion helmets, and another that makes "straw" raincoats like the Edo-period Japanese did.

The K'hongani fish with nets in a fairly organized fashion, trap birds with smaller nets and plant-based glue they spread on limbs, cultivate several crop foods, and hunt and trap some small animals. The natives on the outlying islands keep



Locations

- 1. Volcano
- 2. Caldera Lake
- 3. Subsidiary Volcanoes
- 4. Canyons
- 5. Lakes
- 6. Beaches
- 7. Spire
- 8. Village

Elevations

- a. 151 - 200 feet
- b. 101 - 150 feet
- c. 76 - 100 feet
- d. 51 - 75 feet
- e. 26 - 50 feet
- f. 0 - 25 feet

K'hull
Island



some of the smaller and more trainable types of dinosaur species as pets and guard animals, although those on the big island do not for fear of angering their god.

The villagers build surprisingly sophisticated small boats to fish and move between the islands, using elements gleaned from several different ship-building cultures. They make no attempts to build larger craft and depart — everyone who's tried has failed to return, their makeshift vessels torn asunder in the storms ringing the island. One thing all the small craft have in common is that they're designed for crews of 4-7 to allow for potential casualties among the crew, and have a mast or raised platform from which a spotter can watch for the dark shapes of plesiosaurs or other threats approaching under the clear waters. The natives are intimately familiar with the local reefs and underwater topography. Only the most daring of them venture out into more open waters in search of fish; more cautious natives fear the predators dwelling there.

LANGUAGE

The native language, K'hongani, has 2 points of similarity with Malay, and of course characters with Universal Translator can understand it if they succeed with their INT Rolls. A few of the more recent castaways adopted into the tribe still retain their original languages, and several castaway-founded families pass down the knowledge of their founder's native language (usually English, Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin or Cantonese Chinese, Hindustani, or Dutch) at the "basic conversation" level.

RELIGION

The natives worship K'hong (which in their language means "our god") with offerings of food for his other children (the smaller apes) and follow a code of behavior that mimics the traits that they've observed in him: curiosity, peaceful coexistence, and ruthless violence when attacked or threatened. The do not practice live sacrifice, although they do punish their most serious crimes (rape, murder, and a few more esoteric crimes such as sinking another's boat or damaging the village's defenses) by exiling the perpetrators out past the safety of the wall for a period of time that varies by the offense. If the offender survives and returns when the period of exile ends, he's pardoned, but until then any native who sees him may kill him with impunity.

WARFARE

The K'hongani exist at a pre-firearms level. But thanks to often-repeated stories, legends, and occasional encounters with recent castaways, many of the villagers — and particularly any shipwreck survivors dating from after 1850 or so — are familiar enough with firearms to understand what a modern rifle might do (at least in general). The natives aren't aware of any functioning firearms on the islands, although they do have a single muzzle-loading cannon salvaged from the wreck of the *Honoré*, an eighteenth century pirate vessel sunk by K'hong after an attempt to conquer the island. They

have vague plans of using it against like-minded groups of pirates (should any appear), but it's a bluff — they lack powder, fuse, and shot. But an intrepid character could salvage shot from the wreck and manufacture powder and fuse from materials available at hand if he puts his mind to it....

For defense, the natives rely on spears (HKA 1d6+1, STR MIN 10, +1" Reach, Can Be Thrown), knives (HKA ½d6, STR MIN 4, Can Be Thrown), and paddle-shaped wooden clubs edged in shark or dinosaur teeth (HKA 1d6+1, STR Min 12, 1½ H). Some natives will also carry bows (RKA 1d6, STR MIN 8, 95" range, 20 Recoverable Charges) when in the fields or on pteranodon watch, but the thickness of the jungle growth and the sheer mass of many potential opponents means they're useless against anything but the pteranodons and smaller pack-hunting dinosaurs. Against larger foes, the villagers flee for the safety of their defensive wall, where they store rocks to hurl at or drop on opponents from the top. Most weapons with cutting edges have stone or volcanic glass tips, although there are a few metal tools salvaged from shipwrecks — the natives use them sparingly, lest they break.

LOCATIONS

1. K'hong's Volcano
2. K'hong's Lake
3. Subsidiary Volcanoes
4. Rift Canyons
5. Subsidiary Lakes
6. Beaches
7. Rock Spire And "Teeth"
8. Village And Great Wall

MAIN SETTLEMENT

The primary human settlement in the archipelago is on the southern end of K'hull Island. Dominated by a massive stone and timber wall that cuts the southern peninsula off from the rest of the island to keep the natives safe from predators, the settlement consists of a three-layered semicircle of sturdy wooden homes, some with stone foundations. All of them have solid roofs to discourage the pteranodons. Additional open-sided structures, little more than solid roofs resting on four or more upright poles, are scattered around the settlement to provide shade, shelter from the rain, and a place of retreat in case of a pteranodon attack. A pair of warehouses made from stone with cut timber roofs serve as locations to store the villagers' foodstuffs and other supplies, protecting them from the elements as well as the smaller animals that always seem to find ways around or through the wall. Numerous small gardens ring the village, and there are several cultivated fields and an artificially-raised rice paddy between the village and the wall. The villagers' boats are brought up from the bay-side beach at night and carried back down in the morning to keep them from being damaged by animals.

After the attack of the *Honoré*, the villagers erected a secondary wall of logs and loose stone between the village and the sheltered bay as a defensive measure, but it's fallen into disrepair over the years since no new threats have appeared. The wall looks fairly impressive from a distance, but the closer an observer gets the clearer it becomes that it's now a sham. This is where the natives mounted the lone cannon that K'hong flung ashore when he smashed the ship to pieces; it seems to cover the portion of the bay where a ship would most likely take anchor to avoid being ground up on the rocks around the central spire.

None of the natives have any idea who built the gigantic wall that protects them from the island's fauna. Here and there throughout the island explorers (such as PCs with more curiosity than sense!) will find remnants of other large stone structures — walls, stairways, causeways. Who built them, why, and what happened to the builders remains a mystery.

K'HONG'S VOLCANO HOME

The open volcanic cone where K'hong makes his lair at the northern point of the island is a reflection of the island in microcosm. It has a small lake, its own jungle (one featuring many plants not found elsewhere on the island, including some that have mutated so they can supplement their normal feeding process with any small animals and birds that wander within range of their whip-like feeding tendrils), and a series of caves and rock overhangs that support snakes and other creatures. K'hong sleeps where he pleases, but more often than anywhere else he returns to a large cleft in the rim of the volcano that looks southward over the island to sit and survey his domain until slumber overtakes him.

THE ROCK SPIRE

The rock spire in the center of the bay hides a mystery that may be as old as the island and K'hong himself: someone (perhaps the builders of the defensive wall) at some time in the past painstakingly hollowed out a series of rooms out within it, carved windows into the sides, and fashioned an open balcony facing the island 40 feet above the waters of the bay. (The spire is about a mile from the island proper, so seeing these features from the island is difficult at best.) There are several levels to the small complex, all linked by a wide spiral stair in the core of the spire; the lowest is a chamber that allows small boats to pull up and unload directly into the spire at low tide but which is underwater at high tide, and the highest is a small room near the top of the spire with three windows that provide a panoramic view of the area. There are no signs of the maker's identity in the stonework — just smooth, polished stone.

The natives do not go near the spire. They regard it as sacred because K'hong sometimes wades out to it and peers into the windows as if looking for something that he recalls so dimly it might not even be a true memory. He also chases away pteranodons and other creatures that try to nest there, an action the natives take as proof of the spire's holy nature.

THE WRECK OF THE HONORÉ

Sometime around 1850, a pirate ship was swept into the storms circling the archipelago because of poor handling by an inexperienced crew and the fact she was too treasure-laden from the sack of an Indian mogul's bridal ship to escape. The *Honoré* survived more by luck than skill and finally anchored in the northern bay of K'hull Island to make repairs. The natives received the pirates cordially at first. But when it became apparent they intended to take what they wanted and to compel the natives' assistance and obedience by force rather than trade for it, relations broke down quickly. Seeing their initial landing party killed on the beach, the remaining crew determined to fire their cannons at the village to ensure the natives' cooperation. The first salvo drew K'hong's attention.

When the god of K'hull Island loomed through the trees, the pirates panicked and attempted to turn their guns on him. Most of the initial volley missed him, but a lone cannonball struck home, wounding the gargantuan ape and sealing the ship's fate. With a roar K'hong waded out into the bay to do battle. He literally broke the ship apart in his battle frenzy, sending it to the bottom of the bay in three pieces and killing most of the crew in the process; the natives summarily executed the few survivors who made it to shore. The remains of the *Honoré* rest on the bottom of the bay to this day, visible through the crystal-clear waters and easily recognizable for what they are. The wreck is between 35 and 40 feet (5'-6") below the surface; a variety of underwater life lives in it now, thus making things interesting for any would-be salvage divers.

INDIVIDUALS

GRIFFYN HALLIBURTON

13	STR	18	DEX	13	CON	12	BODY
18	INT	15	EGO	15	PRE	16	COM
4	PD	3	ED	3	SPD	6	REC
30	END	30	STUN				

Abilities: Aerobatics 13-; Breakfall 13-; Bueaucrat-ics 12-; Climbing 13-; Combat Piloting 16-; Electronics 13-; Gambling 13-; High Society 12-; KS: Aircraft 13-; KS: The Aviation World 13-; Mechanics 14-; Navigation 15-; Paramedics 13-; PS: Pilot 13-; Riding 13-; Survival (Tropical) 13-; WF: Small Arms and Knife

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Overconfident; Social Limitation: Woman

Notes: Griffyn Halliburton was determined to be the first woman to fly solo around the world. She'd already lost the race to be the first woman to fly the Atlantic solo to Amelia Earhart, and the race to be the first person to fly around the world. She'd tried the "east to west non-stop across the Atlantic" trip, but had to put down in Greenland when her wings iced up.

When she finally found a backer she took off from New York, headed west. Several days and more stops later, she was winging her way across the Pacific, having just survived a horrible storm, when the big-

PLOT SEEDS

Akash Varmandali is on the trail of the long-lost regalia of a neighboring princely domain — when he finds it, and presents himself and the regalia there, the current rajah, a kind and gentle man, will automatically be ousted and his position awarded to Akash, doubling the size of his own domain. His daughter, Drisana, upon discovering that her father intends to elevate one of her wastrel brothers to the throne of his newly-acquired lands instead of her, decides to alter the plan. Knowing her father is watching to see if she warns her beloved Randall Irons, she instead warns the PCs, giving them the same information her father has, all the while planning to steal the artifacts from them when they return and win Akash's approval by claiming the domain herself and then giving it to him as a gift. The only clues available are: the items were last known to be on a bridal ship that was looted at sea by pirates from a ship named the *Honoré* in the eighteenth century... which then vanished from the seas in a great storm; and a single log entry from a Dutch East Indies ship that reported finding a man adrift in the open ocean who reported being swept overboard in a storm as the *Honoré* made for an uncharted island a native crewman swore was on the other side of the storm wall.

Noted Hollywood producer/director Denholm Carlsen wants the characters to star in his next production, an adventure serial being shot on location in the South Seas. He's positive they'll provide a level of authenticity

gest bat she'd ever seen rose up from an island and attacked her, crashing into her plane in the process. She rode the battered craft down to a relatively soft landing in a tree. After surveying the territory from her aerial perch, she climbed down and headed for a nearby stream. It would be a relatively easy walk to the water, then down it to the coast. She had her .45 and her knife. Sooner or later a ship would come by, and she'd flag it down, and.... Sweet Mother McCree, look at the size of that monkey!

Now looking slightly the worse for wear, her stylish bob grown out, her crisp jodhpurs and khaki shirt stained and torn, Griffyn lives by her wits. She avoids both the villagers and the animals and desperately hopes someone will come along and take her off this island so she can get on with her journey.

TAKAWE

18	ST	15	DEX	15	CON	18	BODY
13	INT	10	EGO	15	PRE	14	COM
5	PD	3	ED	3	SPD	7	REC
35	END	35	STUN				

Abilities: Nightvision; Animal Handler 12-; Breakfall 12-; Climbing 12-; AK: K'hull Island 13-; Language; English (basic conversation); Navigation 12-; PS: Hunter; 12-; Shadowing 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Tropical) 12-; Tracking 12-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons; Bump of Direction

75+ Disadvantages: DNPC: Tribe; Hunted: Native Wildlife; Psychological Limitation: Honorable; Psychological Limitation: Wants His Tribe To Thrive

Notes: Since making his first kill at a young age, Takawe has been the main source of meat for his tribe. A masterful hunter, he normally spends most of his days in the jungle searching for prey, and rarely returns to the village without something for the stewpot.

Handsome and well-built, as well as a great hunter, Takawe is highly sought after by the girls of the village as a husband. So far he's eluded that snare, claiming that his lifestyle is too dangerous to take a wife — he wouldn't want to leave her a widow, and his children orphans.

TYPICAL K'HULL ISLANDER

10	STR	13	DEX	13	CON	12	BODY
10	INT	10	EGO	13	PRE	8	COM
3	PD	3	ED	2	SPD	5	REC
26	END	24	STUN				

Abilities: Climbing 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Tropical) 11-; TF: Small Rowed Boats; WF: Common Missile Weapons or Common Melee Weapons

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Native Wildlife; Social Limitation: Subject to Orders of Chief

Notes: This character sheet represents a typical islander able to fight.

K'HONG

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
60	STR	90	21-	Lift 100 tons; 12d6 [6]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
30	CON	60	15-	
30	BODY	60	15-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll: 11-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
35	PRE	40	16-	PRE Attack: 7d6
8	COM	-1	11-	
17	PD	10		Total: 25 PD (8 rPD)
16	ED	18		Total: 24 PD (8 rPD)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
18	REC	0		
60	END	0		
75	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 287

Movement: Running: 18"/36"
Leaping: 12"/24"
Swimming: 10"/20"

Cost Powers

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Gigantic Hands:</i> Area of Effect (One Hex; +½) for STR 60	3
30	<i>Bite:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR)	3
20	<i>Rending Grasp:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR); Must Follow Grab (-½)	3
11	<i>Roar:</i> +25 PRE; Only For Fear-Based Presence Attacks (-1); Incantations (must roar; -¼)	0
24	<i>Thick Skin:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED)	0
60	<i>Durable Body:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
33	<i>Advanced K'hull Effect:</i> Healing BODY 2d6 (Regeneration; 2 BODY per Turn), Can Heal Limbs, Resurrection (stopped by burning the body), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn: -1¼), Self Only (-½)	0
18	<i>Advanced K'hull Effect:</i> Life Support (Diminished Eating: no need to eat; Immunity: all terrestrial diseases and biowarfare agents; Longevity: immune to aging)	0
20	<i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance (10")	0
40	<i>Gigantic Legs:</i> Running +12" (18" total)	2
13	<i>Gigantic Legs And Arms:</i> Swimming +8" (10" total)	1
3	<i>Ape Senses:</i> +1 PRE with all Sense Groups	
5	<i>Keen Scent:</i> Discriminatory Smell	
34	<i>Reach:</i> Stretching 8", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼); No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0
12	+4 OCV with Strike, Grab, and Shove	
6	+2 OCV with Thrown Objects	
2	AK: K'hull Island 11-	
3	Climbing 12-	

Total Powers and Skills Cost: 364

Total Character Cost: 651

75+ Disadvantages

- 20 Enraged: when subjected to sudden loud noises or bright lights (Uncommon), go 14-, recover 11-
- 20 Enraged: when takes BODY damage (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 8-
- 15 Physical Limitation: Enormous (45 feet [7"] tall, -4 DCV, +4 PER rolls against) (Frequently; Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical Limitation: Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 10 Physical limitation: Near-Human Intelligence (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 12 Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap (may only leap half as far as STR indicates) (Infrequent, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Curiosity (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Protective Of K'hull Apes And Islanders (Common, Strong)
- 20 Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Gases/Chemicals/Drugs (Common)
- 439 Experience Points

Disadvantage Total: 651

Ecology: Since K'hong neither eats nor drinks to sustain himself (though he occasionally drinks some water or eats something because he enjoys the taste), his impact on the K'hull environment comes from his sheer size. With his most basic needs eliminated, the gargantuan ape can freely wander the archipelago as whim takes him, indulging his curiosity. Since there are no compatibly-sized females for him to mate with, he substitutes watching over the small tribe of great apes and the humans who dwell on the archipelago for a family life, treating them as if they were his tribe or his children. The larger dinosaurs he occasionally wrestles with are as immortal as he, so they always return to wrestle again.

Personality/Motivation: K'hong is a generally peaceful creature, much like one of the great apes he once was. He spends his days occasionally chewing on a thick stalk of bamboo and wandering the island, sometimes swimming or wading to another island. He treats conflict in a similar manner to the great apes as well, with initial threat displays and shows of violence before getting down to business. He enjoys wrestling with the dinosaurs remaining on the archipelago and refrains from injuring them too severely so they can "play" again later.

K'hong's curiosity is powerful, and, unless attacked, he watches strange or unusual things for hours at a time, sometimes getting closer for a better view. Motivated by boredom, he fearlessly approaches strangers and "plays" with them and their possessions, particularly if they offer things he hasn't seen before. He regards the remaining great apes as something like beloved pets, and his tolerance for the humans living in his kingdom is in no small part due to the way they treat his distant kin; attacking or injuring one of the apes is a fast way to earn his displeasure.

Powers/Tactics: K'hong's strength and resilience result from his incredible size (which comes from centuries of exposure to the radioactive minerals in the volcanic vents of his home). His radiation-empowered cells repair themselves at a rate visible to the human eye, knitting tissues and regrowing missing portions of his body over time; his body will, even if slain, continue to slowly recover until he revives. He is, in essence, immortal, short of his body being burned, vaporized, or trapped in a situation where he has to regenerate over and over until his cells' energy is finally depleted (such as being sunk deep in the ocean). He no longer needs to eat (the energy infusing his cells sustains him), is immune to diseases, and no longer ages.

Although not possessing human-level intelligence, K'hong is certainly not stupid and doesn't enjoy being hurt. If attacked by flying creatures, he tries to lure them in close enough to grasp them with one hand so he can negate their aerial advantage; if facing more than one flying opponent, he uses the same tactic but simply breaks the wings off each one after he grabs it so he can concentrate on another (he finishes off the crippled fliers after the fight). When fighting anything approximating his own size, he closes and attacks with powerful blows from his hands or grapples to crush his opponent. If attacked by smaller creatures, he simply steps on them or scoops them up to bite them or rend them apart.

Since he has no experience with small arms K'hong normally ignores them after he gets over his initial startlement at their sound — he's largely immune to anything smaller than a machine gun, so this isn't difficult. Larger weapons remind him of the cannon fire from *Honoré* and draw his immediate wrath, prompting him to either charge or flee. His metabolism makes him susceptible to many chemical-based attacks; although he tends to recover from them as swiftly as he does any other type of injury.

Appearance: K'hong is proportioned like a normal African mountain gorilla... except that he stands approximately 45' (7") tall and weighs 13 tons. His fur is dense and black, with swathes of silver across the back. His eyes are a surprising, intelligent blue — an aftereffect of the radiation that has bathed his cells for so many centuries. When he moves, he walks like the Earth belongs to him, ignoring anything he deems too small to be a threat.

Continued from last page

never before seen on film which will make the serial a hit and the PCs the darlings of Hollywood. Along for the journey are the two titular stars he signed to get backing: Vivian Carstairs, a spoiled young actress with an eye for men and a body built for sin; and Guy Bradley, a Great War hero turned film star who seeks to bury the horrors he witnessed in the War at the bottom of a bottle. Carlsen also has a crew that hasn't filmed further away from the studio than Central Park. He's taken care of everything: the boat's chartered, the course is laid in, and everyone's ready to go once the characters arrive with their gear.

Liz Murdock (pilot of Randall's Raiders, see *Pulp Hero*, pages 393-4) approaches the characters. She wants to hire them to search for a friend of hers, missing aviatrix Griffyn Halliburton, who hasn't returned from her planned flight around the world. Liz can give the characters her friend's last stopping point and planned course. She knows Griffyn probably couldn't have survived if she had to ditch in the open ocean, but hopes she landed on or near an island. If they take the job, the characters soon find themselves approaching a small, mist-shrouded group of jungle-covered islands...

LAUSSAT PLANTATION



Deep in the Louisiana bayou country, in what might as well be another world, is a historic plantation that once bustled with life but now holds only death for those who venture too close to its secrets. Situated between Grand and White Lakes, on the border between Vermilion and Cameron Parishes, the Laussat Plantation was once the center of a small rice, indigo, and sugarcane empire and a haven for local smugglers. Now it has a new master — the mad scientist Dr. Felton Charn — and under his hand something evil is stirring in the swamps...

DESCRIPTION

The Laussat Plantation was built in the early 1800s by Marcel Laussat, a man who wanted a grand home — but one situated far enough away from the other cities and ports along the coast that his less than legal enterprises would pass unnoticed. Despite the not inconsiderable fortune he amassed by growing rice, indigo, and sugarcane, he wanted more, and he turned to smuggling to get it. Ships would weigh anchor off the coast and bring cargos in at night up the rivers and waterways to Grand and White Lakes, and then on to Laussat's plantation where he stored them in his warehouses alongside the legitimate products of the large plantation. Laussat would then brought the smaller (but more valuable) cargoes of stolen goods and duty-free luxury items into New Orleans by hiding them within his larger cargoes. Later, as he grew more confident, he brought the cargoes in and avoided the risk of taking them to New Orleans by using the local Cajuns to ferry the cargos through the bayou to the waiting wagons of his buyers. His downfall came during the War Between the States when the Union occupied New Orleans and blue-uniformed troops, tipped off by a Cajun whom Laussat had treated cruelly, raided the plantation. In the ensuing battle, Laussat, his family, and most of his slaves were killed; the survivors fled into the swamps.

The plantation is situated along a ridge of stony ground running through the bayou, giving it a slight elevation and secure foundations. The main house and its two closest outbuildings are all that still stand of the structures that made up the plantation proper. They're moss- and creeper-covered ruins, well on the way to being reclaimed by the bayou but fighting it every step of the way. The many smaller structures that supported the main house and housed the Laussat slave population are all gone now, nothing more than bare foundations

and humps of vegetation where once walls stood.

Several hundred feet behind the main house is a branch of one of the deeper local waterways that Laussat turned into a small port for the plantation by dredging and artificially widening it. Three large warehouses once stood there along with a set of piers where workers could load and unload the cargo barges he used to move supplies and contraband in and out of the bayou. One of those warehouses has collapsed in on itself, but the others are the same as the main house: abandoned structures slowly losing ground to the encroaching bayou. The old piers have collapsed on the eastern side and a thicket of vines and vegetation has sprung up along the western side, spilling out into the water and concealing a hidden boathouse. Silt is building up in the dredged portions of the small harbor, although the channel itself can still support larger craft than have moved along it in many years — at least in the daylight.

Extensive fields once sprawled for miles around the main house, but they've all now been reclaimed by the bayou (though one local family still raises rice in a carefully-preserved corner). The roads that once led to the plantation are lost to the bayou as well, but several bridges remain to mark the fact that civilization once reached even here.

Further out in the bayou, Dr. Charn is conducting "in the wild" experiments in remote locations on opposite sides of the old plantation property (see below). Charn has deposited chemical compounds similar to the ones he uses in his normal animal mutation processes in time-release containers so he can study their effects on the local wildlife's growth cycle. He hopes this study will show him a way to correct some of the deficiencies that always seem to creep in when he mutates animals to larger sizes in a forced laboratory environment. Other, smaller-scale experiments take place all the time in his laboratories, but the animal growth study is, for Charn, the real reason for the continued existence of the facilities here.

LIGHT/VISIBILITY

Normal visibility rules apply to all but the deepest parts of the bayou, where the dense vegetation can shorten sighting ranges to a maximum of 6-7" during the daytime and 1-2" at night (2-3" with lanterns due to the shadows and reflected light from the vegetation). At night, use the full -4 penalty for "dark night" under most conditions due to the overhead vegetation.

Trips through the bayou at night in the pulps are spooky and atmospheric, with dark shadows

and the feeling that the vegetation is crowding in on the characters even if they have lanterns with them. The GM should use enough colorful descriptions and modifiers to ensure that the atmosphere is appropriately spooky and oppressive, no matter how high the characters' PER Rolls and PREs are.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The weather in the bayou is humid and damp year-round, the only real variable being how hot it is. The temperatures climb into the low 30s Celsius (the high 90s F) during the late spring and stay there throughout the summer and early fall, dropping to as low as the low 10s Celsius (mid-30s F) during the dead of winter. Thanks to the high humidity, the temperature feels hotter or colder than the actual value, presenting dangers of heat exhaustion during the hotter months or hypothermia during the colder ones (especially should the characters fall — or be pushed or dragged — into the water).

It frequently rains at Laussat Plantation; it's a rare week that doesn't have at least one rainy day, and thunderstorms are common during most of the year. More severe storms move in from the Gulf of Mexico with regularity from June through November, although most hurricanes tend to make landfall either further to the east or west. Winter precipitation is most commonly freezing rain or sleet, which may cause ice buildup in some places, but snow is virtually unheard of.

WILDLIFE

The bayou country contains a vast diversity of plant and animal life... and even without Dr. Charn's ministrations some of them are quite dangerous.

FAUNA

The amount and variety of animals in the bayou is a biologist's dream (which is one reason Dr. Charn set up a lab here). A number of species native to the bayou are — or can be — dangerous enough to threaten a character or group of characters. Alligators, some large enough to overturn the small flat-bottomed boats often used to travel the bayou, exist in significant numbers near and in the waterways near the plantation. While they rarely attack on land, characters in or near the water aren't too different to alligator perceptions from the deer they sometimes catch. Several varieties of venomous snakes live in the bayou as well. Rattlesnakes, copperheads, and coral snakes are usually found in the drier areas on the fringes of the bayou and along the ridges of land that stay dry most of the year, while cottonmouths swim in the water and lair on the banks. Other creatures to be wary of are the wild boars that sometimes travel in small groups along the edges of the bayou, and cougars (called "panthers" or "painters" by the locals) that occasionally disturb the night with their hunting cries as they leap from limbs onto their prey.

Thanks to the chemicals Dr. Charn has released into the wild in his experiments, a number of unnatural species now make their home in the

bayou region around the plantation. Some crawfish, normally only a few inches long, have grown to the size of a man in and around a small lake deep in the bayou, making them large enough to hold their own against alligators and humans. An alligator snapping turtle said to be larger than a rowboat supposedly lurks in the waters of Grand Lake, having moved out of the bayou waterways when they became too small for it to live in comfortably.

Less dangerous animals such as deer, opossums, frogs, raccoons, squirrels, rats, lizards, and birds are practically everywhere. In the warmer months so are insects, from dragonflies skimming along the waterways, to swarms of flies and mosquitoes, to colonies of ants. More dangerous insects like wasps and bees are also common in the warmer months, although the larger hives and nests of both species are surrounded by enough activity that stumbling onto them without warning is something only the greenest of greenhorns would do.

See below regarding character sheets for bayou animals.

Mysteries Of The Bayou

According to local stories, other, more mysterious, creatures also live in the parts of the bayou where no one has gone in decades. Legends tell of the Skunk Ape, a sasquatch-like creature whom locals claim approaches cabins and peers in windows late at night and sometimes follow alongside travelers just out of sight in the brush. More dangerous is "Antoine," a pirate from Jean Lafitte's crew supposedly cursed by a Caribbean witch doctor for crimes against the man's daughter. His shipmates abandoned him in the bayou when his transformation into a twisted half-man/half-alligator hybrid began. Locals have reported increased sightings of both beings

"ANTOINE" DIVING SUIT

The suit's a full-body outfit designed to resemble Dr. Charn's idea of what a half-man/half-alligator mutant would resemble. It comes has a (non-functional) tail, a (functional) alligator-style muzzle with razor sharp teeth, and a greenish-black armored hide to protect the wearer. It also comes with a supply of one of Dr. Charn's discoveries: a chemical that can be released into the surrounding waters to calm and pacify the local creatures.

Cost "Antoine" Model Disguised Diving Suit

- 8 *Thick Outer "Skin":* Armor (5 PD/3 ED); OIF (-½)
- 7 *Advanced Diving Gear:* Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (1 Hour, easy to replenish, +0); OIF (-½)
- 18 *Spring-Assisted Jaws:* HKA 1½d6 (1½d6 with STR), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½), No STR Bonus (-½)
- 21 *Animal-Calming Chemical Disperser:* Mind Control 6d6 (Animal class of minds), Area Of Effect (4" Radius +1), Telepathic (+¼); OIF (-½), Limited Normal Range (5"; -½), Set Effect (be calm; -1), 12 Charges (-¼)

Total cost: 54 points.

over the last year, but no one has investigated the reports because that would require venturing into parts of the bayou where sane people fear to tread. Doctor Charn has taken advantage of the “Antoine” legend to disguise several experimental diving suits for his assistants to use when observing the effects of his chemical experiments on the local wildlife (see text box). He discounts all the stories about strange beings as nothing more than superstition, but if it turns out he’s wrong he’ll spare no effort to try to capture either of these mysterious beings for study.

FLORA

Vegetation in the bayou varies with the underlying terrain, but is normally lush and thick. On the fringes of the bayou, low scrub and pines predominate, but they quickly give way to nearly impassible thickets and vine-draped hardwoods. Further in, cypress trees loom up out of the water, their knobby roots looking like moss-covered gnarled fingers or spiders’ legs splaying out in all directions around the tree’s bases. Overhead trees often spread their branches wide enough to intertwine with the branches of other trees nearby and have patches of Spanish moss hanging down from them like curtains. Vines run down the sides of the trees and loop across waterways; some are strong enough to support the weight of a man.

Bayou waterways are often clogged with patches of algae and weeds that conceal movement underneath them and foul propellers, forcing boats to be poled or paddled. Fallen trees spear into the water where storms have thrown them, or cant out over it where the banks have been undercut by the current. Waterway banks are lined with reeds, cattails, more water weeds, and the overhanging branches of bushes and small trees dipping down into the water, making it difficult to get out of the channels and onto land in a hurry unless the characters can find a fallen tree or clear bank.

PEOPLE

Only two classes of people live in and around the plantation: the local Cajun population that resides in the bayou year-round; and Dr. Charn’s research assistants and support staff, who come and go as needed. A small staff of five people stays on at the plantation permanently to maintain the facility and study the effects of the chemical dumps on the local wildlife, but when more intensive projects take place there, the number sometimes rises to as many as thirty.

DR. CHARN’S STAFF

The core employees who remain at the plantation year-round are: Dr. Steven Teller, the “senior lab assistant” and a competent scientist in his own right; Dale Knopf and Fred Eagan, a pair of technicians who spend most of their time maintaining the equipment and taking turns posing as “Antoine” to study the local wildlife; and Robert “Bad Bob” McCallum and Sam “Jeffy” Jeffrey, two thugs who accepted Dr. Charn’s offer of employment and a safe place to hide out while the heat cooled down after a series of bank robberies in the Midwest. The five take great pains to keep their presence at the plantation a secret, appearing outside only at night or when they’re certain no one’s watching; they’re willing to use deadly force to keep the laboratory’s presence a secret, although if at all possible they try to arrange things so any deaths appear to be accidental... or at least have no connection to the plantation.

When Dr. Charn is present, he’s the unquestioned master of the plantation thanks as much to his ever-present radio-controlled apes (and other servant creatures) as the wages he pays. When Charn is at one of his other hidden laboratories, Dr. Teller is in charge. His control over the others is less secure, especially with regards to McCallum and Jeffrey (who chafe at the restrictions and have grown to regret the devil’s bargain they made with Charn). Only fear of what Charn will do if they break the agreement has kept them at the plantation for this long, and with each passing month it becomes more and more likely one or both of them will decide to risk Charn’s wrath and run. Teller suspects, but cannot prove, that to relieve their boredom the two have manufactured at least one “incident” requiring them to kill a local. Knopf and Eagan are loyal as long as they get paid. Unlike McCallum and Jeffrey, who are both wanted men, the technicians can take the occasional trip into New Orleans to let off some steam, which goes a long way to reducing cabin fever. Eagan enjoys the “Antoine” deception and occasionally hams it up a little to scare inquisitive locals, but Knopf is all business and thinks the suits are silly-looking.

THE CAJUNS

The local Cajuns number about 200 (give or take a few depending on the season). Half of them live between the lakeshore settlements at Grand and White Lakes, the rest throughout the bayous in single-family households. They're an insular society, suspicious of outsiders and wary of any governmental interference in their way of life. Most live near or at the poverty level, supplementing what crops they can grow with game hunted in the drier portions of the bayou and fish or other animals netted or trapped in the lakes and waterways. Cash is in short supply, so most trade is via the barter system. There are no towns in the bayou, just scattered and isolated cabins and homes; small fishing communities exist on the shores of both Grand and White Lakes but there are no civic services or elected officials. The sheriff and the nearest doctor are over thirty miles away (and glad of it), while the last tax collector who came to this part of the bayou did so in 1871. He's buried a few miles out in the bayou in an unmarked grave.

Cajun families tend to be large, and everyone works to support the family in some fashion. Education is a low priority next to feeding the family, but most families have someone who can read, write, and do simple arithmetic (and who teaches the others as needed). Despite a lack of formal education, the average resident is far from stupid. Many of them are capable of surprisingly penetrating insights on a variety of topics, based on books they've read and a lifetime's worth of observation.

Prominent local families in the White and Grand Lake communities include the Thibodaux and Valjean families respectively; the elders of each family essentially run their respective communities by virtue of age, experience, and their family's size. Pierre Valjean and Francois Thibodaux get along well, and the families have a tradition of intermarriage every other generation or so. Notable families dwelling out in the bayou include the LeBruns, the Toussants, and the St. Jacques. The LeBruns are noted hunters, the Toussants make the best wine in the bayou, and the St. Jacques have the most beautiful — and fiery-tempered — daughters this side of New Orleans.

The locals avoid the Laussat Plantation as much for the mundane dangers posed by rotting buildings and piers as the supernatural ones they associate with it. They believe the strange lights seen at night near the plantation are the "haints" (ghosts) of Marcel Laussat and his family trying to escape to hallowed ground so they can rest in peace, or are the spirits of people who died in the raid on the plantation still going about the tasks they performed in life. Lights moving on the bayou are more likely to be considered a neighbor or relative engaging in a little smuggling and ignored, or, if in the vicinity of the plantation, blamed on the ghosts again. Strange shapes seen elsewhere at dusk are blamed on Antoine or the Skunk Ape, although a few of the more adventurous and daring locals have seen some of the results of Charn's experiments in the wild. Those who have tend to refuse to speak of it unless drinking heavily.

Possessions

Cajun buildings are patchwork affairs assembled and maintained from whatever materials the residents can find. A person's boat is almost always in better repair than his home. Everyday clothing is a mixture of second-hand garments, hand-me-downs, and homespun garb appropriate to the weather. During the summer months, many men go shirtless, and visitors may find local women and girls wearing garments that would be considered scandalously revealing on the streets of Hudson City or San Francisco to survive the humid heat of the region.

Most families own a few small-caliber rifles (use the stats for the Remington Model 30 or 34 found on page 304 of *Pulp Hero*) and/or shotguns (use the 20 gauge or 12 gauge models on page 306 of *Pulp Hero*) they use for hunting purposes. It isn't uncommon to see the occasional larger caliber rifle (use the stats for the Springfield M1903 or the Mannlicher Carcano M1891 on page 304 of *Pulp Hero*) for those who hunt game like deer, alligator, or boar. Handguns are uncommon.

Speaking With The Locals

All of the area's residents speak English. However, Cajuns with little formal education have vocabularies and speech patterns which are sometimes difficult to understand if they're speaking quickly or the listener is distracted. In that case, characters who speak English must succeed with an INT Roll to understand the dialect; those who don't speak English at all probably can't make out a thing.

Most rural locals also speak Cajun, a *patois* as opposed to a true language; it's composed of both French and English words along with a wide variety of slang terms. Characters with at least 3 points in both French and English can understand the vocabulary enough to get by, but the slang means some nuances will slip by them unless they succeed with an INT Roll.

Educated locals, mostly the staff at the plantation, speak English clearly and may speak other languages. People who served in the Great War — such as a disproportionately large number of Southerners, including many from the bayou country — may retain 1 point in French or German, even if they have little formal education.

RELIGION

Most of the locals are at least nodding Catholics; a priest from Abbeville makes the rounds through the area three times a year to christen children and perform marriage ceremonies (sometimes both at the same stop), and answers calls to perform last rites for anyone he can reach in time. There's a small group of blacks, descendants of escaped slaves from the original owners of the Laussat Plantation, who live deeper in the bayou and follow a version of the Haitian Voodoo tradition. The local Cajuns consider them "strange" and leave them to their own devices so long as they, in turn, leave the Cajuns alone.

LOCATIONS

The Plantation House

The exterior of the main house — a formerly beautiful, two-story plantation home built on a raised foundation — has been masterfully camouflaged to appear as if it's both unoccupied and falling apart (the adjoining side buildings need no camouflage — they are, in fact, unoccupied and falling apart). Characters suffer a -4 penalty on Concealment rolls (or -6 on PER Rolls) when they try to see past the camouflage at a range of 6" or greater during the day. Farther than that and they can't penetrate the deception; the penalty drops by -1 per 1" that they move closer to the main house. At night, the illusion is essentially perfect (-8 to Concealment rolls, -10 to PER Rolls). Doctor Charn has reinforced the walls and external doors (DEF 6, BODY 6), and doors with locks have top-quality ones (-2 to Lockpicking rolls).

THE FIRST FLOOR

1) Portico: The stairs leading up to the portico — and the floor of the portico itself — are rotten and in poor condition. Characters weighing more than 150 pounds may find their feet punching through the stairs and floorboards, or even wind up having a leg drop through the portico floor up to the knee if they're not careful. Each Phase that a character moves more than 1", have him make a DEX Roll at a penalty equal to -1 per inch moved above 1". If the roll fails, the character's foot (or entire leg, for failure by 4 or more) crash through the floor, leading to a -2 DCV penalty until the character uses a Half Phase Action to free his foot/leg. Characters who succeed with the roll, or who move slowly (1" per Phase), avoid these problems.

The plantation house door is unlocked, but it's warped and stuck. Characters need to use 20 STR to pull it open, a procedure that makes a fair amount of noise and sets off a silent alarm in the cellar and the laboratories.

2) Entry Hall: The once opulent Laussat home appears to be a ruin on this level. Large patches of mold speckle the floors and walls; wallpaper, if it's there at all, hangs in strips that move in the faint breeze like the edges of a shroud; small plants grow up from between floorboards; carpets lie rotting underfoot; the furniture is all shattered or collapsed; the odor of damp rot pervades the place. Again, larger characters will find feet plunging through the floor (see #1, above), and leaning on the walls for anyone isn't recommended lest they punch holes in the soggy plaster.

3) Parlor: Generations of birds have nested in the fireplace, their presence adding little to the room's charm. Characters investigating the rustling noises from the fireplaces startle them, causing them to burst forth in a rush in the investigating character's face.

4) Dining Room: The heavy wooden dining room table is mostly intact, but putting any real weight on it quickly speeds it to collapse. The door in the west wall is closed and must be forced with 15 STR; it sends a second silent alarm as above.

5) Ballroom: The ballroom that once was the pride of the Laussat home is now an empty wreck, though the floors seem more solid here. The sliding doors that allowed the room to be sectioned hang from their tracks, the piano was destroyed years ago, and four or five scattered lumps of vegetation and mold hide the remains of what once were members of the family and staff (they give up their horrific secret with a little prodding).

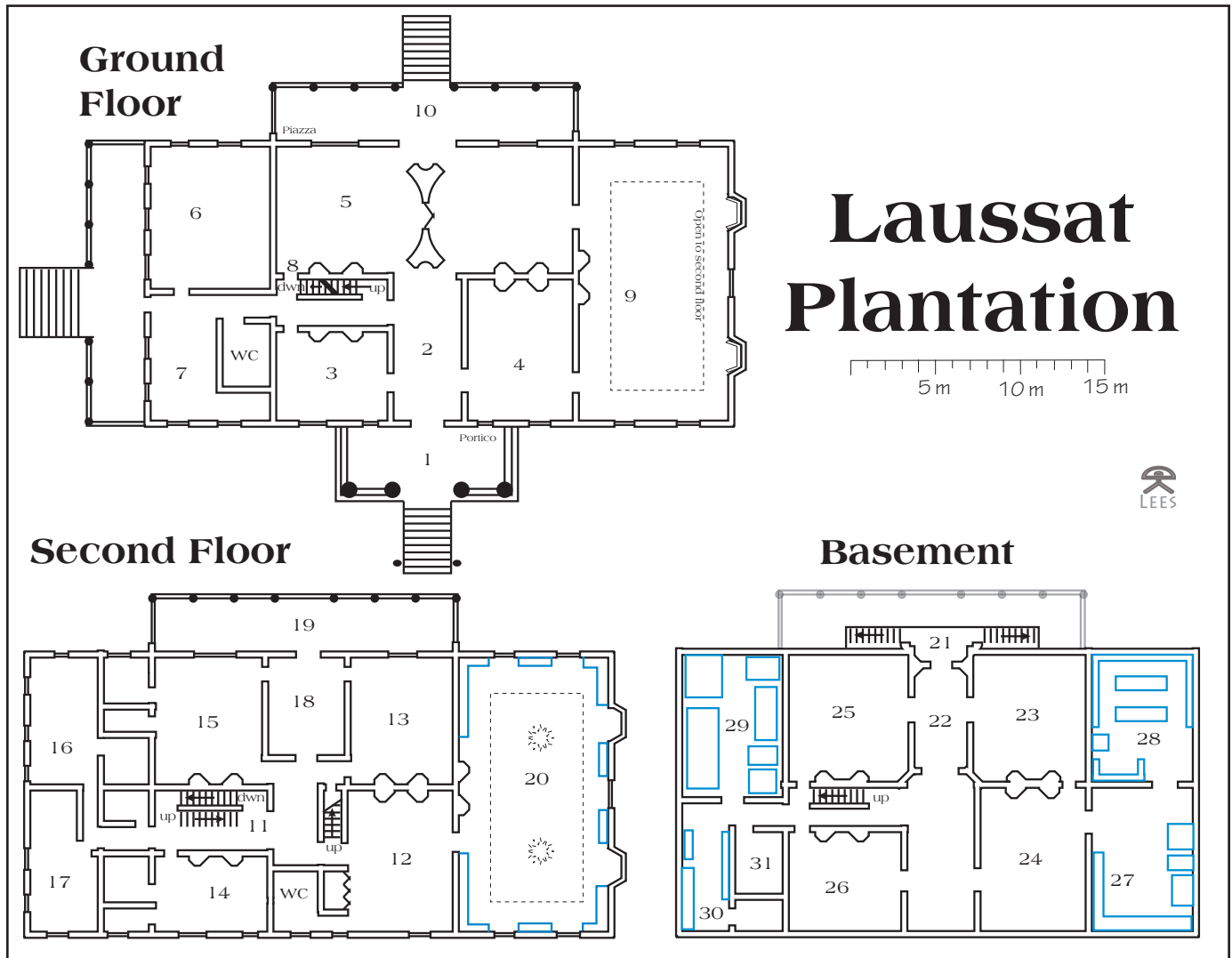
The eastern half of the room has a trap built into it, triggered by a switch located in the laboratories and downstairs: the floors have weight sensors built into them, allowing the staff to track individuals on a display panel that lights up areas where someone stands. If they believe all members of a group of intruders are in this area, they flip the switch and seal off the room with steel shutters over the windows, the chimney, and the doors (DEF 9, BODY 9), and release a gas that knocks the intruders out (Energy Blast 5d6, NND [defense is Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing)], 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Turn (attacks on Phases 3, 6, 9, and 12)).

6) Kitchens: The most intact thing in the kitchens is the iron stove, which has succumbed to rust. A family of raccoons nests in here, entering and leaving through the shattered windows, and will protest intrusions.

7) Storage: The exterior door here is also stuck, requiring 20 STR to force it; it sounds an alarm as described above.

8) Stairs: The stairs going down into the cellar appear to end jaggedly several feet down into the darkness, as if they've collapsed due to rot. They actually continue, having been replaced with a set of glass steps that are invisible in the darkness and nearly so even with a strong light (-4 to Concealment rolls, or -6 to PER Rolls, to notice with a strong light). The stairs up appear to be about to suffer total collapse (even though they're not), and specially-weakened steps are placed along their length to collapse under anyone's feet (11- to encounter one, -4 to Security Systems rolls to notice). Characters clutching at the handrail for support discover it's been designed to break away — they'll fall down into the hallway (4d6 Normal Damage).

9) Library: The once impressive two-story library will bring tears to the eyes of any librarian, historian, or academic. Thousands of books once lined the shelves on this level and the balcony level above — and none of them have survived the years of neglect since the plantation was raided. They lie rotting and ruined about the floor amidst shattered tables and chairs, pages occasionally fluttering about like wind-blown leaves when a volume's bindings fail, and spilling from failed shelves like a fall of moldy snow piled against a house in winter. A large globe in the corner is cracked open like



an egg, both of the chandeliers have fallen to the floor, and hundreds of birds have nested in here or stolen pages to make their nests. The wrought iron spiral stairs to the balcony level still stand and will support a character's weight, but examining the balcony level's floor from underneath hints that it will not; several shelves have already fallen through it along the south wall.

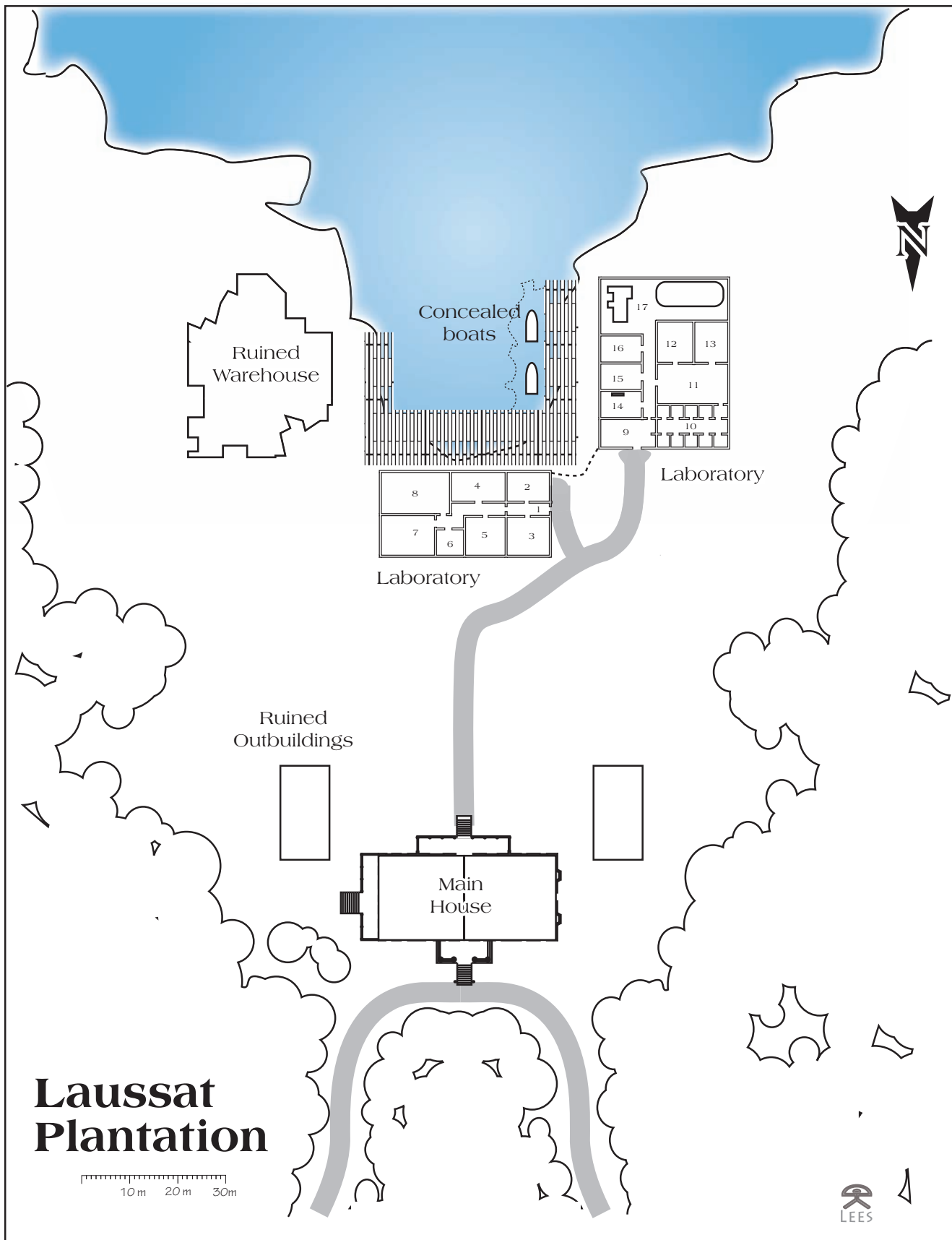
10) Piazza: As with the Portico, this door requires 20 STR to force open (and is alarmed); the floor and stairs are equally unsafe. Looking out at the warehouses behind the plantation from here, one can see several game trails leading through the tangle of undergrowth in the direction of the water (they're really the paths used by the staff to reach the labs at the piers).

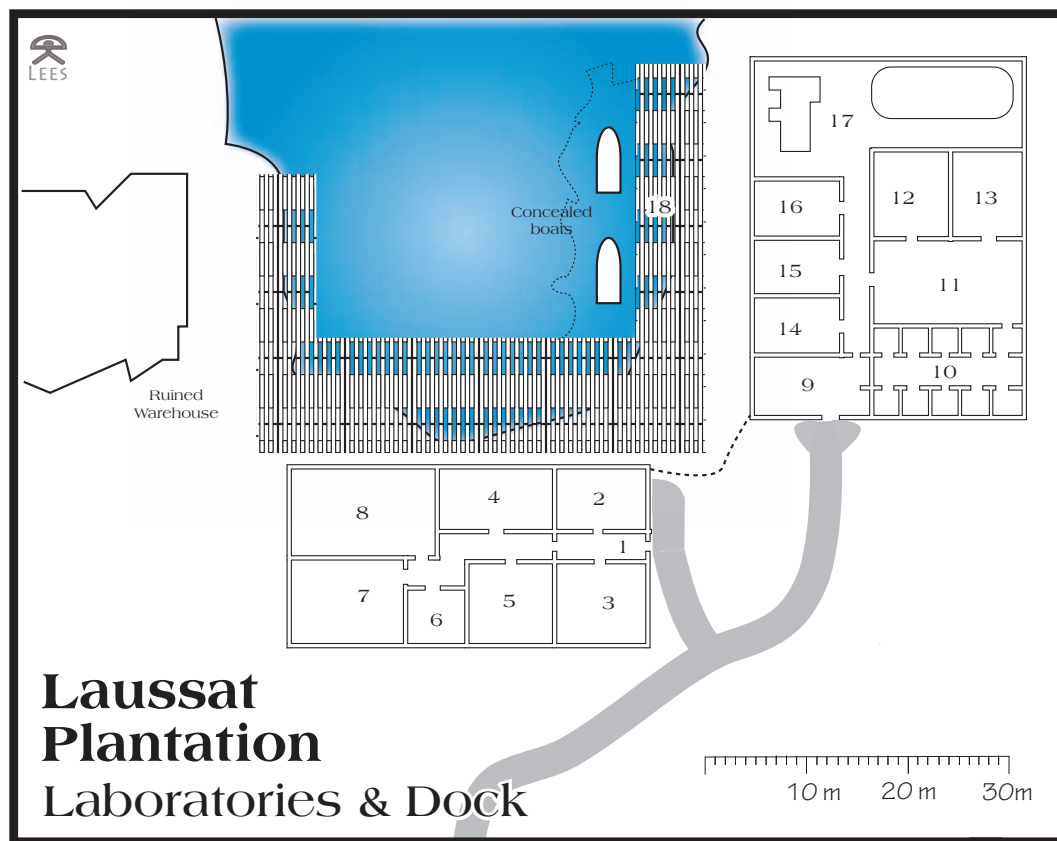
THE SECOND FLOOR

11) Stairs: The stairs from the Ground Floor continue up here and then move further on into the attic, another set of stairs to the west also leads to the attic — like the stairs leading up at #8, these are trapped and set to collapse with specially weakened steps placed along their length (11- to encounter one, -4 to Security Systems roll to notice or disable), and breakaway handrails which precipitate characters down to the hallway (4d6 Normal Damage).

12-17 Bedrooms: All of these rooms were once bedrooms for the Laussat family or its guests; all are in the same state of ruin. The doorway in #12 leading to the balcony level of the library is a trap — it appears to be jammed, but when real force (STR 13 or more) is applied to it the door falls away, sending the character forward and over the balcony rail — unlucky characters will strike the ruined chandelier and not the floor! (8- to strike the chandelier's metal frame for 2d6 Killing Damage, otherwise 6d6 Normal Damage; an Unluck roll means automatically hitting the chandelier, while a Luck roll means automatically evading it.) Room #15 has a gas trap identical to the one in Room #5.

18) Parlor: The doors to the upper balcony are shattered and lie on the floor.





19) Balcony: Anyone weighing more than a small child (50 pounds) walking out onto this structure almost certainly falls through the rotten floor to the portico below (must make a DEX Roll at -6 per step taken or fall through for 6d6 Normal Damage). Characters who avoid that fate for three steps can see the paths leading to the laboratories clearly in the daylight, and will realize they're not game trails.

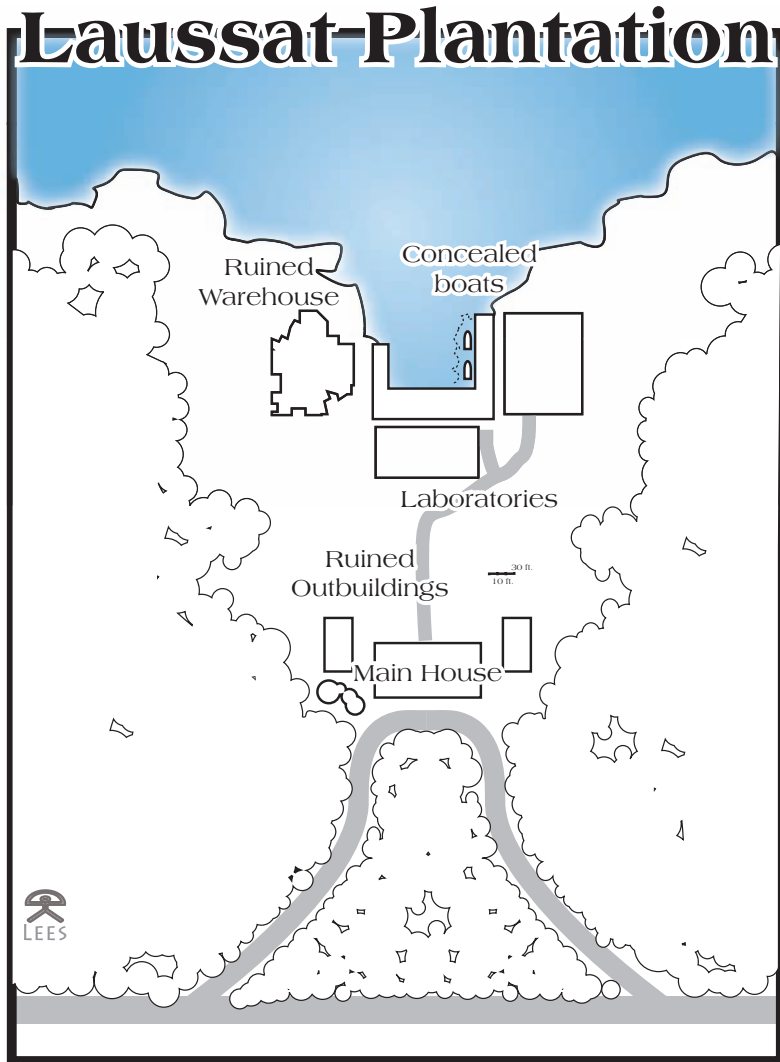
20) Upper Library Level: As with the balcony, the floors here are completely unstable and collapse if the characters put too much weight on them, although the wrought iron underpinnings provide a little more security than the exterior balcony (8-chance to collapse per step, 6d6 Normal Damage).

THE BASEMENT

21) Basement Entrance: The entrance to the staff living area is located within the raised foundations of the plantation house under the portico, and accessed through a locked, reinforced steel gate painted to look like rusted-shut wrought iron (DEF 7, BODY 8, -5 to Concealment rolls [or -7 to PER Rolls], -4 to Lockpicking). Stairs descend to the level of the door. The "game trails" lead from the gate to the labs and the pier.

22) Hallway: Within the basement it's a different world. Doctor Charn has installed an experimental cooling and dehumidifying system that makes the living area comfortable and pleasant. An array of colored lights mounted on the wall in each room and the hall signal the triggering of any of the silent alarms. The glass stairs from the Ground Floor end in a booth-like arrangement of armored glass (DEF 8, BODY 6) that can only be opened from this side and can be sealed and flooded with the same gas as in Room 5 if necessary. The controls for the traps upstairs and the displays for the floor sensors are in the hall near the door.

23-26) Bedrooms: The staff has made small changes to their quarters. Room 23 is reserved for Dr. Charn, and it remains sparse and utilitarian; Room 24 is Dr. Teller's room; he's added a wall chart with cryptic notations about his experiments and shelves for his books. McCallum and Jeffrey occupy Room 25; it's the most ill-kept and slovenly of the four, the only clean things in it are their guns. Room 26 is Knopf and Eagan's room. They've decorated it with posters from New Orleans and pictures of their girlfriends with personal informa-



tion and the aliases the women know them by on neatly-lettered cards next to the photos so they can keep details straight.

27) Storage: Extra equipment, several rifles, and a stock of tattered Union army uniforms, equipment, and phosphorescent paints and makeup are stored here in case the need arises for some ghostly intervention.

28) Office: Dr. Teller uses this office when Dr. Charn isn't here. It contains many shelves and filing cabinets with experimental records and observations, two desks, and a safe containing petty cash to cover trips to New Orleans and the like.

29) Machinery: This area holds the heating and cooling systems and the supplemental power generator for the living area, as well as the gas tanks for the traps in Rooms 5 and 15 and the hallway stairs.

30) Kitchen: The living area's kitchens and walk-in freezer. Theoretically the cooking and cleaning duties rotate, but Knopf and Eagan took them over completely after sampling McCallum and Jeffrey's cooking and Dr. Teller forgot to cook four times in a row.

31) Bathroom

Laboratories

The exteriors of the two laboratories have, like the main house, been camouflaged to appear as if they're both unoccupied and falling apart (like the eastern warehouse really is). Characters take the same -4 to Concealment/-6 to PER Rolls penalty when trying to see past the camouflage (see above). The walls and doors are heavily reinforced to be stronger than they appear in case a specimen tries to escape (DEF 10, BODY 7); neither laboratory building has exterior windows. The exterior locks are, like those at the main house, of excellent quality (-2 to Lockpicking rolls). Power lines disguised as vines run from one lab to the other; lines to the plantation house run underground. Most offices and labs have panels with alarm lights to warn of intrusions.

LABORATORY ONE

1) Hallway: This hallway has the same type of pressure plate tracking system and gas trap as found in several rooms of the plantation house. It has displays and triggers in Room 6, Room 11, and the hallway in the living area in the plantation cellar; there's also a manual trigger on the east side of the hallway door near Room 5. The door to the east has

a glass panel inset in it, allowing someone to see into this area. The front door sounds a silent alarm when opened.

2) Office: This room contains the sort of desks, chairs, and filing cabinets one would expect in an office. The records in the cabinets are mostly charts and maps of the area bearing markings that make no sense without a great deal of study (they're used to track the flow of the chemicals and contaminants through the bayou, and experimental subject movements). Characters with Science Skills like Hydrology or Biology might at least gain a general idea of what they're for.

3) Office: Identical to Room 2, above.

4) Storage: The Antoine suits and their cleaning and repair materials are stored here. In the dark, the suits on their stands appear to be standing, waiting to attack.

5) Chemical Storage: This room contains racks and shelves full of chemicals, plus the gas tanks for the trap in the front hallway.

6) Radio/Control Room: Has the monitor panels for pressure plate sensors (characters appear as red dots on an outline of the room), a radio for contacting Dr. Charn, and triggers for the gas traps. The radio antenna is concealed in the nearby trees.

7-8) Laboratories: A typical Weird Science chemistry lab, with lots of chemicals, beakers, colored liquids moving through glass tubes for no discernable purpose, and so on. Doctors Charn and Teller mostly use it to analyze samples of the chemicals and dissect small specimens.

LABORATORY TWO

9) Entrance Hall: Knopf and Eagan have whimsically arranged this room to look like the waiting room at a prosperous medical doctor's office, complete with chairs, couches, and outdated reading materials. This room has a gas trap in it as well.

10) Observation Cells: Charn and Teller use these steel-lined rooms to observe specimens too large or dangerous to place in simple cages. Captured characters will awaken here. The reinforced doors (DEF 8, BODY 8) have glass inserts to allow viewing of the interior, the lights are recessed and shielded by a metal grate, and there's a feeding slot in the doors near the floor. If necessary laboratory personnel can bring in gas tanks and hook them up to individual doors to subdue fractious specimen (or characters).

11) Examination Room: Dr. Charn and Dr. Teller examine and dissect large specimens in here. There are cages along the walls holding things like raccoons the size of dogs, and ants or wasps the size of rabbits. Stained dissecting tables fill the center of the room. This building's displays and gas trap controls for the complex are on the north wall.

12-13) Large Specimen Observation Rooms: Charn and Teller use these room to store larger specimens like the giant crawfish or giant turtles. These rooms have water tanks in the floors and more heavily-reinforced walls and doors (DEF 10, BODY 10), as well as the glass observation windows and provisions for gas tank attachment. Faced with recalcitrant characters who possess information he needs to know, Dr. Teller would consider placing someone (traditionally a woman) in one of these rooms where the crawfish or turtle could menace them to force the others to speak.

14-16) Chemical And Supplies Storage: These rooms contain tanks of chemicals for introduction into the bayou, and supplies for the labs.

17) Main Generator: The facility's main power generator and the fuel storage for it. If characters set a fire here, the resulting explosion as the fuel tank went off would level the laboratories (8d6 Killing Damage Explosion, -1 DC per 2").

18) Disguised Boathouse: This apparently overgrown mass of vegetation conceals the two boats used by the staff (-4 to Concealment rolls to perceive). One is a motorless poled craft used when examining the wildlife or scouting the area, the other is a high-powered speedboat used for trips to New Orleans and getaways.

INDIVIDUALS

For Dr. Charn himself, see *Hero Plus Adventure 14: Four Fiends* (or just use the character sheet for Dr. Jennings Petrie in *Pulp Hero*, changing it to emphasize biology rather than electronics and physics). Here's some information on other noteworthy individuals in and around his plantation labs.

DR. STEVEN TELLER

8 STR	12 DEX	12 CON	10 BODY
15 INT	13 EGO	12 PRE	8 COM
4 PD	3 ED	2 SPD	4 REC
24 END	21 STUN		

Abilities: AK: Immediate Lab Area 12-; Inventor 12-; KS: Animal Behavior 11-; Paramedics 12-; PS: Scientist 12-; SS: Biology 12-; SS: Botany 13-; SS: Chemistry 13-; SS: Medicine 12-; SS: Pharmacology 12-; Stealth 12-; Systems Operations 12-; WF: Small Arms

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Watched by Dr. Charn; Hunted: Police; Psychological Limitation: Determined To Perfect A Human Growth Serum; Psychological Limitation: Insecure Over Small Stature; Psychological Limitation: Devoted To Science; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Dr. Steven Teller is in the frustrating position of a man who's almost in range of his life's dream... but only almost. Growing up a spindly weakling, he was often bullied by larger and older children. His superior intelligence raised him above those less gifted (and occasionally got him out of a scrape), so he convinced himself a superior mind ought to be able to mold or enhance one's body. But the exercise programs he tried never gave him satisfactory results. After a brief examination of eastern mysticism, he came to believe that only science could help him achieve the physical stature and prowess he deserved. It didn't help matters that his adolescent growth spurt ended early, leaving him only five feet tall and weighing around one hundred pounds.

Teller's family sent him to a fine university. He concentrated on the life sciences and chemistry, sure that these disciplines held the knowledge he needed. He developed no close contacts or friendships, except for one or two professors, and paid no attention to the opposite sex. He finished his graduate studies, put in some time teaching undergraduates at his alma mater, and slowly began setting up his own laboratory to pursue his research. His knowledge of biology and drugs allowed him to make some interesting discoveries, but he needed human blood and growth hormones to really find a breakthrough. Unfortunately, the police discovered his involuntary donors before he could extract the substances he needed and release them back into the slums. How unreasonable — it's not as if he were going to kill them or something! What did the temporary inconveniencing of a few derelicts matter compared to the advancements he could bring to Science?

Teller escaped from police custody before reaching jail. While he was on the lam, Dr. Felton Charn — a superior intellect he could respect, who appreciated the contributions he could make — contacted him through underworld channels and offered him a job. He quickly agreed to serve as Charn's resident scientist at an isolated Louisiana laboratory, knowing he could advance his own research there. While some of Charn's projects make him uneasy, he calms his misgivings by reminding himself that his leader is, after all, a superior scientist and that some few sacrifices have to be made at the altar of Science.

FRANCOIS THIBODAU

10 STR	12 DEX	13 CON	11 BODY
13 INT	12 EGO	14 PRE	10 COM
3 PD	3 ED	2 SPD	5 REC
26 END	23 STUN		

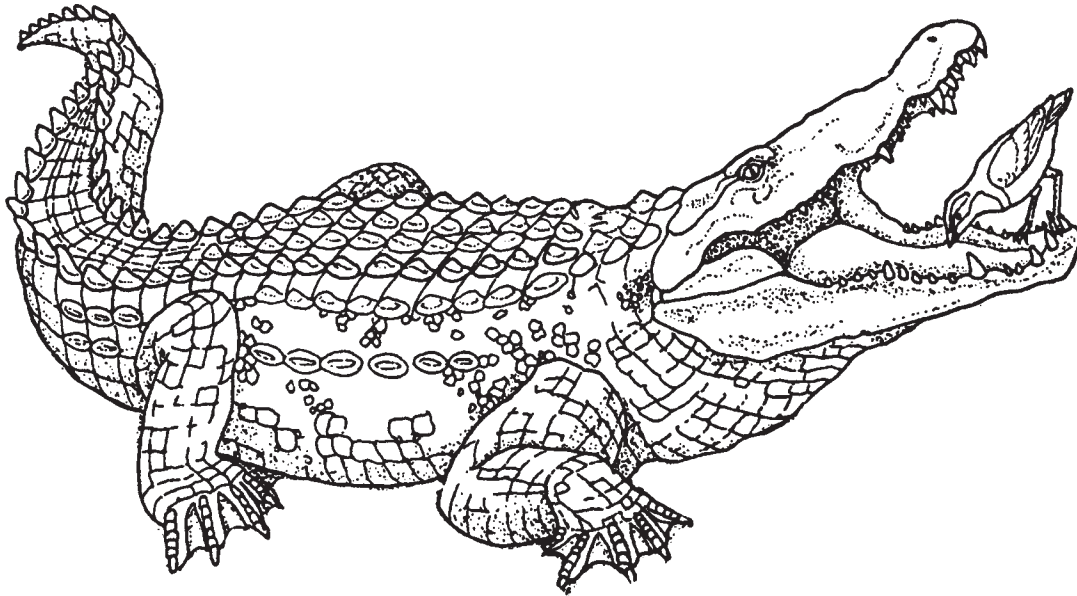
Abilities: +1 to PER Rolls with Sight Group; +1 with Ranged Attacks; Conversation 12-; AK: Grand Lake Area 12-; AK: Louisiana Bayous/Swamps 12-; KS: Swamp Fauna 12-; KS: Local History 13-; KS: Local Folklore/Superstitions 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Hunter 12-; PS: Fisherman 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical Swamp) 12-; Tracking 12-; TF: Small Rowed Boats, Small Motorized Boats; WF: Small Arms;

75+ Disadvantages: Age (40+); Psychological Limitation: Loves/Protective Of Wife And Family; Psychological Limitation: Wary Of Outsiders; Social Limitation: Burdens Of Family Leader

Notes: Francois Thibodaux has lived nearly all his 65 years in the bayou country around Grand Lake, raising his family and making a decent living (though he's never been well-off by any means). On the other hand, the self-sufficient lifestyle of his family rendered them largely immune to the stock market crash and its attendant disasters. Francois even makes small quantities of his own moonshine; the Grand Lake area is so remote he has yet to be troubled by revenuers or sheriffs.

Francois is wary of outsiders, especially anyone in an official capacity such as law enforcement or tax collectors. This is due in part to the three-year sentence he served in a Louisiana state prison for assault and battery committed during a visit to Baton Rouge — he beat up a local tough who made unseemly advances to his fiancée, Martine St. Jacques. She returned home to wait faithfully for him, and they were married two weeks after his release. They're still happily (if sometimes noisily) married after some 40 years. The family suffered the loss of its second son in the Great War, but they still have two other sons, two daughters, and numerous grandchildren.

Francois has considerable knowledge of the local area, including history and folklore. Given his distrust of outsiders, getting him to share any information a visitor needs may be a little difficult.



JEZEBEL "BELLE" ST. JACQUES

10 STR	15 DEX	16 CON	13 BODY
13 INT	14 EGO	16 PRE	16 COM
6 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
32 END	26 STUN		

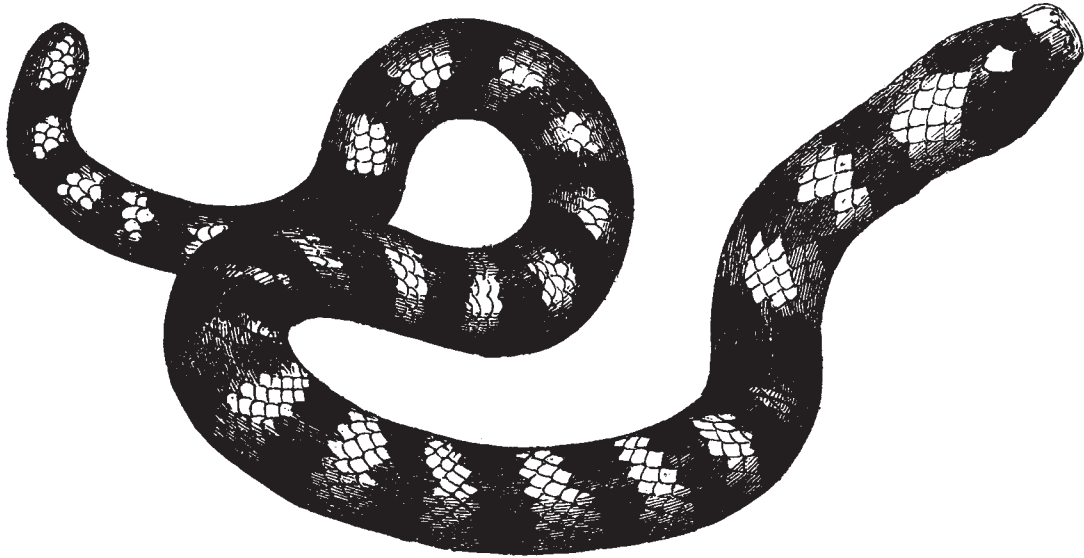
Abilities: +2 to Sight Group PER Rolls; +1 HTH; +1 with Ranged Combat; Dirty Infighting (Low Blow, Punch); AK: Local Bayous/Swamps 12-; KS: Local History 11-; KS: Local Medicinal Plants 12-; PS: Herbal Healing 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical Swamp) 12-; Tracking 12-; TF: Small Rowed Boats, Small Motorized Boats; WF: Small Arms;

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Curiosity About World Beyond Louisiana; Psychological Limitation: Hot-Tempered; Psychological Limitation: Wants To Leave Home And Live In The World Beyond; Reputation: Hot-Tempered; Social Limitation: Woman

Notes: Growing up with an over-protective older brother can be difficult for a high-spirited girl, even if she has two sisters to share his watchfulness. It did mean that Belle learned more about fighting than most would consider proper for a young girl — something her brother Paul and several other over-enthusiastic young swains have had occasion to regret. But Belle was pleased she could take care of herself (when she wanted to) without needing her brother's interference.

Belle is an attractive, athletic redhead with all the temper and willfulness implied by her flaming tresses. She's reached 20 without finding a young man in her area she's willing to marry, although she's gone out walking with several. Her willingness to resort to punching a beau who wanted to proceed faster or farther than she wished has gained her a (slightly) exaggerated reputation for being hot-tempered. Few young men of neighboring families are willing these days to do more than partner her in an occasional dance.

And that suits Belle just fine. She desperately wants to move out into the wider world of which she's read, to visit places and do things her siblings can barely imagine. She'll be extremely interested in any visitors to her area — particularly handsome, eligible men. Belle prefers to leave home with a suitable husband (a wealthy one would be nice) and travel the country, or even the world. She still loves her family, but wants to return to visit occasionally, not live here the rest of her life. She might be willing to leave with a lover if she were convinced he wouldn't abandon her, but this would be a much harder sell (one of her aunts ended her days in New Orleans as a "fallen woman"). Lastly, she'd be willing to join a group of adventurous heroes who gave her a chance to prove her mettle, even if she wasn't romantically attracted to one of them.



BAYOU CREATURES

The *HERO System Bestiary* already has character sheets for all of the mundane dangerous animals characters might encounter in the bayou country. See page 140 for the Boar, page 145 for the Cougar (use the Leopard's sheet), page 149 for the Alligator (add the *Hibernates In Winter* Physical Limitation described in the text), page 178-181 for the Rattlesnake, Copperhead, Cottonmouth, and Coral Snake, and page 183 for a sheet appropriate to a swarm of bees or wasps. If necessary you can alter any of these animals to reflect mutation by the chemical dumps in the bayou simply by adding the *Ferocious* Template or manipulating their size with the *Size* Templates.

The Giant Crab write-up on page 46 of *The HERO System Bestiary* works perfectly for the Giant Crawfish that are beginning to spread through the bayou. The Grand Lake Turtle needs its own character sheet.

THE GRAND LAKE TURTLE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	50	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 (8)
12	DEX	6	11-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
25	CON	40	14-	
25	BODY	40	14-	
5	INT	-5	10-	PER Roll 10-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
20	PRE	10	14-	PRE Attack: 4d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
15	PD	14		Total: 23 PD (11 rPD)
6	ED	1		Total: 14 ED (11 rED)
2	SPD	0		Phases: 6, 12
13	REC	0		
50	END	0		
60	STUN	4		Total Characteristics Cost: 148

Movement: Running: 2"/4"
Swimming: 10"/20"
Leaping: 0"

Cost	Powers	END
25	<i>Snapping Beak:</i> HKA 1½d6 (3d6+1 with STR)	2
12	<i>Thick Shell:</i> Armor 8 PD/8 ED; Limited Coverage (covers Hit Locations 9-13; -1)	0
4	<i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (3 PD/3 ED)	0
8	<i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -4"	0
1	<i>Diving:</i> Life Support (Extended Breathing: 1 END per Turn)	0
13	<i>Agile In The Water:</i> Swimming +8" (10" total)	
-8	<i>Not Agile On Land:</i> Running -4" (2" total)	
3	<i>Extendable Neck:</i> Stretching 1", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Always Direct (-¼), Limited Body Parts (neck; -¼), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼)	0

Talents

3 Lightning Reflexes: +3 DEX to go first with Snapping Beak

Skills

6 +3 OCV with Snapping Beak

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 67**Total Cost: 215****75+ Disadvantages**

- 15 Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 5 Physical Limitation: Large (5m long, 4m wide, 2m tall at the shoulder, 2700 kg in weight; -2 DCV, +2 to PER Rolls to perceive)(Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 8 Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, cannot leap (Infrequent, Slightly Limiting)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Ill-Tempered And Territorial (Common, Strong)
- 82 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 215

Ecology: Like the smaller alligator snapping turtle it once was, the Grand Lake Turtle is an omnivore, feeding on vegetation, fish, and carrion. The largest difference is the volume of material it eats: a food requirement formerly measured in ounces has become one measured in hundreds of pounds. Now that it's devoured the material easily available to it in the bayou (including many of its fellow turtles), it's moved on to a location with more room and available food. It doesn't have to eat constantly — it prefers to gorge itself and then rest in the shallows along the banks, appearing to be a terrain feature rather than a living thing. While Grand Lake currently provides enough food for it, if left unchecked it will denude the lake and have to move on in search of a more food-rich environment.

For an interesting scenario, the turtle could be female and escape Grand Lake seeking a good place to lay her eggs (say, Lake Pontchartrain), forcing the characters to track it down before dozens of giant turtles start to spread across the Mississippi Delta.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations. Normal turtles of this type are very ill-tempered animals, and have strong territorial instincts — the Grand Lake Turtle is no exception. If anything, it's worse than an ordinary snapper.

Powers/Tactics: The turtle's only real mode of attack is its terrible beak, which can cut a man in half with one snap. It typically waits for a target to come within range, then lunges out with its extendable neck, a maneuver it can execute at rapid speeds and that usually takes a target by surprise the first time. It can do a considerable amount of damage by simply running into, or shouldering, a target while it's moving, but due to leg positioning it can't really exert STR against a target in any other way except by stomping on something. If injured, it tries to withdraw into the water, where it becomes a much more agile creature. Against targets in the water, it tries to come up beneath them and use its beak; it knows how to overturn boats.

PLOT SEEDS

The characters arrive at the Grand Lake community searching for a missing contact, a reporter last seen in this area. They're greeted with disinterest and suspicion. As they work to gain the trust of the local Cajuns that evening, a commotion draws attention away from their conversation. An attractive, redheaded young woman comes to the community elders and says she needs help to find her idiot "city boy" cousin Pierre (he's from Lafayette, Louisiana, a booming metropolis of some 14,600 souls) — he's run off and gotten lost in the swamp. Questioned further, Belle explains they were out at the family still loading 'shine when *something* tried to climb into the boat with them. Pierre panicked while she was beating it with an oar, and when the critter splashed back in the water she looked around and couldn't find him. The locals want to wait until morning before mounting a search, but Belle is afraid her cousin will get snake-bit or "et by a gator, and then won't Momma bust a gusset!" She appeals to her Uncle Francois for help. He reluctantly agrees to get his boat, gun, and some lanterns. If the characters want to gain the Cajuns' trust (and impress the girl), this is their chance... but of course, Belle's coming too, and she wants to borrow a *real* gun.

A character interested in occult studies finds references to the ghosts of Laussat Plantation and the legend of Antoine. A search through Civil War records uncovers the fact that Laussat's ill-gotten treasure was never located by the Union troops. Deciding to take a Louisiana vacation to investigate the old stories, he and his companions may find more excitement than they expected.

One of the characters has a wealthy and eccentric Aunt Matilda. She comes to him with the thrilling news of her latest project: she's bought this romantic, old Louisiana plantation in dire need of restoration "before this wonderful piece of history is lost forever. Can you imagine, dear — it's even said to be haunted!" All she needs is for the character and his friends to visit the site, keep an eye on her surveyor and engineer, and help arrange for some locals who'd like jobs to provide the manual labor for the repairs. She'd love to go with him, but has a previous commitment in San Francisco....

Appearance: The Grand Lake Turtle is a normal alligator snapping turtle grown to monstrous proportions. It's currently 2½" (16 feet) long and 2" (13 feet) wide, stands 1" (6.5 feet) tall at the shoulder (closer to 10 feet — about 1½" — at the crest of its shell), and weighs 2,700 kg (5,940 lbs.). Its hide is green and scaly, its eyes yellow, and its beak blackish green; the massive shell covering it is dull green with the individual shell "scutes" being edged in black. Patches of algae and moss cling to the shell, and in some places have attached themselves and started to grow there.

THE PLEISTOCENE PLATEAU



Located between the western slopes of the Verkhoyansk Mountains and the eastern slopes of the Kolyma Mountains in north-eastern Siberia is a frigid, mountainous land that ranks among the most inhospitable places on earth. There, running along and slightly below the 65th parallel, is a vast, uncharted plateau unchanged since the days when the great glaciers marched down from the Arctic to bury the earth under their massive weight — a plateau where the creatures and peoples of the last Ice Age still dwell as they did thousands of years ago. It is an island the sky, a land frozen in time just waiting for intrepid adventurers to discover it and the wonders it holds.

GEOGRAPHY

The Pleistocene Plateau is an enormous plateau of irregular shape whose surface is 9,000 feet above sea level. The mountains surrounding it on all sides in an unbroken wall of impassable stone reach still higher, averaging 12,000-15,000 feet at their peaks. The plateau is longer than it is wide, though it has many small branches along its length that increase its overall width. A river that begins in a lake at the eastern end and terminates in a smaller lake at the western divides the plateau in half, although there are numerous shallows and natural bridges that allow passage across.

The mountains surrounding the plateau cut it off from the outside world so thoroughly that the only feasible access is either by air... or, possibly, some caves on the southern side of the plateau. The inhabitants' oldest stories say these caves to the land from which the People came, a place many days' journey down into the dark where the land is so warm that men can walk like the other creatures, clad only in the skins the spirits gave them.

FIRE-ROCK

Running underneath and, in some cases, into the plateau are several veins of a previously undescribed mineral that captured the heat from the earth's molten past, trapping it within its unique crystalline matrix. Having worked their way closer to the surface, where the pressure on them is less, the veins now slowly radiate their stored heat as infrared radiation, keeping the Pleistocene Plateau just warm enough that it isn't plunged into a winter cold enough to end all life that dwells within it. Named "fire-rock" by the plateau's inhabitants, the veins and outcroppings create localized temperature variations around the plateau depending on their concentration and nearness to the surface.

Fire-rock is initially cool to the touch, but after a short time the infrared radiation it emits inflicts burns. The majority of the fire-rock is contained in underground deposits lying under the valley and running through inner walls of the surrounding peaks. Exposed outcroppings are normally surrounded by an area where only the hardiest lichens grow, because plants wither and die under the emanations. The plateau's inhabitants use smaller pieces of fire-rock in place of fire. It lets them cook food and heat dwellings without the annoyance of smoke, the necessity to dispose of ashes, or (most importantly) the need to gather fuel for a fire. Use the rules on page 445 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* to determine damage taken from handling or being exposed to fire-rock — a chunk the size of a baseball is equivalent to a torch.

Ka-Boom

Fire-rock is also unstable — the energy contained within it constantly seeks to release itself and explode outward. If a sufficiently powerful impact fractures the crystalline matrix, the results are... explosive. Small crystals are more unstable than larger ones; any golf ball-sized crystal can explode with the power of a stick of dynamite (Energy Blast 5d6, Explosion) if dropped onto a hard surface, and smaller crystals are increasingly more unstable and liable to "daisy chain" if triggered (though their explosions are also proportionately weaker). Larger crystals, such as outcroppings, are sufficiently stable that only a sharp, concentrated impact (like a large-caliber bullet impact or powerful explosion) are likely to set them off — but if they do explode, they detonate like several powerful bombs (RKA 10-12d6 Explosion, -1 DC per 2"). Natives find nothing unusual in the sound of gunshot-like explosions in the distance as small pieces fall from the cliffsides or are stepped on by unwary animals and detonate. During windy nights, the sound of the explosions may resemble an intense firefight in the distance.

The GM should use this dangerous property of fire-rock for best dramatic effect, and the PCs will no doubt want to use the exploding rocks as weapons or tools. For game purposes, assume a small (golf ball-sized) piece of fire-rock explodes on a 14- roll if struck with a weak impact (e.g., just dropping it onto a hard surface or stepping on it). For harder impacts, increase the roll (with a ceiling of 17-). Smaller pieces may have larger rolls as well. For every doubling of a piece of fire-rock's size, decrease the chance to explode by -1 (to a minimum of 8-).

VISIBILITY

The clouds wreathing the mountains at the edge of the plateau combine with the warmer temperatures rising from the plateau itself to leave the Pleistocene Plateau perpetually covered in a dense cloud cover that blocks direct sunlight almost completely. Combined with its extreme northern location and the higher elevation, the cloud cover means the plateau seems dimly lit to eyes accustomed to brighter climes, resulting in a daytime penalty of -1 to Sight Group PER Rolls for a period of two to three days until a visitor's eyes adjust. (This doesn't apply to characters with Nightvision.) The length of the plateau's day is somewhat shorter than normal (approximately 8-10 hours) due to the narrowing of its horizon by the mountains, and its nights are correspondingly longer and darker. Moon- and starlight are virtually nonexistent, and characters suffer the full -4 penalty for "dark night" conditions to Sight Group PER Rolls once the sun sets (unless, of course, they have Nightvision). Wind-driven snow and snowstorms that clear the mountain peaks can create "whiteout" conditions with little warning, inflicting a similar "dark night" (even in daytime) penalties and affecting Hearing and Smell/Taste Group Senses to a lesser degree (-1 to -3) depending on the severity of the conditions. (Nightvision doesn't help to offset any winter weather penalties.)

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Due to its altitude and extreme northern location, the base temperatures around the Pleistocene Plateau are crippling low, commonly dipping down to -50° Celsius (-60° F) in the mountains outside the plateau, and wind-driven lows can reach around -70° Celsius (-90° F) in just a few minutes. Terrible winds sweep down out of the Arctic and rage through the mountains most of the year, bringing with them storms that blanket the peaks with snow year-round. Around the plateau itself, the winds are so fierce they inflict a piloting penalty on aircraft equal to the aircraft's DCV Modifier, making an approach with larger air vehicles almost impossible. Additional visibility penalties to Combat Piloting rolls (within the same range as that for the whiteout conditions within the plateau) may apply based on current conditions, and the hungry mountain peaks await those who fail.

Within the Pleistocene Plateau conditions improve markedly. The plateau's normal temperature ranges between -7° to -23° Celsius (20° to -10° F) unless one of the storms makes its way over the plateau walls and sweeps down across the land. Winds normally blow west-to-east along the plateau, although cross-winds are not uncommon. Conditions on the western end of the plateau (especially on the open tundra portions of the plateau) tend toward the lower end of the range,

and perhaps a bit lower when the winds blow; while temperatures at the eastern end of the plateau only rarely falls below -7° Celsius (20° F) due to the greater presence of below-ground fire-rock deposits. See pages 438 and 441-42 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* for rules about low temperatures and frostbite. Characters will need heavy winter clothing, such as parkas or bearskin garments, to counteract at least some of the cold; the bulky garb may impose a -1 to -2 penalty on DEX Rolls, Agility Skill rolls, and CV unless the character has an appropriate *Environmental Movement* Talent or some other ability that cancels them out.

Conditions are almost never warm enough for it to rain, even at the eastern end of the plateau — snow is the most common form of precipitation. There's typically at least a light dusting of snow on the ground at all times, and during snowstorms (or when pockets and wind-blown drifts are created) it can be several feet deep. Sleet is not unknown, although it remains more common near the two lakes and the river, especially in the colder parts of the Pleistocene Plateau. Normally, however, the air is cold and dry, all the moisture having frozen out of it. On still, quiet nights, it's possible to hear a soft whooshing sound, like grain being poured, as the moisture in one's breath crystallizes in the frigid air and falls to the ground. This is especially noticeable near the herds of bison as they huddle in groups for warmth in the night. The inhabitants call this phenomenon "the Voice of the Spirit" and explain it as the sound of the spirit that abides within all things speaking to the other spirits around it.

TERRAIN

The majority of the Pleistocene Plateau is flat, rolling tundra carpeted in wiry grasses, broken only by small copses of trees and occasional rocky outcroppings. The mountains ringing the plateau rise up sharply at its edges, forming steep cliffs that are impossible to climb due to ice, barrenness, and the high winds that wash along them. Coniferous forests flow along the bases of the mountains, filling most of the coves along the plateau edges and expanding at the eastern end of the plateau where they fill dozens of square miles.

The Pleistocene Plateau has a pair of lakes linked by a river; the larger eastern lake butting against the rock wall at the edge of the plateau and the smaller western one filling a depression some distance away from the rock wall. There are many smaller streams caused by snow-melt that bubble up from the rocks in places, and hot springs heated by underground veins of fire-rock steaming in the frigid air are a not uncommon sight. Plant life flourishes near such spots, exhibiting a greater variety than on the tundra and attracting animal life accordingly.

WILDLIFE

The plateau was uninhabited for most of its existence, only beginning to exhibit the diversity of species currently dwelling there during the last Ice Age, when the glaciers filled in enough of the surrounding mountain ranges to allow animal life to reach the Pleistocene Plateau in real numbers. Some of the natives arrived the same way, but others have legends of a different origin, one where they trekked up from “the Good Home” deep within the earth and were trapped here on the Pleistocene Plateau when the spirits closed the way back as punishment for daring to seek the spirits’ home.

FAUNA

The plateau is home to a variety of animals not seen elsewhere since the end of the Ice Age. Several herds of *wisert*, or European bison, can be found grazing alongside small family groups of mammoths and woolly rhinoceroses, while packs of dire wolves and lone sabretooth tigers stalk them as in ages gone by. The coniferous forests hide the homes of the last of the great ground sloths and arctic deer, and protect many smaller animals like minks and ermines from their natural enemies.

The herds of bison, mammoths, and woolly rhinos roam the tundra. These are more commonly found toward the western end of the plateau, migrating up and down the river and around the lake. Giant sloths and arctic deer are more prevalent toward the eastern end, where the forests are thicker and provide them with the concealment and food sources they require. Dire wolf packs follow the herds out on the tundra, making most of their dens for raising families along the river or in one of the small copses of trees on the tundra. The sabretooth cats prefer to lair near

the western lake and along the edges of the plateau, where ambushing prey is easier.

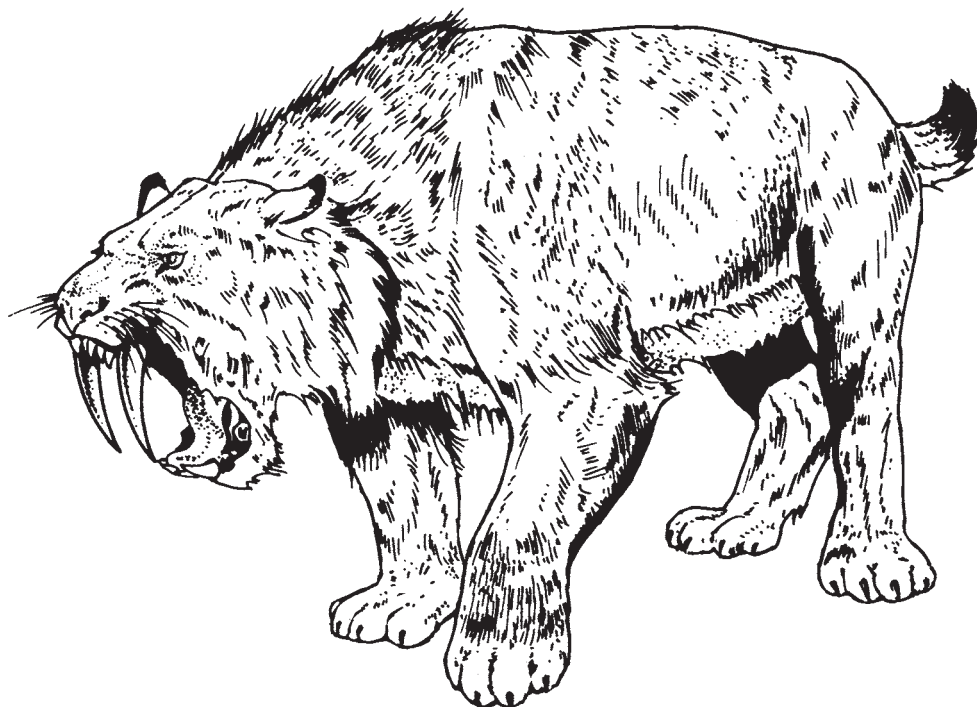
Animal Character Sheets

The *HERO System Bestiary* already has character sheets appropriate for many of the animals that live on the Pleistocene Plateau. See page 141 for the wisert (Bison), page 146 for the Sabretooth Tiger, page 150 for the arctic deer (Deer/Antelope; use the Mountain Goat variant), page 164 for the woolly mammoth (Elephant), page 173 for the woolly rhino (Rhinoceros), and page 188 for a sheet appropriate to a dire wolf (Wolf). You may want to add +5 to the STR and CON of the Elephant and Rhinoceros sheets to reflect the more robust nature of the Ice Age versions of these animals. To reflect their adaptation to the arctic conditions of the Pleistocene Plateau, add Life Support (Safe Environment: Intense Cold), Requires A Survival Roll to any animal lacking it.

Herbivores such as the wisert, mammoth, and woolly rhino have dark coats to help absorb any light that reaches the Pleistocene Plateau as heat. The dire wolves have grayish-brown coats to blend in with their native tundra more effectively, and the sabretooth tigers are colored like white Siberian tigers to blend in with their surroundings and make stalking and ambushing their prey easier.

FLORA

Much of the Pleistocene Plateau’s flora is identical to that found elsewhere in Siberia, having changed little, if any, in the thousands of years since the Ice Age. The conifers that make up the dense forests and the tough, wiry grasses and scrub that cover the tundra are identical to species found outside the plateau. There are some lichens and mosses that have been lost to the outside world in the intervening millennia, but no significant undiscovered plant species exist on the plateau.



PEOPLE

The only sentient native inhabitants of the Pleistocene Plateau are human — or nearly so. Two distinct tribes of Neanderthals live there, one occupying the warmer, more heavily-forested eastern end, and the other, dwelling at the colder, western end of the plateau.

The eastern tribe is larger, older, and more culturally advanced thanks to the warmer weather there and its control of the forests that provide easier hunting and foraging. Its members call themselves the Forest People. They occupy a few fixed ceremonial sites at all times, but primarily live nomadically in semi-permanent hide tents that they move as game becomes scarce. A hereditary shaman who claims magical powers granted to his family by the spirits rules the tribe. Their stories say they followed the herds of bison and mammoths into the Pleistocene Plateau over “the frozen sky.” They’re a people on the edge of evolving culturally from a hunter/gatherer society to a pastoral one where they herd arctic deer for their primary food source.

The western tribe is newer (only in a relative sense — both tribes are ancient in actual years), is the smaller of the two, and has a harder existence in the colder and more barren west. Its members call themselves the Bison People. They live in an extended cave network along the western plateau wall, foraging out to hunt bison, woolly rhinoceros, and mammoth and to gather such other foodstuffs as they can find. They’re ruled by a powerful hunter and warrior whose wife is reputed to be a shamaness of great power dropped from the sky by the talons of a spirit bird. Their stories (and those of the Forest People) describe them as having climbed up from the “lands below” in the distant past. Under their chief’s leadership and with the help of his wife’s powers, they’re making great steps and may soon catch — or even pass — the Forest People on the ladder of civilization.

The Neanderthals aren’t particularly handsome by modern standards, with thick browridges, flattened and elongated heads, broad noses, barrel chests, and limbs that are not proportioned like those of *Homo sapiens*. But they’re not stupid or animalistic as some might think based on their appearance or level of technological advancement. Underestimating them or treating them as if they were idiots is a sure path to a painful lesson in how clever people need to be to survive for thousands of years in some of the harshest conditions on Earth!

Traditionally the Bison People were the less advanced of the two tribes, but the balance of power shifted fifteen years ago when a pair of Russian noblemen attempted to escape Russia with their families and a substantial portion of the famed Romanov jewels as the White Russian cause collapsed. Stealing a pair of Ilya Murometz aircraft from the former Czar’s private airfield, they fled east across Siberia, reasoning that the Bolsheviks would not expect them to travel in that direction. They almost succeeded, reach-

ing the Verkhoyansk Mountains before pilots sent in pursuit caught them and forced them to veer off-course into the mountains where they were caught in the fierce winds and sent spiraling down into the plateau. The pursuit pilots reported the fleeing noblemen as shot down and destroyed; certain in the knowledge no one could survive crashing in the mountains. One of the aircraft crashed in a remote cove on the southwest side of the plateau, all aboard perishing in the impact or dying of exposure. The other plane crashed in the open tundra near the western tribe, and the four survivors — three noble children and their French governess — were taken in as gifts from the spirits.

Since then, the governess has risen to the position of tribal shamaness and wife of the chief, and the three children, a brother and sister (now 18 and 19) and an older male cousin (now 21), have become part of the tribe and the chief’s adopted children.

CULTURE

The Neanderthals of the Pleistocene Plateau belong, in general, to the Mousterian culture. This means they use flaked stone tools and weapons, and they know the flakes knocked off of a stone core are often as useful — or more useful — than the tool they were flaked off of. They make hand-axes (sharpened stones used for cutting tasks; HKA ½d6, STR Min 6), wooden-shafted spears with heavy, sharp stone heads (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 12), and various task-specific slicers, choppers, and cutters. Neither tribe uses its spears for throwing; for ranged weapons the Bison People use sharpened javelin-like weapons (RKA ½d6, STR Min 8), and the Forest People use primitive bows and arrows (RKA ½d6, STR Min 9).

Neanderthal clothing is made from bison or deer hide and worn in several layers, with the inner clothing often sporting surprisingly complex embroidery and decoration made from animal fur, sinew, teeth, and bone. They wear boots with bison-hide soles, elbow-length mittens, and fur-lined hoods with attached scarves to wrap around and protect their exposed faces. Women’s parkas often have pockets built into the hood, and mothers sometimes carry infants there while they work. The Bison People’s clothing has, in the last fifteen years, improved much in quality and workmanship, and now is clearly superior to that of the Forest People.

The Neanderthals subsist on a protein-heavy diet. The Forest People diet has a somewhat greater percentage of vegetable material thanks to their home in the dense forests, but even in the western plateau there are plants the Neanderthals have learned are nutritious and gather when they’re available. The quality of the cuisine in either tribe is certainly not up to that of the modern world, but as in many areas the Bison People are markedly superior thanks to the influence of their shamaness.

Light for the interior of dwellings comes from small oil lamps that burn oil rendered

down from animal fats, or, more rarely, wooden torches or fires. The Forest People use wood for this purpose more often than the Bison People, although the practice is known to both. Both tribes also know how to add crushed leaves or oils pressed from tundra flowers to the lamps to make the odor more pleasant, although this is commonly only done by women attempting to attract the attention of a specific man.

The Bison People, due to the warmth of the caves where they live, tend to wear little clothing when indoors, with many of the older members foregoing it altogether. Even the chief's adopted children wear scandalously little despite their adopted mother's best efforts. The Forest People tend to remain more heavily clothed at all times due to the less permanent nature of their dwellings. Both tribes practice ritual bathing before hunts and ceremonies, but the Bison People also bathe frequently as a matter of course to keep their scent from becoming strong enough to warn game of their approach — a fact for which their chief's wife is grateful! The Bison People set aside several heated pools within their cave complex specifically for this purpose.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE NATIVES

The Neanderthals speak their own language, *Thal*, that characters can learn with time and expended experience, but can't know when they first enter the Pleistocene Plateau. (However, the PCs might have learned if they've visited the Inner-Earth and interacted with the Neanderthals living there, as described in *Hero Plus Adventure 12: Inner-Earth*. The Inner-Earth version of *Thal* and the Pleistocene Plateau version have 3 points of similarity, so characters who know Inner-Earth *Thal* can make INT Rolls to understand Pleistocene Plateau *Thal* until they have a chance to learn it properly). The western and eastern tribes speak slightly different core dialects (a successful SS: Linguistics roll tells the characters this) but there's no linguistic barrier to communication.

The Bison People have also assimilated an odd mix of French, German, and Russian loan-words from their chieftain's wife. These may appear in odd spots during conversation. The effect is more confusing than helpful, as the words have often been modified by the tribe using the linguistic rules from *Thal*, or had their context and meanings shifted based on what the tribesmen *think* they mean as opposed to their actual meaning.

RELIGION

The tribal shamans are the Neanderthals' religious leaders (and in the case of the Forest People, political leaders as well). They preside over the tribe's religious observances and make certain the tribe's taboos are obeyed (and in some cases, are altered or added to as conditions change). Dead tribesmen are buried with grave goods and short ceremonies, although the western tribe's ceremonies have increased in length since their new shamaness arrived. Both tribes' religions are animistic in nature. They believe all things around them have spirits that live inside them. The tribes offer up sacrifices to the spirits differently. The Bison People whisper a few words of thanks and apology to the spirits of the animals they kill, while the Forest People have begun to offer sacrifices in advance of events they wish to happen. Their shaman-leader uses a natural basin that can be filled with scalding hot water from a spring to boil alive sacrifices as large as a deer (or a man...).

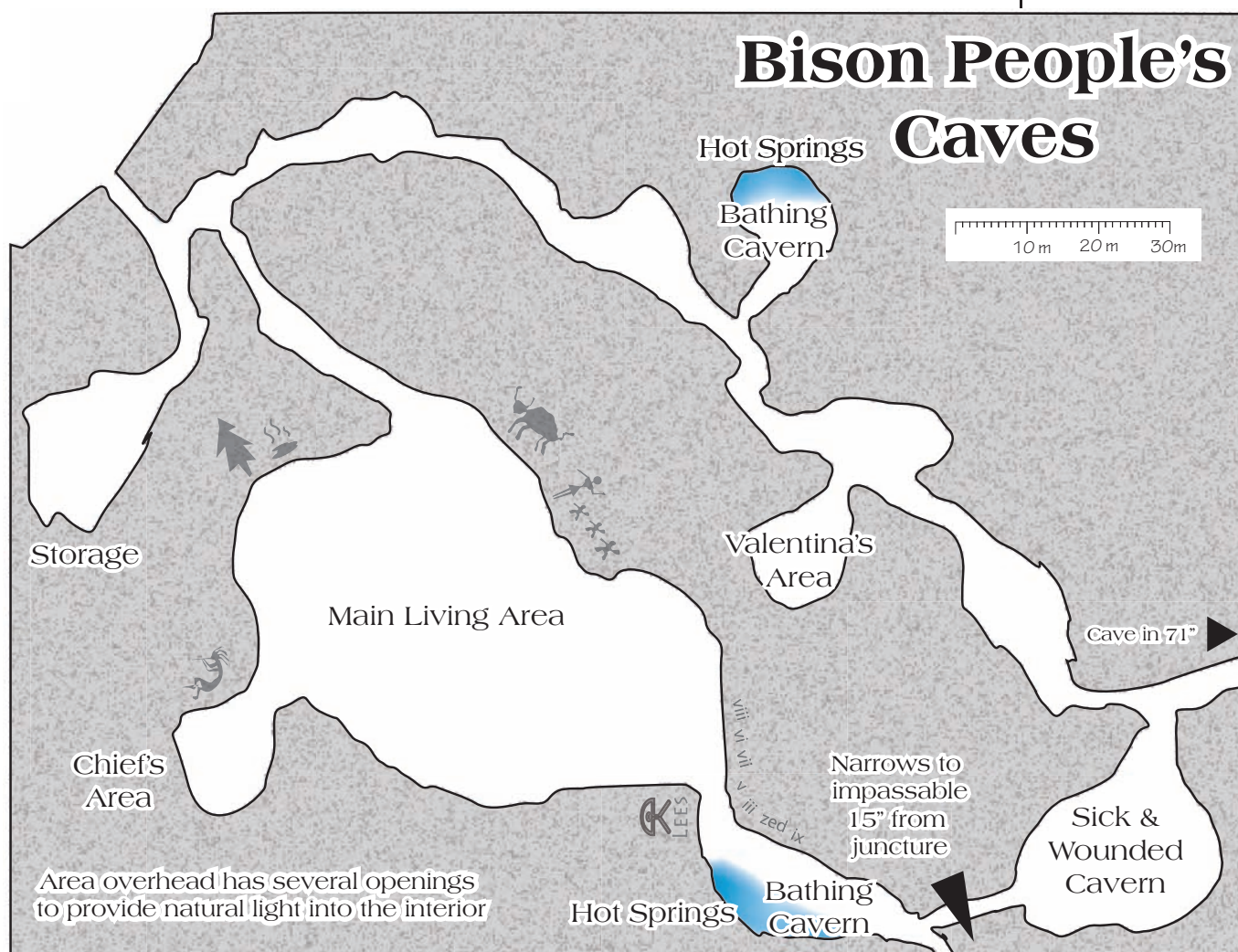
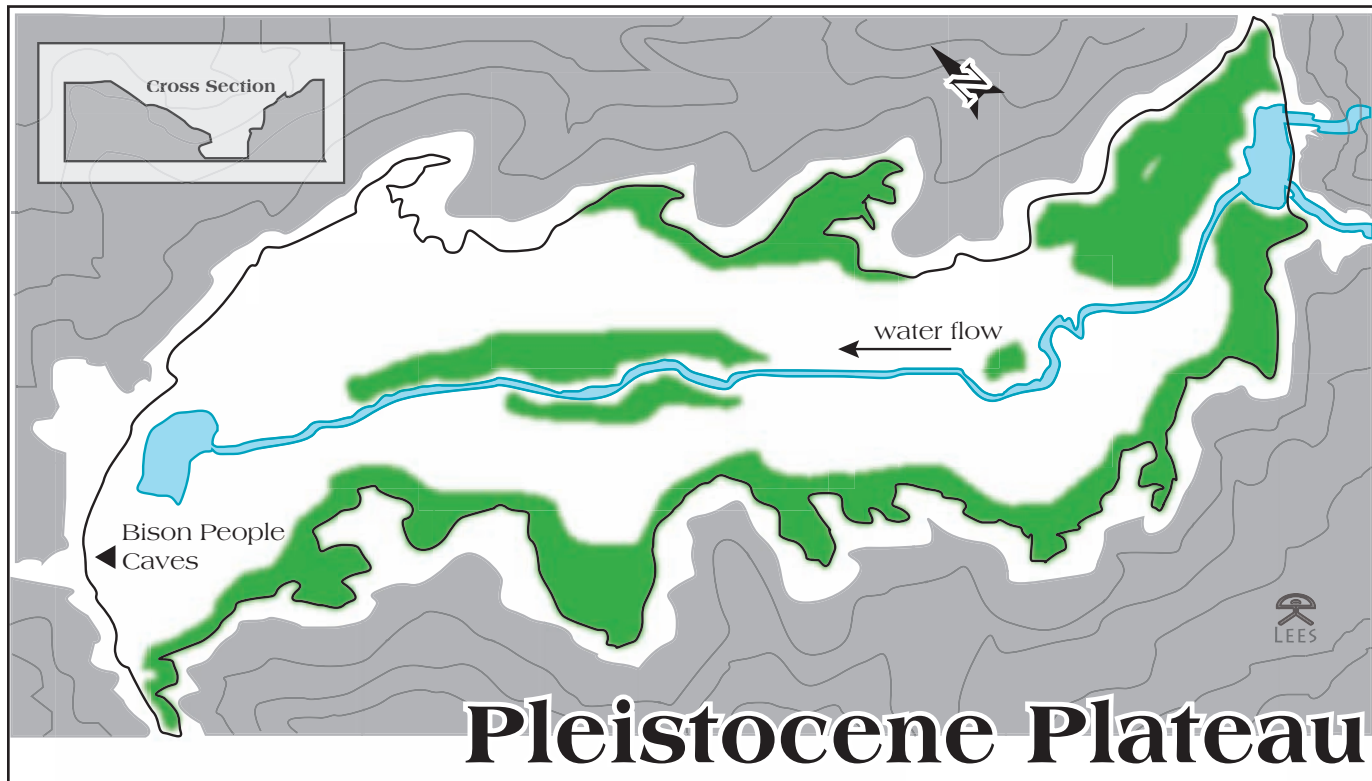
Both tribes make primitive cave paintings using ochre and other natural paints and pigments that can be found or produced locally. The paintings are typically made by the shamans, who wield primitive magics (or claim to...) to help the tribe and protect it from harm via sympathetic magic. The quality of the paintings reflecting the shaman's power and skill at influencing the spirits on the tribe's behalf. The Bison People traditionally made less colorful and elaborate paintings than the Forest People, but with the arrival of their new shamaness their paintings have become positively brilliant thanks both to the inclusion of ground gemstones to the pigments she uses and to her superior artistic talent.

WARFARE

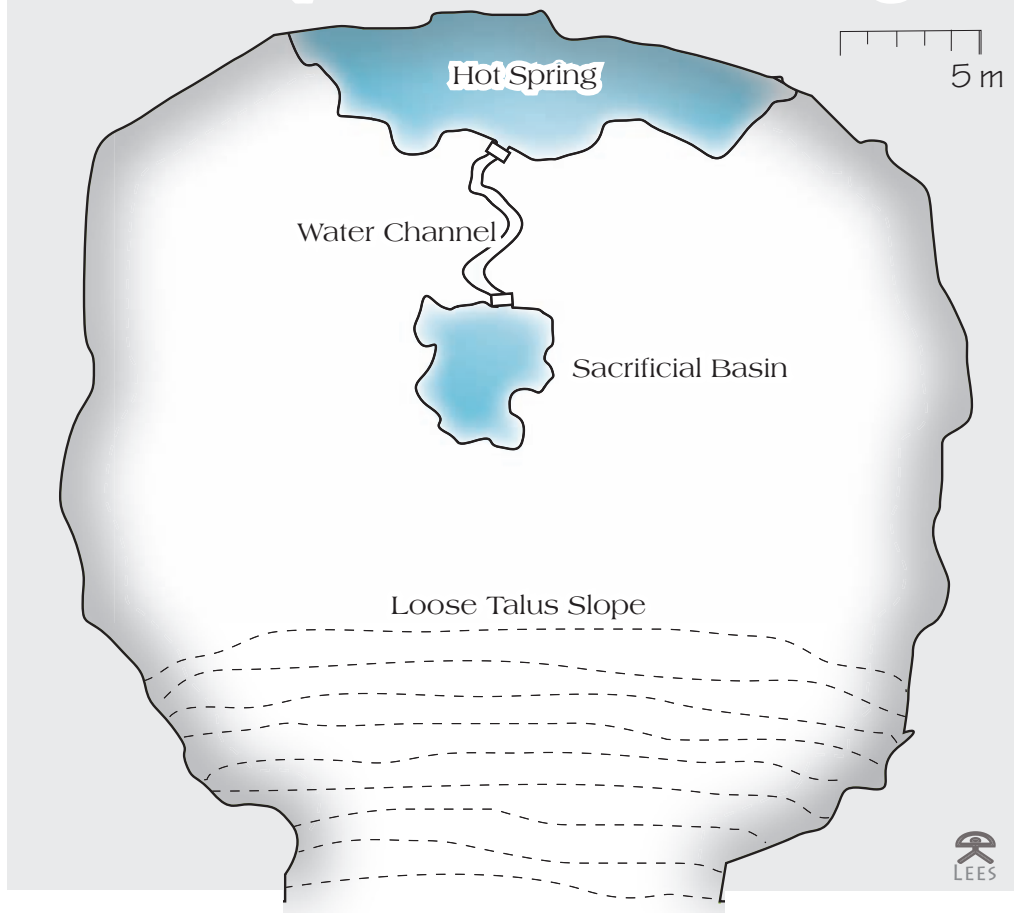
Although their cultures may seem simplistic to modern observers, both Neanderthal tribes are composed of clever, experienced hunters and fierce fighters. They're well versed in the art of laying ambushes, know how to use apparently wounded individuals to lure others into traps or away from people and places they don't want disturbed, and are patient enough to stalk a foe and attack at the moment of greatest vulnerability. They're very territorial and take whatever measures they consider necessary to defend their territory, including mass attacks without thought for personal safety or quarter.

The Forest People's use of archery gives them a slight advantage at range due to their ability to carry a greater supply of ammunition than the javelin-using westerners, but that advantage is largely nullified and reversed at close range, where the Bison People's superior skill with their spears can be brought to bear. Combats between the two tend to revolve around each side trying to maneuver the other into a situation where they can bring their particular skills into play most effectively.

Neither side makes great use of fire-rock as a weapon due to the difficulty of transporting it safely and the danger it represents to the user because of the unstable nature of the pieces most suitable for use as weapons. Ambushes where fire-rock has been placed in advance to create avalanches or as crude mines are not unknown, but since both tribes are wary of such tricks they rarely succeed.



Forest People Sacrificial Scalding Pool



sloped walls. The Forest People have artificially smoothed the walls to make any attempt at escape by a sacrificial victim more difficult (-4 to Climbing rolls). The western end has a loose rock slope that lets down into the depression; many Forest People sit here like they were at a stadium during sacrifices, while the others line the depression's edges. At the eastern end of the clearing is a hot spring that runs particularly close to a vein of fire-rock that keeps its temperature so high that only constant replenishment from the spring's source prevents it from boiling dry. The Forest People have dug a second pit in the center of the depression and linked it to the spring by a zigzag artificial channel closed off by a large stone at the spring end. When they lever the stone aside, the boiling water rushes down the channel and begins to fill the smaller

sacrificial pool, scalding and boiling the victim (usually a deer or other animal) to death.

The water takes 1 Turn to reach the sacrificial pool after being unleashed, traveling one leg of the channel every 3 Segments. Once it reaches the sacrificial pool the water fills it quickly. The boiling water does ½d6 Killing Damage per Segment (against Resistant ED, if any) for the first three Segments, then 1d6 Killing Damage for three Segments, then 1½d6 Killing Damage for 3 Segments, and then 2d6 Killing Damage for each Segment thereafter until the victim is literally boiled alive.

PLANE CRASH SITES

The plane bearing Jeanette Dubois and her three charges crashed on the open tundra southwest of the western lake. It sustained serious damage in the crash and cannot be made airworthy, but at least one of its engines can be repaired by cannibalizing parts from the remaining three. The other aircraft, carrying the children's parents, the bulk of the purloined Romanov jewels, and the documentation to prove the identities of Valentina, Ivan, and Piotr, crashed high on the slopes of a cove along the southwest side of the plateau. It's almost entirely intact, although partially buried in snow (winds cover and uncover it periodically), and could be repaired and used to escape the plateau with the replacement of an engine and a simple

LOCATIONS

CAVES OF THE BISON PEOPLE

The caves the Bison People live in are along the western wall of the plateau's shielding mountains, approximately twenty miles south of the western lake. Extensive and roomy enough for a population several times the size of the current tribe, the caves are heated by a vein of fire-rock that keeps the average interior temperature a scorching 26° Celsius (79° F) once one gets a short distance inside them. There are several pools of water heated by the vein; the tribe usually has to let water cool to drink. One of the larger caverns sports the tribe's cave paintings, which display a sudden and marked improvement in style, skill, and color since Jeanette took over as the tribe's shamaness. The caves are well defended, with rock barriers to fight from behind and carefully-positioned spots where the Bison warriors can place fire-rock to discourage predators and attackers.

SACRIFICIAL POOL OF THE FOREST PEOPLE

The 1½-2" (10-15 foot) deep pool the Forest People use to offer sacrifices to the spirits is located in a clearing deep in the forests they call home, near one of their rotating temporary settlement points. In the center of the clearing is a large, roughly circular, natural depression in the earth with steeply-

conversion to an alcohol-based fuel. (Of course, the characters may have some difficulty doing this work without the proper tools — just figuring out ways to make the right tools and obtaining the materials for them could take an adventure or two!) Complicating its retrieval is the fact that the cove in which it came to rest is the winter mating ground for the plateau's sabretooth tiger population....

The Ilya Murometz

Designed and built in Russia by Igor Sikorsky in 1913, the Ilya Murometz was the world's first four-engined aircraft. Originally designed as a purely civilian transport, the craft had luxuries the likes of which would not be seen for decades to come: an enclosed cockpit with excellent forward and side visibility; a spacious main cabin with six windows on each side and comfortable wicker seating for as many as 16 passengers; a floor-mounted window in the main cabin for observing the terrain below the plane; a heating system for the cabin provided by the engine exhaust; a rear cabin configured as a bedroom with 4 windows; internal electric lighting powered by wind-driven generators; and, as a part of the main cabin, a toilet.

The Great War terminated the plane's future in civilian aviation. The production line was retooled to revamp the aircraft as a bomber thanks to its capacity to carry a bomb load as high as 700-800 kg and for its day, extensive range. It mounted internal bombsights and used the former passenger compartment to hold bombs internally when most similar craft were relying on hand-thrown bombs or grenades delivered with eyesight as the only aiming tool. The standard defensive armament for the craft was a daunting array of machineguns — as many as seven on some models — which led to the Murometz having the distinction of being the only heavy bomber in the Great War to possess a positive score versus enemy fighters, scoring 10 confirmed kills to only three bombers lost. Some of the craft also saw use as reconnaissance ships, making forays of hundreds of kilometers into enemy territory to capture supply depots, rail yards, and troop movements on film.

There were a number of variations during the aircraft's production life, but the "standard" Murometz was 62 feet long, with a wingspan of just under 100 feet. It weighed 3,500 kg empty and 5,000 kg when fully loaded. It had a ceiling of 13,000 feet and a maximum speed of about 90 miles per hour with a four-hour range before refueling was necessary (although, as with many craft of its day, the crew could extend the range dramatically by flying with a lighter than capacity load). It had a flight crew of two, a pilot and co-pilot/navigator in both civilian and military configurations; in military models the co-pilot doubled as a bombardier, and there were enough extra crew to man all the craft's machineguns.

INDIVIDUALS

TARLAN — BISON PEOPLE CHIEF

20	STR	15	DEX	18	CON	16	BODY
10	INT	10	EGO	14	PRE	8	COM
6	PD	4	ED	4	SPD	8	REC
36	END	35	STUN				

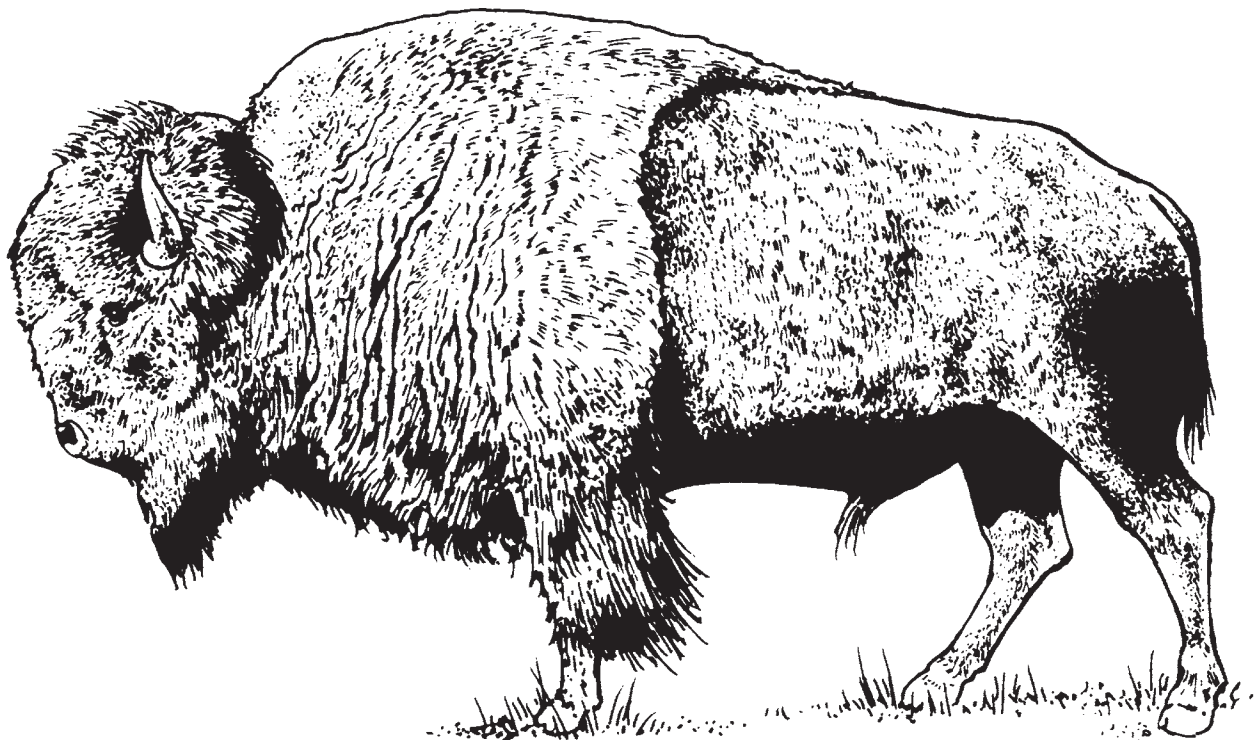
Abilities: +2 to Sight Group PER Rolls; +2 HTH; +1 with Spear; AK: Bison People Lands 12-; AK: Pleistocene Plateau 12-; KS: Bison Behavior 11-; KS: Dire Wolf Behavior 11-; Language: French (fluent conversation); PS: Clan Leader 12-; PS: Hunter/Warrior 13-; PS: Flint Knapping 11-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Arctic) 12-; Tactics 11-; Tracking 11-; WF: Neanderthal Weapons; Fringe Benefit (Neanderthal clan leader); Environmental Movement: Heavy Winter Clothing

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Loves/Protective Of Wife And Family; Psychological Limitation: Wants His Tribe To Thrive And Grow; Rivalry (with Forest People for lands and resources); Social Limitation: Burdens Of Chieftainship

Notes: Tarlan inherited the leadership of the Bison People at a fairly young age. He takes his duties seriously and has made every effort to overcome the cultural advantages held by the Forest People. The key to this problem came when he investigated the (crash) landing of the great spirit bird with a couple of his hunters. Tarlan's attention was captured first by Jeanette's golden hair (all the Neanderthals have dark hair) and second by her fierce defense of her children. He realized the strange woman and her children must have been sent by the sky spirits to aid his tribe. As she learned Thal and revealed her mystic knowledge, he grew to love her for her wisdom and strength of spirit. He was overjoyed when she accepted him as her husband (although he admits to himself she's no beauty, except for her hair).

Tarlan loves his wife and adopted children, and puts their occasional strange ways down to their spirit origins. He is somewhat troubled about finding proper mates for them, however — particularly his willful, adventurous daughter.

At 5'6", Tarlan is taller than most of his tribe and weighs a muscular 180 pounds. His hair is dark brown and he has thick scars on his right shoulder and left leg, souvenirs of struggles against dire wolves. He is kind and surprisingly gentle among his own tribe, an example of the maxim that "mercy is the province of the strong."



**JEANETTE DUBOIS —
BISON PEOPLE SHAMANESS**

8 STR	13 DEX	13 CON	10 BODY
14 INT	13 EGO	16 PRE	12 COM
7 PD	3 ED	2 SPD	7 REC
23 END	21 STUN		

Abilities: AK: Bison People Lands 11-; Language: French (Native, literate); Language: Russian (idiomatic, literate); Language: German (idiomatic, literate); Language: Thal (completely fluent, accent); Oratory 12-; Paramedics 13-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Cook 12-; PS: Painter 14-; PS: Seamstress 13-; PS: Shaman 11-; Survival (Arctic) 12-

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Loves/Protective Of Husband And Charges; Psychological Limitation: Wants To Civilize The Bison People; Psychological Limitation: Fears The Bolsheviks Will Come For Her Charges; Rivalry (with Forest People for lands and resources); Social Limitation: Burdens Of Shamanism

Notes: It is, to say the least, rather unusual for a woman from a cultured, upper-class Parisienne background to have an actual caveman for a husband, but that's the peculiar fate of the former Mademoiselle Dubois. The first turning point in her life came when, soon after graduating the Sorbonne, she took a position as governess to a noble branch of the Romanov family. The aunt and uncle for whom she worked were worried about her living in Russia, particularly with the clouds of war gathering over Europe. But such a fine opportunity didn't come along every day so she was happy to take the job. Then the Russian Revolution came along, and her employers finally decided they had to flee when the Bolsheviks were on the cusp of defeating the White Russians.

Jeanette and her three charges were the only passengers to survive the crash landings for more than a few hours. When the fur-clad strangers approached, she lashed out with a broken rifle, prepared to sell her life dearly in defense of the children. But the leader called off his men and, through sign language, gradually made her understand she and the children would not be harmed and were being offered sanctuary with his people. When their rescuers removed their outer furs in their cave home, Jeanette was taken aback to find they were examples of a people long thought extinct. Gradually she came to appreciate the Bison People and learned their language. Her superior education enabled her to make herself very useful to the tribe, particularly when she began using powdered gemstones to augment the pigments for the tribe's ceremonial cave paintings. Originally she agreed to marry Tarlan to gain more protection for the children and consolidate her new position as shamaness; as time went by, she grew to love her husband and share his goals of improving the tribe's fortunes.

Today, Jeanette is less concerned about the Bolsheviks and more concerned about the increasing aggression of the Forest People. She's also worried about finding suitable spouses for her children. She would like to see them return to the world beyond the plateau, although she herself would be hesitant about leaving her husband and their tribe.

VALENTINA — RUSSIAN GIRL/HUNTER

13 STR	17 DEX	18 CON	13 BODY
13 INT	14 EGO	15 PRE	18 COM
13 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	7 REC
30 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: +1 with all PER Rolls; +1 HTH; +1 with Spear; +1 OCV with Bow; +2" Running; AK: Bison People Lands 11-; AK: Pleistocene Plateau 11-; Breakfall 12-; Climbing 12-; Conversation 12-; Language: Thal (Native); Language: French (completely fluent, with accent); Language: Russian (completely fluent, with accent); Persuasion 12-; PS: Hunter/Warrior 12-; Stealth 13-; Survival (Arctic) 12-; Tactics 12-; Tracking 12-; WF: Neanderthal Weapons, Bows ; Environmental Movement: Heavy Winter Clothing

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Adopted Family; Psychological Limitation: Adventurous and Willful; Psychological Limitation: Wants To See The Outside World; Rivalry (with Forest People for lands and resources); Social Limitation: Chieftain's Daughter; Social Limitation: Limited Knowledge of Modern Customs and Culture

Notes: Valentina has led an exciting life since her family's failed escape from the Bolsheviks. She has grown into a strong, athletic, and beautiful young woman — 5'8" tall, with an athletic build, shoulder-length auburn hair, and blue eyes. She wears a gold and pearl necklace made from her childhood bracelet spread apart and tied with leather thongs. She's a skilled tracker and huntress, well-versed in surviving the dangers of the Skyland. While not bloodthirsty, she has twice killed members of the Forest Tribe in self-defense; clever and fierce, she's inclined to deal with enemies by the practical expedient of killing them.

Valentina can scarcely remember her real parents. She's transferred her familial affections to her adopted parents, her brother, and her cousin. She has yet to form any romantic attachments within the tribe, though she's begun to have private yearnings for a husband. None of the Bison youths interest her in that way, and many are intimidated by her status as spirit child or chief's daughter.

Jeanette's lessons of civilized behavior have stayed with her adopted daughter, but Valentina doesn't consider such things very important to her way of life. In any case, she's had no opportunity to learn about any changes or events in the outside world during the last two decades. She has no knowledge of talking moving pictures, the rise of Nazism, or the Great Depression. Should a PC successfully court the beautiful young Russian, he'll find he's gained a wife whose yen for adventure may even outrun his own.

VOGAR — FOREST PEOPLE SHAMAN

10 STR	15 DEX	14 CON	13 BODY
13 INT	13 EGO	15 PRE	5 COM
4 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
26 END	25 STUN		

Abilities: Awe-Inspiring (Weak): +1 with Interaction Skills; +1 HTH; +1 OCV with Bow; AK: Forest People Lands 12-; AK: Pleistocene Plateau 12-; KS: Forest Clan Religion 13-; Lipreading 12-; Oratory 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Clan Leader 12-; PS: Painter 11-; PS: Shaman 13-; Sleight of Hand 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Arctic) 12-; Tactics 12-; Tracking 12-; WF: Neanderthal Weapons, Bow; Fringe Benefit (Neanderthal clan leader/shaman); Environmental Movement: Heavy Winter Clothing

75+ Disadvantages: Physical Limitation: Bad Leg (-2" Running); Psychological Limitation: Wants To Exterminate The Bison People; Psychological Limitation: Superstitious; Psychological Limitation: Must Serve Religious/Mystical/Political Needs Of The Forest People; Rivalry (with Bison People for lands and resources); Social Limitation: Burdens Of Shamanship

Notes: Vogar became the new shaman of the Forest People only a year after the arrival of the great spirit bird in the Skyland. He needed some time to consolidate his power over the tribe. He knew it would require effort to convince his people to share his goal: the extermination of their rivals, the Bison People. (He's never forgiven the Bison hunters who left him lamed after a clash between rival hunting parties.) His tribesmen defend their hunting grounds fiercely against interlopers, but a war of annihilation was foreign to their nature.

THE OTHER CHILDREN

Piotr, the older cousin, has the only functioning rifle left from the crash, a Mauser Special British (see *Pulp Hero*, page 304). He only has six bullets remaining, which he's saving for an emergency. He's handsome, quite athletic, and is eager to leave the Skyland if a real opportunity presents itself. He remembers enough of his former life to want to return to the outer world, and to be wary of outsiders who might be spies for the dreaded Bolsheviks.

Ivan, the younger brother, was injured in a fire-rock explosion when he was 12 that left him crippled (Running 1"). He has an excellent mind and an instinctive grasp of mechanics and engineering fueled by what Jeanette has taught him. He has a sunny disposition and spends his time creating primitive but ingenious devices to improve life in the caverns and to serve as defenses against attackers. He would be particularly impressed with any visitors who display engineering knowledge, barraging them with questions about their education and problems he hasn't been able to solve. (It's possible modern surgery might be able to repair or alleviate Ivan's condition, giving the young nobles another reason to return to the modern world).

As time went by, Vogar realized he'd underestimated the danger posed by the Bison People's new shaman. Her spirit-born skills meant her tribe had fewer sickly members, were better equipped against the weather, and were stealing his people's luck in the hunt. To counter his rival, he's begun making more impressive sacrifices to the spirits; the last and most recent was a Bison hunter who strayed into the forest. Vogar believes his tribe will soon be ready to begin an all-out war on the Bison People. He fears he may have already have delayed too long; the spirit children have almost reached full adulthood and will create even more difficulties if they become seasoned warriors.

NEANDERTHAL WARRIOR/HUNTER

13 STR	13 DEX	15 CON	14 BODY
8 INT	8 EGO	10 PRE	6 COM
4 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
30 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: +1 OCV with Bows or +1 OCV with Spears; Climbing 12-; AK: Tribal Lands 11-; PS: Hunter/Warrior 13-; PS: Flint Knapping 11-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Arctic) 11-; Tracking 8-; WF: Tribal Weapons; Environmental Movement: Heavy Winter Clothing

25+ Disadvantages: Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (of tribal chief and/or shaman)

Notes: The represents the average Neanderthal warrior or hunter. Many individuals would have additional Knowledge and Professional Skills relating to hunting or handcrafts. The average individual Forest People warrior carries a bow with 20 arrows (RKA ½d6, STR Min 9) and the average Bison People warrior a flint-tipped spear (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 12); both will also carry a club (4d6 Normal Damage, STR Min 10), and a flint hand-axe, knife, or chopping tool of some kind (HKA ½d6, STR Min 6).

PLOT SEEDS

The characters encounter a rumor concerning a Russian grand duchess (could it be Anastasia?), who was lost somewhere in a airplane crash in the Verkhoyansk Mountains while fleeing the Bolsheviks. Could it be true? What awards might await the characters who found and rescued Grand Duchess Anastasia? How far would the Bolsheviks go to prevent her return as a rallying point against them?

The characters discover that they need a particular gemstone for some mystic ritual — a gem last known to be in the possession of the Romanov family. The Bolsheviks confiscated the royal family's jewels during the course of the Russian Revolution. An expatriate Russian puts the characters in touch with a contact who knows more of the gemstone. They find his freshly murdered corpse, with a signature seal imprint left by a dreaded Russian agent codenamed "Steel Winter." Overlooked by the murderer is a journal page on which the victim mentioned that the gemstone in question had been among wedding presents given to a minor branch of the Romanovs, who fled the country heading east in two giant airplanes as the White Russian cause collapsed. It contains further clues to start the characters on the chase.

Escaping Inner-Earth through the Mongolian exit, the characters take a wrong turn and become lost. During a sudden earth tremor, a rock wall splits open and fresh air flows in. Dashing through the new exit even as it seals behind them, the characters find themselves wandering around a snowy wilderness. Could those fur-clad figures be *more* Neanderthals? At least they now speak the language...

The characters hear rumors that the sinister Dr. Fang is planning an expedition to locate an amazing new explosive mineral. Their informant insists that he heard it can be found in considerable quantities. Even though it means a dangerous trip into the Siberian wilderness, can they stand idly by while Dr. Fang obtains this new resource?

Learning of the arrival of more spirit-sent visitors like those previously adopted by the Bison People, Vogar determines to find the Spirit Bird's nest (either the new one who brought the new visitors, or the second one from 15 years ago) and plunder it for his own tribe. This would almost certainly ruin either plane as a means of escape for the characters. (If he goes after the previous crash site, Vogar has concocted an herbal mixture he believes will drive off the sabretooth tigers.)

STREET OF THE EMERALD BIRD



Deep within the maze of twisting streets and alleys that is Hudson City's Chinatown is a street without street signs — one that appears on no maps or city documents and which not even the most skilled cabbie can find; a street that doesn't exist. In opium dens and small shops around Chinatown it's whispered that for those who can find it, dreams may come true... but it's best to remember that nightmares are dreams too...

HISTORY

The history of the Street of the Emerald Bird is as old as that of Hudson City's Chinatown. When Chinese laborers came in by the shipload to help in the reconstruction following the 1895 fire, they built a ramshackle community on unused land south of the Stewart River that gradually grew as more workers arrived and their families followed. In time the community was absorbed into the urban fabric of the city and became known as Chinatown — although most people are also familiar with the name given to the neighborhood by newspapers in their articles naming it a den of wickedness and vice: the Yellow Crescent.

When Chinatown became part of Hudson City proper after the turn of the century, the city's urban planners resurveyed streets. They shifted some at the cost of destroying homes and businesses, renamed some according to a system enacted by the city government, and removed some entirely. That the residents of Chinatown had already named their streets was irrelevant to City Hall; all signs listing non-official names for the district's streets were forbidden. The residents nodded, took their old signs down, and never stopped using the original names.

Now, a little over a quarter of a century later, even the residents of Chinatown itself have started to forget the old names, with younger residents and immigrants simply using the city's names for streets that once bore more colorful and traditional designations. But the traditionalists still remember, and it's through them that one can still find the Street of the Emerald Bird. If properly and respectfully approached, some of Chinatown's older residents might be persuaded to reveal the secret of the Street (almost all know it, but due to the insular nature of Chinatown society usually refuse to discuss it with outsiders). Winning the trust required for this may take some time and effort on the part of questing characters, though; Chinatown does not give up her secrets easily.

The secret of the Street of the Emerald Bird is this: it's the former name for a stretch of what became South River Drive and the two blocks that front onto it, now bordered on the north by Avon Avenue, on the west by Van Allen Street, on the east by Childress Street, and on the south by a small side street that still bears its traditional name, the Avenue of the Nightingales. In the early days of Hudson City's Chinatown, there was a joy house (a common term for a Chinese brothel) named the Heavenly House of the Emerald Bird located on the southern side of the street which catered to the Chinese workers. Although as ramshackle and squalid as one would imagine given the times and conditions, the institution proved so popular that the locals gave its name to the section of street there, retaining it long after the structure itself was destroyed by a fire started during a territorial dispute between two tongs. But merely knowing the location of the Street does not grant knowledge of its mysteries — like an onion, they must be stripped away one layer at a time to reveal the worm hiding at the rotten innermost core: Dr. Fang Shen.

DESCRIPTION

The Street of the Emerald Bird appears on the surface to be much like any street in Hudson City's Chinatown during the day: local residents in a mixture of traditional Chinese and more modern Western garb moving through it (mostly on foot due to the rarity of automobile ownership in the area); vendors hawking their wares from pushcarts; women with unlabeled packages wrapped in butcher's paper; cartloads of fresh fish and vegetables being rushed up from the docks to restaurants in the area; red Chinese characters written across banners strung across the street or painted on signboards above the doors and windows of every shop; and everywhere the sound of a dozen dialects of Chinese filling the air like the hum of a thousand dragonflies. In many ways, it's more like a slice of China lifted up and deposited in Hudson City than a part of a great Western metropolis — something that characters visiting here might do well to remember.

Most of the buildings on the Street are three or four stories in height; most are of older construction, dating back to the decade before the Great War. Typically the owners live above their shops and use one of the floors for storage. Street-facing shops often have colorful (albeit slightly faded) awnings, and all of the buildings without alley access have fire escapes with drop-down ladders

above the awnings. Roofs have the ubiquitous water tanks common to Pulp-era Hudson City. None of the buildings have elevators; interior stairs provide the only access to upper floors.

No single structure dominates the Street, either by size or significance — or at least no visible structure does. But almost all of the businesses and residents have had their lives touched by the will of the man who's the Street's secret master.

The numbers in the headers below correspond to the locations marked on the map on page 71. The dotted lines on the map indicate where tunnels and passageways run under the streets; unless shown on the map, the tunnels do not connect to one another, but pass alongside and above or below each other as needed.

1. HOY LEE'S WAREHOUSE

To the north, across Avon Avenue, is a large warehouse owned by Hoy Lee, a local merchant and the largest fireworks distributor in the city. A well-known minimalist when it came to the safety of his workers and facility, he was cited by the city several times for fire code violations without effect, and residents of the area had begun to resign themselves to the inevitable fire and explosion that would devastate the neighborhood. But within the last year he's had a change of heart — he's refurbished the building and installed safeguards to make the warehouse a safer place. Many locals attribute the change to the delegation of local business leaders that approached him just before the improvements began, but it was actually a midnight visit from a pair of *Ying Hu Shi* who explained to him in excruciating — and painful — detail how displeased Dr. Fang would be should Hoy Lee's warehouse catch fire. Unbeknownst to Hoy Lee, under his warehouse are tunnels leading down to the river and across under the street to the hidden base, and a storeroom that's often filled with opium or other smuggled goods.

2. THE PARK

To the east, across Childress Street, is a small, unnamed park maintained by the Chinese-American Friendship Society. Built on the site of a pair of businesses that failed during the Crash of 1929, the society bought the properties and leveled them, turning the space into a much-needed oasis of green within the area. It's a popular spot for locals to gather in good weather and socialize or enjoy the relative calm of the well-maintained gardens. There's a secret exit from one of the hidden base's escape tunnels that lets out in the base of a statue of Kwan-Yin in a secluded part of the park. Many local festivals center on the park — residents erect (illegal) barricades to block off Childress Street (and, depending on the size of the crowd, parts of Avon Avenue and South River Drive as well). Still on the other side of Childress Street, but south of the park, and across South River Drive, is a block completely taken up by a series of buildings converted to apartments.

THE AVENUE OF THE NIGHTINGALES

South of the Street the narrow Avenue of the Nightingales cuts through the center of the block, dividing it into two. The southern side of the avenue is a featureless expanse of brick walls covered in faded and tattered posters, handbills, and frequently painted (and just as frequently marked out) tong territory-marking symbols. If how often a tong's symbols appears means anything, an observer might deduce that the On-At Zhang seems to be winning the battle for control over the area.

The northern side of the avenue contains three storefronts for businesses. Running east to west they are: Chung's Acupuncture, a moneylender's thinly disguised as an acupuncture clinic; the Nightingale House, a gambling den; and Kwan's Real Books, a book seller.

3. Chung's Acupuncture

Chung Bang, the owner of the money lending operation, actually has enough skill with acupuncture to get by, but found that he made a lot more money in his sideline business than in acupuncture. He prefers to loan only to individuals, primarily ones with families — he feels they'll pay on time, having more to lose. He's small-time, stopping just short of the point where he'd be worth the time of a tong to muscle in on him, and intends to stay that way. When one tong or the other finally wins control of the avenue, he plans to fold up shop on his illegal operations to avoid having to pay them a percentage.

4. The Nightingale House

The gambling operation in the center of the block is another story, however — *it's* big enough to be worth the trouble of a takeover, and by a respectable margin. The Nightingale House specializes in traditional Chinese games of chance like *fan-tan* and *pai gow*, and lets patrons bet on other traditional games not normally considered by Westerners to be gambling, like *mah jong*. The owner, a fairly recent arrival from San Francisco's Chinatown named Wu Peng, bought out the aging former owner (he actually killed him and disposed of the body by burying it under the foundations) and expanded the operation to its current size. He currently depends on the four huge Mongolians he brought with him for security and protection, but realizes he's succeeded too well and sooner or later will be paying a hefty portion of his profits to one of the local tongs.

5. Kwan's Real Books

The bookseller, Kwan Shude, is an old widower who's been in the area since he came in the second shipload of workers. He only sells materials written in Chinese, specializing in books, magazines, and newspapers imported from Shanghai and Hong Kong and shipped to him by train from San Francisco. He also carries small papers produced in other cities' Chinatowns, allowing residents to keep track of important events in areas where their families live.

West Of The Avenue

Across Van Allen to the west and between the Avenue of the Nightingales and South River Drive are more apartments. Kwan Shude lives in the corner apartment on the third floor; his apartment is situated so he can see both exterior sides of his store. He frequently gets up at night to peer out and reassure himself that everything's all right there. Another escape tunnel from the hidden base lets out in the basement of the apartment building there.

Further north, across South River Drive, is the Lucky Dragon Warehouse (#13 on the map); it's secretly owned by Dr. Fang. He only uses it for normal business purposes to avoid calling attention to the area. There are tunnels linking it to the small facility hidden on the Street and other tunnels running under Chinatown in case a surreptitious entrance or exit is necessary.

THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE STREET

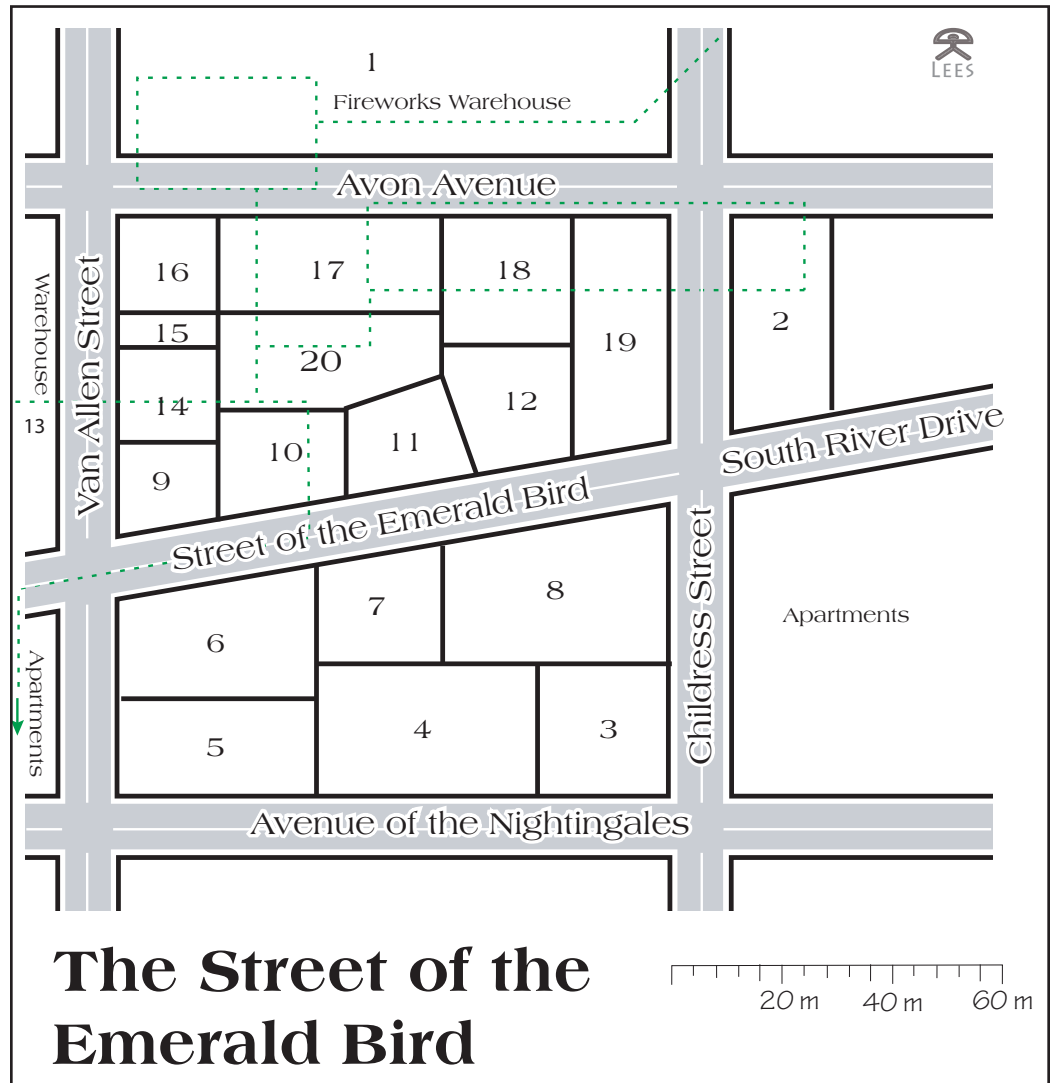
Three business front on the southern block of the Street. Running west to east they are: Yeun & Sons, a furniture store; Lóng's Meats, a butcher shop; and the Golden Harvest, a restaurant.

6. Yuen & Sons Furniture

Yuen & Sons is actually owned by a pair of middle-aged brothers named Tang who bought the store a decade ago and have never bothered to change the sign because it's in good repair and everyone knows the name. They and their large families live in apartments over the store that also stretch back over Kwan Shude's bookstore. There's almost always a truck parked along Van Allen Street with furniture being loaded or unloaded by some of their many sons.

7. Lóng's Meats

Lóng Li, a fat and jovial Chinaman who always wears a bloodstained apron with a cleaver tucked into it while the shop is open, owns and operates Lóng's Meats. His meats are fresh and reasonably priced, and he always tries to have special cuts on hand for his regular customers. Characters taking a good look inside the store may note that some of the carcasses awaiting butchering look suspiciously canine or feline, and those unfamiliar with the diverse contents of a Chinese meat market might mistake some of the other partial carcasses for something a good deal more human.



The Street of the Emerald Bird

8. The Golden Harvest

The Golden Harvest is a well-known local restaurant that caters to both local residents and those occidentals looking for a good meal that isn't too Chinese for Western tastes. It's on a main thoroughfare so non-residents can find it easily, the waiters all speak enough English to get by, and it's been there long enough for word to spread, so it's common to find several occidental couples dining there on any given evening — particularly younger couples who want to "experience" Chinatown without getting off the beaten path and into trouble.

NORTH OF THE STREET: EAST SIDE

The northern block of the Street has four businesses that front onto the Street: Yun's Hot Noodles, a noodle shop; Hsiao Tai-Sheng, Physician, a local doctor's office; Shen's Groceries, a small general-purpose grocer's; and Lo's Herbalism Cures, an herbalist shop.

9. Yun's Hot Noodles

Yun's Hot Noodles specializes in hot noodle dishes made quickly and to order. Its busiest time of the day is noon, when what seems like hundreds of workers from the warehouses to the north and businesses all around the area converge on the shop at once. There's no seating during the day; customers are expected to eat standing up (and quickly)

or to take their meals back to work with them, but about the middle of the afternoon Yun sets out some stools and a few tables and chairs for less rushed diners. His afternoon and evening menu is a bit more varied, but nowhere near as extensive as that of the Golden Harvest.

10. Hsiao Tai-Sheng, Physician

The physician, Hsiao Tai-Sheng, has an actual diploma on his wall from a medical school in Hong Kong. He's treated injuries and sicknesses in Chinatown for just over twenty years, making him on the verge of becoming respectable. He prefers to use more modern methods when treating patients, but his willingness to call in Lo Lien, the herbalist a few doors down the Street, when dealing with more traditional patients has gone a long way toward earning the locals' acceptance. His daughter Ushi, a charming, unmarried girl who acts as his nurse, draws in a steady stream of "injured" warehouse workers hoping to catch her eye.

11. Shen's Groceries

Shen's Groceries, owned by a first generation immigrant and local success story Shen Park, supplies staples and nonperishable goods to residents. Shen doesn't advertise it, but thanks to his success he's been able to open two other stores, one inside Chinatown (Fa Sheng's Groceries) and one in Free-town (Parkman's Groceries) using different names to avoid appearing too prosperous and attracting tong attention. Despite his success he can't convince his parents to abandon their business of selling fish out of a cart in more residential neighborhoods.

12. Lo's Herbalism Cures

Lo Lien, the owner and proprietor of Lo's Herbalism Cures, has been a resident of Hudson City since the turn of the century when he and his aging father fled China after a court functionary under his father's care was poisoned. Now 74, Lo runs his business with his two sons and their families (they all live over the shop). He sells every type of Chinese herbal remedy imaginable, from powdered dragon bones to tiger whiskers, all brought into the country duty-free by his friends in the local tongs.

NORTH OF THE STREET: WEST SIDE

The western side of the northern block is partially taken up by Yun's, but there are three businesses that run along the block going north: Chang's Horoscopes, a Chinese astrology business; Wen's Restful Rooms, a boarding house specializing in long-term residents; and Zhou Lan's, a tailor shop.

14. Chang's Horoscopes

The astrology shop is, surprisingly to some Westerners, a legitimate business that many residents of Chinatown patronize to have a horoscope drawn up before making important decisions. Chang Yifu, the proprietor, has the reputation for honesty critical to his profession. But his son and daughter-in-law Wu and Tse have a reputation in certain circles for taking money for skewing the information they give Chang to make a given horoscope come out the way their under-the-table patron wants it to.

15. Wen's Restful Rooms

Wen's Restful Rooms has the smallest street-front of any business in the area, scarcely more than a small lobby, a front desk, and a set of stairs, but owns all three floors above street level here and above Chang's and Yun's businesses. It rents the rooms out by the week and month (preferably month). "Auntie" Wen Tzu runs the business with a cheerful smile and an iron fist, tolerating no loud noises, fighting, or late rent from her guests.

Despite the slightly run-down appearance of the place, the rooms and linens are spotless and kept that way by Wen's three attractive young daughters, Jun, Ping, and Fung, who are in and out of all the rooms daily cleaning them. They show no signs of concern or interest at whatever the residents might be doing when they walk in. Particularly handsome characters renting rooms will find that the sisters walk in on them more often than usual. They're all looking for husbands — particularly occidental ones to get them out of Chinatown — and speak perfect English, although they won't reveal this at first.

16. Zhou Lan's Tailoring

Zhou Lan's is a recent addition to the area, having only moved in a few months previously. Zhou is a generally good but not exceptional tailor, although if given an example outfit from which to work he can produce copies that are almost impossible to tell from the original very quickly. He specializes in this sort of duplication, making it possible for many Chinatown residents to wear near-perfect copies of the latest fashions.

NORTH OF THE STREET: ALONG AVON AVENUE

There are only two businesses on the northern end of the block along Avon Avenue: Sun Yun Fat's Cleaning, a laundry; Mao's Oddities, a curio shop.

17. Sun Yun Fat's Cleaning

The laundry is the oldest business in the area, having been at its current location in one form or another since Chinatown's shantytown days, and having always been owned by Sun Yun Fat's family. Many local housewives work in the laundry to make extra money, and there always seem to be at least a dozen small children underfoot while their mothers are at work. Sun's family has served Dr. Fang for three generations; he's his master's eyes and ears on the Street. Of all the Street's residents, he and his family alone know the secrets of the network of tunnels under their feet, and that the sliding wall allows passage from his laundry to the hidden base.

18. Mao's Oddities

Mao's Oddities is a curio shop with a small front where the most marketable pieces are displayed, but there are row after row of shelves in back where Mao Guofeng has more esoteric (and occasionally valuable) items scattered in amongst the replica vases, reproduction idols, and mass-produced knickknacks. Mao lives above his store with his family; he's famous for his sharp ears and for dropping a plaster statue of the Buddha on the head of a thief from the third floor window when he heard the man breaking into his store late one night.

19. THE CHINESE-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

The lone business on the eastern side of the northern block isn't really a business at all — it's the meeting hall for the Chinese-American Friendship Society. A typical Chinatown organization with the stated goal of improving relations between the neighborhood's

OTHER STREETS, OTHER CHINATOWNS

Any city with a defined Chinatown could be home to the Street of the Emerald Bird simply by changing the bordering street names as desired, and making a few other minor adjustments.

San Francisco is an obvious choice thanks to its well-known Chinatown, the setting for many adventures in the pulps. The atmosphere there would be similar to that in Hudson City, with fogs rolling in off the Bay, but the streets there would be steeper and the buildings built in part from materials scavenged from the debris after the Great Quake of 1906.

New York is another American city with a famous Chinatown, also home to many pulp stories and adventures. It's located on the southern end of Manhattan Island, bordered by Little Italy to the north and the city's Financial District to the south, giving it a different "feel" than San Francisco's or Hudson City's Chinatowns, one more urban and part of the city as a whole.

London's infamous Limehouse District is another easy fit, although the character of the surrounding area would be different — more run-down and dangerous than typically found in American Chinatowns due to the District's greater age and Pulp London's starker division in appearance and cleanliness between the areas where the lower classes live and the neighborhoods of the wealthy and powerful.

Hong Kong's crowded streets and tiny, maze-like alleyways make it a natural fit for the Street. There, it would be even more difficult to find and the characters searching for it even more out of place, with hostile faces everywhere they look. The criminal residents of the street could and would operate more openly — unlike Western cities, Hong Kong belongs to them.

Any other major Chinese city (Shanghai, Kowloon, Macao...) has you can insert the Street into without difficulty. Other potential locations with less well-known but still thriving Chinatowns where an enterprising GM might locate the Street include Honolulu, Vancouver, and Manila.

The secret base need not belong to Dr. Fang either. Many secretive tong lords have facilities like this one from which to run their operations. Just remove the mutated octopus and replace it with alligators, snakes, or ordinary spikes and you're set. Another possibility would be for it to belong to a villain with a Chinese theme but fewer resources than Dr. Fang (the Yellow Scar on page 184 of *Masterminds And Madmen* for example); for such a villain this might represent a powerful base, rather than a minor one. Yet another possibility might be assigning the facility to a campaign's NPC mystery man as their headquarters (or even a group of characters); in such a case, shifting the neighborhood to one outside Chinatown and changing names as appropriate might work best.

residents and the rest of Hudson City, the Society holds festivals to promote interest in Chinese culture, lobbies the city as a representative of Chinatown's interests, and provides a free advocate service where the few local Chinese attorneys donate time to assist Chinatown residents with troubles. It also uses its influence to try to keep local tong disputes from spilling out into the streets and drawing any unwanted attention from the press and the police to Chinatown. (Since Dr. Fang is a major contributor to the Society, it has a much higher rate of success at this goal than one might expect.)

Open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the meeting hall also functions as the local post office, sending and receiving weekly packets of mail to and from Hong Kong for further distribution within China or to residents here. The Society maintains a message and job board just inside the doors and rents out meeting rooms and its small ballroom for social events and parties. One of the escape passages from the hidden base leads to the basement of the meeting hall.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The streets in the area, particularly South River Drive, are well maintained by most standards, though they're not kept up to the level required for most of the rest of Hudson City — only Freetown is further down the city's inspection and work schedule than Chinatown. In places the paving has worn away enough to reveal the original cobbled stone surface of the street system; some areas, particularly in the many alleyways and small side streets that run through the district, were never paved at all and residents still walk on the same surfaces the city engineers laid down a quarter century before. The sidewalks are well worn; both they and the streets have an occasionally odd, patchwork appearance caused by local shopkeepers and associations having contracted with private labor to make repairs rather than depend on or deal with the city. The City Engineer's office is aware of the practice and turns a blind eye to it, feeling that aside from the obvious fact that it's only Chinatown, any work the locals have done is work the city doesn't have to pay for.

The utilities in the Chinatown area are functional, although not maintained to the same state of repair as in other parts of the city. There are brown-outs and blackouts in the summer and other times of high power usage. During heavy rains when the Stewart River rises it's not uncommon for the sewers to back up and flood the streets high enough to lap at stoops of buildings or flood basements. But the stretch along the Street of the Emerald Bird never seems to suffer from problems with the water systems, sewers, or power going out or needing repair. The City Engineer considers this just good luck, as do some of the local residents — but the truth of the matter is that they're secretly maintained by workers employed by the man who casts a shadow over the Street: Dr. Fang Shen. By keeping things in good working order he earns loyalty from the local residents (who have only to look at friends and family not lucky enough to live along the Street to see what their lives could be like if the "Demon Doctor" weren't around), and ensures that his own hidden base remains in good condition.

DR. FANG'S HIDDEN BASE

This facility is typical of the sort of arrangement Dr. Fang has in many cities around the world, particularly in locations he feels don't require a first- or second-tier installation. See page 11 of *Masterminds And Madmen* for information about his first-tier facilities; second-tier bases have more space devoted to laboratories, are more heavily defended, and are harder to locate than this one. This base might be used by Li Lian, Ming Wei, or Lok Shing if they needed a semi-permanent base of operations in an area; Dr. Fang himself would find its resources too limiting for more than a few days.

The walls and floors are all lined with a layer of cork to provide insulation and muffle sounds as loud as a scream or gunshot to inaudibility in the surrounding structures. This has the effect of making stealthy movement easier when someone tries to hear a noise from an adjoining room (+1 to Stealth for purposes of moving silently in that circumstance). All the floors on the main level are covered in wooden tiles that interlock in a pattern that makes the edges of the tiles hard to follow and concealed trap doors harder to locate (-6 to Concealment rolls to locate).

1) Main Entrance: The main entrance to the facility is located within Sun Yun Fat's laundry, through a concealed sliding panel in the back wall of the offices to the rear of the laundry that's triggered by shifting the statue of Buddha in a niche on the wall. (-5 to Concealment rolls to locate, -4 to Lockpicking rolls to figure out how to open).

2) Foyer: Individuals coming into the base are stopped here by one of the staff and given soft slippers to exchange for their shoes (which are stored in a cabinet on the east wall). The west wall is taken up by a large bronze statue of a pot-bellied and snarling Chinese demon; a hidden catch (-3 to Concealment rolls to locate) opens the statue's stomach open to reveal a system of speaking tubes that lead to other rooms in the facility.

3) Guardroom: There are normally four hatchet men on loan from a local tong stationed here, playing *mah-jong*, *xiangqi* (Chinese chess), or other games and awaiting a summons. If Dr. Fang or one of the other Legion Of Crime leaders is in the base, there will be six to eight men here, including one or more *Ying Hu Shi*. The secret passage from the storage area under the fireworks warehouse enters the base here.

4) Meeting Room: A large meeting room for planning sessions and less formal meetings than the Audience Hall. It contains a large table with many chairs, a sideboard for refreshments, and a massive cabinet that holds a chalkboard, pull-down maps of the city and surrounding area, and other useful planning tools.

5) Waiting Room: Individuals awaiting a formal meeting with Dr. Fang or another leader of the Legion Of Crime await their summons here. The furniture is comfortable, with a couch, several chairs, and a few scattered tables; the effect is one of a well-kept parlor.

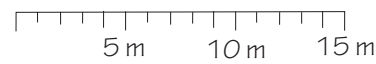
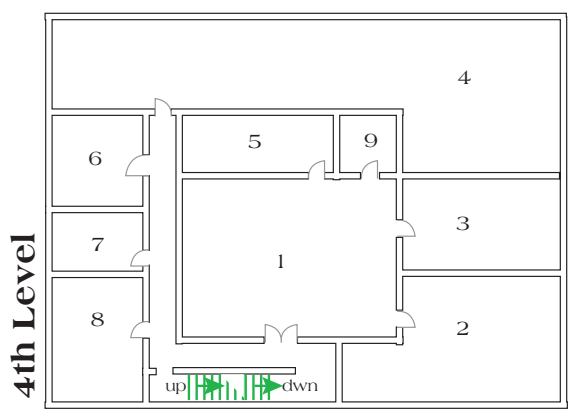
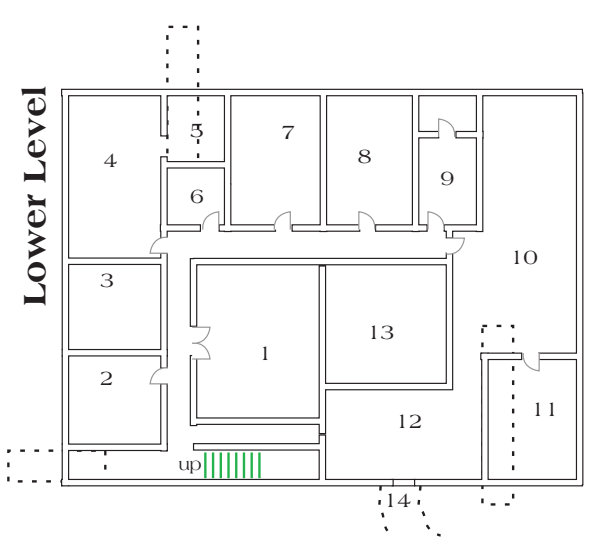
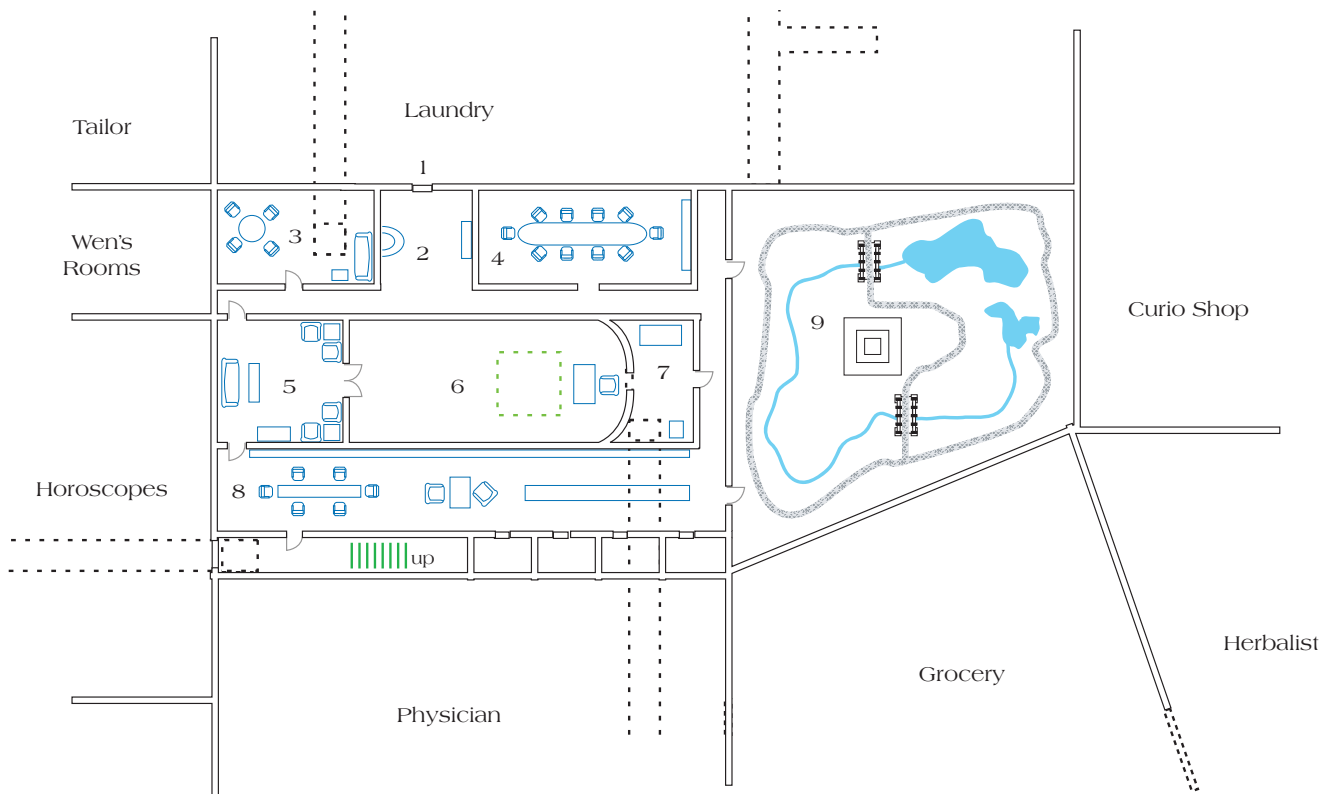
6) Audience Hall: This room has tapestries on the walls but is otherwise bare except for the desk and single chair at the opposite end from the door. The rear wall is specially curved to project the voice of anyone seated at the desk more effectively (+3 PRE) and decorated in a continuation of the wooden tile pattern that covers the floor. During audiences, either two tong warriors or a pair of *Ying Hu Shi* are stationed behind the desk to either side. Directly in front of the desk is a concealed trap door (-6 to Concealment rolls to locate, -2 to Security Systems rolls to bypass/disarm) triggered by a switch on the floor behind the desk. When triggered, it drops anyone standing on it into a tank containing one of the Demon Doctor's less successful experiments — a deadly mutated octopus (see below). A bulletproof glass panel (DEF 7, BODY 7), triggered by a second switch on the floor behind the desk, slides out to cover the opening so that Doctor may witness the victim's struggles and gloat in safety. Directly behind the desk is a secret door (-6 to Concealment rolls to locate) for fast escapes.

7) Secret Room: This secret room contains peepholes for observing the Audience Hall, an armoire for changing into formal robes, a chair and end table, and another secret door (-4 to Concealment rolls to locate) that opens into an outer hallway. A secret exit into an escape tunnel is located under the chair (-6 to Concealment rolls to locate unless one attempts to move the bolted-down chair, -2 in that case); opening it also opens the secret door to the hallway, giving the impression that an escapee used that exit and not this one.

8) Library: A long library with bookshelves lining the walls, several tables and chairs, and a secondary shelf running down the center of the last part of the room. The books are in many different languages and cover many topics. Doctor Fang has a standard set of volumes present in all facilities, with some variations added by residents, the caretaking staff, his daughters, and Lok Shing. The library has a series of concealed doors (-4 to Concealment rolls to locate, -4 to Lockpicking rolls to figure out how to open) in the shelves along the south wall: the four at the southeastern end of the room hold weapons for the tong soldiers, firearms, and other equipment for defense of the base (gas bombs, smoke devices, and so forth); the one at the southwestern end opens into a corridor that allows access to the stairs to the residential areas on the upper floors and, with the flip of a switch, hinges the stair up to reveal a set going down to the kitchens and servant's quarters. Opposite the stairs is another floor panel opening onto a secret passage (-6 to Concealment rolls to locate).

9) Hidden Garden: The facility's most impressive room, the Hidden Garden is a climate-controlled Chinese garden complete with two ponds, a stream connecting them, a small pagoda with chairs and a table for relaxing and dining, and a path meandering around the garden so visitors can see all the lush (and occasionally rare) plant life. The garden has no upper floors — it's open to the three floors above it, making it feel much larger than it is. The ceiling

Dr. Fang's Hidden Base



PLOT SEEDS

A local medium approaches one a PC who's a scholar with an interest in the Orient or the supernatural. During a séance, the medium was approached by a fading Chinese ancestral spirit requesting his aid. The spirit is tasked with guarding the prison of a hideous demon and preventing its escape into the mortal world. Unfortunately, his last known mortal descendant is in very poor health, and with his death, there will be no one to venerate the spirit and give it power to continue its duty. The medium asks the character to locate any remaining descendants and inform them of their familial responsibility. With clues provided by the spirit the PCs can narrow down the list of possible descendants to two or three people, all of whom reside in Hudson City's Chinatown. The most likely candidate, a laundry owner named Sun Yun Fat, seems uncooperative and becomes less amiable and more reticent as they continue to ask their questions....

A criminal contact of one of the character calls him in a panic. One of his recent "business deals" didn't pan out the way he planned, and he inadvertently left a herbalist in Chinatown holding the dirty end of a very short stick. The herbalist, one Lo Lien, apparently has friends in one of the local tongs, because Chinamen with hatchets have already tried to kill him twice. He's perfectly willing to make everything good to the herbalist, even

is made from double-walled armored glass (DEF 7, BODY 14) treated to be as optically clear as possible so that one may look up at the sky and not know the glass is there. The one foot vacuum space between the layers provides insulation, ensuring that no outside temperature affects the perfectly-balanced one inside the garden. Concealment for the garden from aircraft overhead is supplied by a silk screen that's rolled out over the roof, making it appear to be part of the surrounding structures (-5 to Concealment rolls to locate from the air, or -8 to Sight PER Rolls). Sun's laundry assists in the camouflage by placing a number of clotheslines on the rooftops to dry clothing, giving Sun a reason to station tong guards to chase away anyone who might discover the deception by walking on the screen. In the winter, snow covers the glass, rendering it invisible.

UPPER FLOORS

The second and third floors are identical in layout, and serve as guest quarters, either for visiting *Ying Hu Shi* or for other guests — or prisoners — of Dr. Fang. They're opulently decorated in the Chinese style, with ornate brocades in bright colors, low tables and comfortable seating and beds.

1. Sitting Room.
2. Bedroom
3. Bath
4. & 5. Servant's Room
6. Storage For Guests' Luggage
7. Kitchen
8. Dining Room
- 9-10. Servants' and/or Guards' Rooms

The fourth floor serves as a laboratory and office area where Ming Wei and Dr. Fang can replenish their poisons, potions, and various small devices.

1. Laboratory
2. Storage
3. Office
4. Storage
5. Bath And Showers
6. Kitchen
7. Assistant's Bath
8. Assistant's Bedroom
9. Walk-in Safe

LOWER FLOOR

The lower floor contains the quarters for handful of permanent staff, kitchens, some storage, and the lower portions of the "octo-tank." The staff is a single family imported from China to serve here; they're loyal to Dr. Fang but not real fighters. None of the secret passages are accessible from this level — the staff has one of its own that joins up near the river with the one from the Guard Room.

1. Sitting Room
- 2-3. Servants' Bedrooms

4. Kitchen
5. Pantry
6. Closet
- 7-8. Servants' Bedrooms
9. Bath
- 10-12. Storage
13. Octo-tank
14. Secret Escape Tunnel

INDIVIDUALS

SUN YUN FAT

10 STR	12 DEX	14 CON	10 BODY
13 INT	12 EGO	13 PRE	10 COM
4 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	5 REC
28 END	22 STUN		

Abilities: +1 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups; +1 with Interaction Skills; Acting 12-; Concealment 12-; Conversation 12-; AK: Hudson City 12-; AK: Underground Chinatown 11-; KS: Chinese Philosophy 12-; Gambling 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Laundryman 12-; Shadowing 12-; Stealth 12-; Streetwise 12-; WF: Small Arms; Contacts (30 points' worth, Chinatown); Fringe Benefit (Membership: Legion Of Crime)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by Dr. Fang); Psychological Limitation: Loves/Protective Of Wife And Family; Psychological Limitation: Loyal To Dr. Fang; Social Limitation: Minority; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Mr. Sun is an amiable, cheerful Chinese man of middle years, 5'4" tall with a slightly rotund build. He's well-known in Chinatown, with innumerable friends and acquaintances. None of them know he serves the sinister Dr. Fang as a member of the Legion Of Crime. His position as owner of Sun Yun Fat's Cleaning enables him to gather information from families all over Chinatown in addition to news from some Western households in Hudson City. The clotheslines on the roof also give concealment to the hidden garden of Dr. Fang's hideout.

TONG HATCHETMAN

15 STR	14 DEX	13 CON	11 BODY
10 INT	10 EGO	12 PRE	8 COM
5 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
26 END	25 STUN		

Abilities: +1 HTH; +2 OCV with Hatchet; Hand Attack +2d6; Climbing 12-; Stealth 12-; Streetwise 11-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms; Fringe Benefit (Tong member)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by tong leader); Hunted (rival tongs); Psychological Limitation: Loyal to Tong; Social Limitation: Minority; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: This character sheet represents a typical tong hatchetman who belongs to a local tong

(possibly one with ties to the Legion Of Crime). He reports to an assigned leader. He prefers to remain in his own neighborhood, but will travel outside it when ordered. He carries a pair of hatchets (HKA 1d6, STR Min 8, Can be Thrown), but seldom carries any firearms.

MUTATED OCTOPUS

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
20	STR	10	13-	Lift 400 kg; 4d6 [4]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
20	CON	20	13-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-5	10-	ECV: 2
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
9	PD	6		Total: 9 PD (2 rPD)
4	ED	0		Total: 4 ED (2 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
8	REC	0		
40	END	0		
40	STUN	0		
Total Characteristics Cost: 75				

Movement: Running: 1"/2"
Leaping 0"/0"
Swimming 8"/16"

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Snapping Beak:</i> HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR)	1
9	<i>Crushing Grasp:</i> Hand Attack +4d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Must Follow Grab (-½), Only To Crush/Squeeze (-¼)	2
2	<i>Rubbery Hide:</i> Damage Resistance (2 PD/2 ED)	0
1	<i>Aquatic Life Form:</i> Life Support (Safe Environment: High Pressure)	0
-10	<i>Mutated By Dr. Fang:</i> Running -5" (1" total)	
10	<i>Suction Cups:</i> Clinging (STR 35); Cannot Move Up Vertical Surfaces (-½)	0
4	<i>Heavy:</i> Knockback Resistance -2"	0
1	<i>Water Siphon:</i> Swimming +6" (8: total)	1
22	<i>Underwater Senses:</i> Spatial Awareness	0
6	<i>Tentacles:</i> Extra Limbs (4, total of 8), Inherent (+½)	0
10	<i>Tentacles:</i> Stretching 2"; Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½), Inherent (+¼); Always On (-½), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼), Limited Body Parts (tentacles; -¼)	0
5	<i>Mutated By Dr. Fang:</i> Expanded Breathing (Breathe Oxygen)	0
Skills		
6	+3 OCV with Grab	
2	PS: Attack 11-	
1	PS: General Obedience 8-	
1	PS: Stop Attacking 8-	
3	Stealth 12-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 83

Total Cost: 158

75+ Disadvantages

15	Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
0	Physical Limitation: Human Size (2 meters long, 260 kg)
10	Physical Limitation: Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Slightly Impairing)
5	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap (cannot leap)(Infrequent, Slightly Limiting)
15	Psychological Limitation: Hunger for Human Flesh (Common, Strong)
38	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 158

Ecology: The mutated creature living in the tank beneath the audience chamber scarcely bears a resemblance to a normal octopus any longer. It's larger and heavier than any normal octopus and lives on a "special" diet, having been raised on the flesh of those who failed the Demon Doctor. The mutations inflicted upon it cost it the ability to eject ink and change colors, but allow it to breathe air and to move about on land, albeit slowly. It lives a fairly sedentary lifestyle in its tank except for the days when a "guest" drops in to pay his respects.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations, but the steady diet of human flesh on which Dr. Fang raised the creature has left it with a taste for such morsels. It's difficult to control the creature when it senses it might obtain human meat; the servants have learned to beware the occasional tentacle tip questing too close when they have to feed the beast.

Powers/Tactics: When attacking, the mutated octopus's tactics vary depending on whether it's on land or in the water. In the water, it attempts to grasp its prey with as many tentacles as possible and drag the hapless victim underwater to crush and squeeze him until he stops moving, and then to start biting chunks out of him with its beak. If fighting more than one opponent, it devotes a pair of tentacles to each opponent, allowing it to fight as many as four people at once. On land the beast tries to creep as close as possible, pulling itself along with three or four tentacles, and then strike at an opponent with its other tentacles them simultaneously in a Grab. If successful, it squeezes as above until the opponent is motionless, at which point it drags him back to the water to feed. If forced to fight multiple opponents on land, it lashes at them with its tentacles to drive them back and retreat, or snares one opponent and retreats.

Appearance: The mutations Dr. Fang inflicted on the creature altered its appearance considerably from that of a normal octopus. The creature's body (excluding tentacles) is 6'6" (1 hex) long; it weighs 260 kg (572 pounds). Its skin is now a leathery dull red color, growing darker toward the tips of its tentacles. Spiny growths over its eyes resemble eyebrows, and a ridge of the same spiny growths runs down the animal's back. Its flailing tentacles seem more aggressive than those of a normal cephalopod.

Continued from last page

more than was lost, if he'll call off the hatchetmen. He needs the character to serve as a "go-between" and help straighten the matter out.

Due to an unfortunate accident at feeding time, Dr. Fang's mutant octopus escapes from its tank and follows the fleeing servants out their escape tunnel and into the sewers of Chinatown. Sun Yun Fat is frantic to recapture the creature before Dr. Fang discovers the situation. A rival tong is searching for the creature that dragged off one of its brothers. Pets and derelicts are beginning to disappear in Chinatown and nearby neighborhoods. The characters are drawn into the mystery when Aunt Matilda's prize Pomeranian Pookie (*a.k.a.* Grand Champion Graf Sigmund Schwartzwulf of Bardichburg) goes missing. "He got off his leash for just a moment while I was attending a meeting of the Chinese-American Friendship Association and I simply can't find him! I'm afraid he's been stolen!"

NEOS THEMISCYRA



In sub-Saharan Africa lies a secret that has awaited discovery since the days of ancient Greece. Deep in the heart of French Equatorial Africa, hidden from prying eyes by trackless miles of jungle and grassland, under the concealing cover of an expansive karstic formation, is the home of a people who once made the strongest warriors quake at the sound of their name: Neos Themiscyra, the last bastion of the Amazons.

GEOGRAPHY

Neos Themiscyra lies several hundred miles north of the Belgian Congo, where the jungles of central Africa start to give way to the huge expanses of grassland that comprise much of sub-Saharan Africa. Hidden away in a remote part of the territory making up French Equatorial Africa, its southern approach is guarded by mountainous terrain and dense jungles that are proof against all but the most determined expeditions. The northern approach is grassland, with nothing to make the city's location remarkable or attract interest.

Further complicating any search for the city is its physical location in the high, airy caverns of a karstic formation that sprawls at the feet of the northern foothills of the mountains to the south. Constructed entirely within a three-cavern system linked by tunnels, the city is invisible from the air and virtually invisible from the ground unless someone peers in through one of the openings in the cavern roof or stumbles on one of the two exits to the outside world that the Amazons have not sealed off over the centuries.

Outside the city proper, the Amazons' territory encompasses a wide range of terrain from grasslands to jungles to the mountainous south of the caverns. Included in that expanse of territory are a half-dozen native villages (all subjugated), several waterfalls and lakes in the mountains, and a pair of quarries where the Amazons obtain stone for building materials and sculptures.

LIGHT/VISIBILITY

Light inside the city is less bright than the fierce African sun outside, but still bright enough to see by with ease. During the day, light from the many holes piercing the cavern roof over the city's head is gathered by a series of cunningly-designed "reflecting towers" and wall-mounted mirror banks that send it through the city. Individual homes and civic buildings all have similar, albeit smaller-scale, reflectors. Special banks of these mirrors ensure that the Amazons' crops receive enough light.

Although the Amazons have never needed to use them offensively, the reflectors in the main cavern and the military's cavern are designed so they can reflect the light toward the city entrances, forcing any invading force to fight at a -2 penalty to their OCV and DCV due to the dazzling effect of the light.

At night, the Amazons light Neos Themiscyra by more traditional methods. Individual homes use oil lamps and occasionally torches. Important structures are marked by oil-burning braziers outside their entrances at night, and a rotating detachment from the military patrols the streets with oil lamps at night, ensuring the larger braziers are properly fueled and lit. The Temple of Artemis has a special set of reflectors that focus the light of the moon on it, bathing its white surface in a soft glow on all but the darkest of nights, but it's the only structure in the city lit this way. The standard penalties for dim light apply in the lit areas, but outside of those, the full -4 "dark night" penalty for Sight PER Rolls applies due to the lack of ambient light from the moon and stars.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The climate around the city is that of the African terrain in which it resides: hot and dry toward the northern plains, becoming more humid and tropical as they give way to the southern mountains. Temperatures range from a low of 21° Celsius (70° F) and a high of 34° C (93° F) with the average being about 29° C (85° F). There's sufficient rainfall (40-65 inches yearly) to raise livestock and crops, especially with the irrigation systems the Amazons have sent slaves to design and build for the subjugated local tribes, although the occasional drought is not unknown. The seasons break down into two "wet" (May-June and October-November) and two "dry" (June-October and November-May)

Inside the city of Neos Themiscyra itself, the climate blends into a single eternal season thanks to the insulating stone and earth surrounding it. The temperature in the main cavern and the military cavern is a static 21° Celsius (70° F) year-round, with an almost constant gentle breeze coming down through the open shafts and out the entrances. Thanks to the presence of the city reservoir, the air in the main cavern feels slightly damp during the wet months but pleasantly cool in the dry ones. Because of its large banks of reflectors the agricultural cavern is noticeably drier and warmer than the other two.

THE CAVERNS

All the caverns of Neos Themiscyra have a downward slope — in the main city cavern the rear (mountain) side is over 200 feet higher than the front. The agricultural cavern is the most level of the three, followed by the one the military uses. The main, and largest, cavern has the steepest grade; it's been terraced into several distinct, descending levels over the years. An underground river flowing from a lake at the rear of the main cavern has been laboriously dammed and is now held back by a tremendous, buttressed stone wall both to feed the city's aqueducts and to maximize the available space within the cavern. The two adjacent caverns are linked to the main cavern by passages carved out of the solid rock that have aqueducts as well as foot traffic.

THE MAIN CAVERN

The main cavern is laid out in five descending levels that vary in height (though the floor of each level is at least 7.5" [50 feet] below the floor of the level above). Light reflectors sprout on towers around the caverns (see above). In several places monumental reinforcing pillars rise from the cavern floor to buttress the underside of the ceiling.

The First Level

The first and highest level holds the city's dam and reservoir. Constructed of massive stone blocks imported from the Amazons' quarry in the mountains, the dam holds back the underground river that used to flow down through the cavern, creating a reservoir that extends back into the mountain. A squad of Amazons always stands guard at the dam to sound the alarm and summon the repair crews in the event of a leak or potential breach. The aqueducts also start on this level, wrap around the sides of the cavern, and then descend to the lower levels. Running along the western cavern wall behind the aqueducts are the residences of the city's poor and those slaves fortunate enough to possess their own residences. Most of the homes in this district receive less light than other parts of the city, and the narrow alleyways of the area are often damp from the aqueduct overhead. Access to this level is via steep, narrow stairs built into the rock or the massive cranes used to lift repair supplies to the dam and reservoir.

The Second Level

The Temple of Artemis, built on an artificial hillock, dominates the second level. The Temple holds the sacred black altar to Artemis that the Amazons carried with them to Troy and then to their new home. Surrounding the Temple in a semi-circular arc on its southern side is the Sacred Grove of Artemis, composed of blessed wormwood trees the priestesses care for as part of their ceremonial duties. The priestesses live and study in several Temple outbuildings. On a northern "step down" (not a true separate level) stands the Royal Palace, residence of the Amazons' queen. The second level connects to the rest of the city by several sets of stairs and a series of switchback ramps.

The Third Level

The third level is the city's primary residential area. A broad shelf on the western side of the city, it contains densely-packed multi-story dwellings laid out in square blocks. Most of the dwellings have rooftop gardens, and there are several public fountains and bathhouses fed by the aqueducts. Homes are covered in whitewash to mimic the white marble and limestone of the Grecian cities the Amazons sought inspiration from; those that don't have rooftop gardens are covered in red tile roofs. The streets are paved in stone, and merchants move up and down them with small carts, hawking their wares during the day. This level is also accessed by several sets of stairs and ramps.

The Fourth Level

The fourth level is on the eastern side of the cavern, below the Royal Palace and opposite the residential level. It contains the city's open air amphitheatre, where plays and civic meetings are held; the circular arena and surrounding field where challenge combats and some athletic games take place; and the tunnel to the agricultural cavern. No one lives on this level, though it sees a fair amount of traffic due to the need to move harvested products from the agricultural cavern to the city and take garbage and waste products back for use as fertilizer. Access to this level is via two sets of ramps and a connecting hub that links the ramps to levels two, three, and four together.

The Fifth Level

The fifth and lowest level contains the city's administrative buildings, the tunnel to the military cavern, and the city's entrance to the outside world. The whitewashed stone, three-level administrative buildings contain offices for civic functionaries, storage for civic records, a public school that all Amazons attend regularly until adulthood. The school has a library that houses copies of many texts and writings from Classical days, as well as never-before seen histories and writings penned since then by writers within the city.

The tunnel to the military cavern is used both by the military and as the point where many goods come into the city. Access to the outside world is through a reinforced and walled cave mouth that has an artificial tunnel on the cavern side to constrict passage and make defense easier in the event of an attack on the city. It can even be collapsed to seal the city off.

THE MILITARY CAVERN

The military cavern contains two levels. The higher, encompassing approximately a third of the cavern floor, spreads out to either side of the tunnel connected to the city cavern. The military maintains an extensive array of whitewashed barracks and training areas along the southern and southwestern walls together with a solidly-built open air stockade where the Amazons imprison captives. On the northwest wall of the cavern are the pens where the Amazons keep their livestock and the homes of the slaves responsible for animal husbandry, milking, slaughtering, and similar tasks. This level connects to the lower one via wide ramps to facilitate troop movements and the handling of animals.

RIDING ZEBRAS

Zebras aren't the easiest animals to domesticate (which is why no one's ever really done it outside of Fantasy novels and Pulp stories). Characters who try to ride one without having TF: Zebras (which the Amazons learn by default when they learn Riding) suffer a -2 penalty on Riding rolls when on them.

The second, larger, level of the military's cavern is a wide, flat floor where the military breeds, raises, and trains their zebra mounts, and trains warriors in the art of riding them. There are stables and corrals, fields where grasses are grown so the zebras may graze in addition to being fed grain, and areas suitable for training the warriors in the intricate Amaazon cavalry maneuvers. Also on this level are several fields set aside for the herds of goats and groups of cattle awaiting transportation to the pens and slaughterhouses on the levels above. The cave mouth leading to the outside world from this cavern has, like the one in the main cavern, been strengthened and reinforced with stonework, and also has an artificial tunnel on the cavern side to constrict access in the case of invasion. This tunnel, however, is almost three times the size of the one leading into the city, to allow for the Amazons to maneuver cavalry out of it. Like the tunnel in the city cavern, it can be collapsed to seal off access.

THE AGRICULTURAL CAVERN

The agricultural cavern has only one level, having been artificially flattened by layers of added soil to facilitate the growing of crops. Here the Amazons raise apples, almonds, the wormwood trees sacred to Artemis, and staples like onions and legumes, assisted by the pollination efforts of bees from the hives the Amazons maintain for honey. There are slopes along the walls for the growing of crops requiring such an arrangement (olives and grapes in particular). The cavern walls have huge

banks of mirrors lining them to ensure the crops receive enough sunlight to grow, and irrigation canals crisscross the cavern floor. This cavern also has the largest central reflector array of any of the three caverns. In the southwest corner of the cavern are the dwellings of the agricultural slaves, storage bins for foodstuffs, and the mills to process and preserve those foodstuffs.

WILDLIFE

The animal life outside the city proper is normal for the region of French Equatorial Africa it's located in. Larger creatures found in the vicinity of Neo Themiscyra include zebras, antelopes, gazelles, lions, giraffes, hyenas, ostriches, and some elephants on the grasslands, and an incredibly varied number of smaller animals plus chimpanzees and gorillas in the mountains to the south. At least one subjugated local tribe raises large herds of cattle and goats to help feed the city. As befits a people whose patron goddess is a huntress, the Amazons consider the territory they control around their city to be a private game preserve and actively — and violently — discourage hunting there by anyone other than their own people.

Within the caverns, there are no wild animals other than birds that fly in through the cavern roof openings and nest all over the city, and small creatures such as rats that have crept in. Many households keep caged songbirds as pets, and the sounds of birdsong occasionally make the caverns seem to be singing themselves. The agricultural cavern has a constantly-maintained net over the light shaft opening to keep the birds from descending on the crops there; slaves patrol the fields in search of birds that make it past the net. The royal family and the Temple of Artemis both maintain packs of hunting dogs descended from those who traveled south with the Amazons from Greece for the occasions when the queen or priestesses wish to hunt. The military maintains a large stock of domesticated zebras as cavalry mounts and actively breeds and trains them to encourage the traits they wish to foster.

FLORA

The normal vegetative patterns for this region Africa hold true throughout the area Neos Themiscyra controls, with the exceptions of crops the Amazons brought with them and have fostered since their arrival. Many of the subjugated tribes within the Amazon's territory grow wheat, barley, flax, and hemp to supply the Amazons with as tribute, and have integrated the non-native crops into their own lives. At least one village grows olives, and several others produce fruits like figs, apricots, and dates that have never grown naturally in central Africa. In the wild, small patches of plant life not native to central Africa have taken hold thanks to seed droppings by birds and other animals in spots where conditions were right, giving travelers a potential clue that something odd is going on.



Within the city cavern there are many small rooftop gardens where inhabitants grow personal supplies of herbs to season their food and treat injuries, and flowers to decorate their homes and press for oils to make perfumes. Decorative plants are commonly grown in pots to make homes seem less inhospitable. A soft, springy carpet of local moss replaces grass as a ground cover in the city's parks, and there are some small trees in spots that receive sufficient light. The military's cavern is more open; it has fewer trees and decorative plants, and has actual grass as opposed to moss. The agricultural cavern is, of course, filled with carefully-cultivated crops (see above).

PEOPLE

The inhabitants of Neos Themiscyra are human. Except for locally acquired slaves, they're lineal descendants of cultures and people long extinct in the outside world. Isolationist and suspicious, the Amazons have imposed their customs and values on a part of the world that was utterly alien to them, transforming it into something akin to the home they now recall only through the writings and stories left to them by their forebears.

The Amazons of Neos Themiscyra are descended from the Amazons who fought on the side of Troy against the Greeks during the Trojan War. Led by Queen Penthesilea and twelve noted Amazon warriors, a unit of Amazons answered King Priam's call to honor a debt owed to him by Penthesilea and bravely battled alongside Troy's defenders against the Achaeans until the fateful day the Greek hero Achilles helped his countrymen fend off an assault on their beached ships by the Amazons. Penthesilea, mighty as she was, fell before Achilles's skill alongside most of her twelve champions. The remaining Amazons, their morale broken, retreated into Troy, never to take the field again.

When the Greeks finally breached the walls of Troy through the artifice of the Trojan Horse, Priam came to the remaining Amazons and asked of them a final favor: to take as many of his city's treasures and people as they could and flee the Greeks, so something of his city and people would survive the destruction. The Amazons agreed, and, as the Greek army spilled through the gates, the greatest part of Troy's treasures and the best and brightest of her people slipped away unnoticed through secret ways prepared for this eventuality. The Amazons and their charges stole a small fleet of ships from the Greeks and sailed off into the night.

The rag-tag fleet crossed the Mediterranean, purchased passage — and silence — from the Egyptians as they sailed down the Nile, and vanished into the heart of Africa, always fearing the vengeful Greeks were just a few steps behind them. Abandoning and destroying their ships somewhere along the banks of the Lower Nile, they set out overland, taking the supplies and slaves they needed by force from native tribes. They finally settled at the base of a mountain range to build their city in a series

of karst caverns formed by eroding and collapsing limestone layers. The Trojan engineers constructed a home for their Amazon saviors as great as the one the Greeks had destroyed.

The Amazons are a tall, well-proportioned race, noted for their athletic ability and attractiveness in Classical times. They traditionally have fair to olive complexions (only the warriors and royal family are outside often enough to have tans) and dark hair and eyes. Blonde hair is considered to be particularly attractive; it occurs in only a few family lines. Red hair is a sign of a connection to the supernatural world. Girls born with it, even slaves, are destined for the ranks of Artemis's priestesses from birth; male children with red hair are considered bad luck and rarely survive to adulthood.

CULTURE

The Amazons of Neos Themiscyra are a female-dominated society, albeit one that's absorbed some of the trappings of Troy's Hellenic civilization over the ages. The design of their buildings, the way they administer their city, their education system, and much of their arts and entertainment are essentially Hellenic, while their army, religion, ruling class, and innate sense of superiority remain uniquely Amazonian in nature. The people of Troy have been assimilated into the Amazonian culture as an intellectual and merchant class who supply the city with the technical, artistic, and mercantile skills the Amazons lack.

The city is governed by a Queen, who must be descended from the line of Evandre, the last of Penthesilea's champions and the commander who led the Amazons into Africa. The current ruler is Queen Andromache. She has not yet produced an heir and has no living relatives; her twin sister was banished from the city over seventeen years ago for daring to subordinate herself to a man and is considered dead. Three priestesses of Artemis advise the queen, but she rules alone. Her duties are in many ways ceremonial and administrative, but she still retains the power of life and death over her subjects — slave and free alike — and is the supreme commander of the Amazonian military.

Outside of the royal family, Amazons are divided into four general categories that are as much social divisions as political ones: those who have reached adulthood but who have not yet proved themselves in battle by killing an enemy; those who have proved themselves in battle by killing an enemy, and thus earned the right to bear children and become an officer in the military; those whose inclinations or skills mark them as best suited for the ranks of Artemis's priestesses; and those who have been injured or grown too old to continue in the military and have become civic administrators. As members of a martial culture, all Amazons are inducted into the military after their ceremony of adulthood, and even those who have moved on to become administrators still practice regularly to retain some level of skill at arms. A common trait among all Amazons is a sense of superiority to others, men in particular, and an accompanying arrogance when dealing with them.

The small intellectual and technical classes formed by the Trojans the Amazons escorted to safety are neither slaves nor Amazons, instead occupying a specialized niche between the two. Some of the more radical Amazons occasionally call for their absorption to the ranks of the slaves, but no queen has been willing to risk the possible backlash of betraying the oaths their ancestors swore to Artemis to protect the Trojans. They have more freedom than the slaves, but are not actually citizens and have no voice in the governing of the city. Occasionally daughters from this class are accepted into the ranks of Artemis's priestesses.

Typical dress for the Amazons is a *chiton* caught up at the waist by a girdle so it scarcely reaches the knee. The upper part fastens over the left shoulder, leaving the right shoulder bare. A pair of sandals cross-lace up the calf. Most common-day chitons are white, but soldiers wear red ones under their armor to hide signs of injury from foes. Chitons worn at social occasions are floor-length and come in many colors, though only the royal family is allowed to wear purple. Hair is normally long and worn up, except for times of war, when it's braided and used as helmet padding. Jewelry is mostly of plain gold and never worn to excess. Garments for the Trojan and slave classes reflect similar Hellenic influences, but dressing exactly like the Amazons is forbidden outside of theatrical productions.

Amazons do not marry and do not engage in exclusive relationships where they might become subordinated to their male companions. Whenever possible, they prefer to select potential fathers from the Trojan class, with female children going to the mother and male children to the father's family, but since this isn't always possible, the women often choose companions from the ranks of the slaves. Female children arising from such pairings are automatically elevated to Amazon status; male offspring remain slaves. Particularly handsome, strong, or intelligent men within the city, regardless of status, often find themselves courted by a number of Amazons simultaneously. In such cases, challenge duels between competing Amazons are not unknown. Trojans can and do marry and create family units.

SPEAKING WITH THE NATIVES

The Amazons all speak Amazon, a language with no linguistic relations to any languages other than Phoenician and Akkadian (with which it shares 2 points of similarity). Almost all Amazons are also fluent in ancient Greek, which has 3 points of similarity with modern Greek. Some also speak one or two native dialects indigenous to the area (Sango or Zande). A very few members of the military speak an Arabic dialect. Most Amazons are literate.

Native slaves speak their own languages, usually a dialect of the tribal language Sango, and if they've been slaves for any length of time also have some degree of fluency with Amazon and/or Greek (though they're rarely literate). Descendants of the Greek slaves brought with the Amazons speak Greek and Amazon, may know a dialect of Sango, and might be literate.

SLAVES

The Amazons maintain a large contingent of slaves to do the work they consider beneath them. All Trojan households have slaves to do menial work, as do many military detachments. Organized slave labor keeps the public works in good repair, tends to the agricultural fields, and works the city's industrial processes (such as they are). Life as a slave in Neos Themiscyra is less onerous than in many slave-using cultures. The Amazons permit (even encourage) slaves to raise families and educate themselves, and slaves enjoy some freedoms (such as the ability to perform in theatrical performances and protection against abuses). But they are the property of their masters or the city as a whole, and children born to them automatically become slaves owned by the same master.

RELIGION

The Amazons universally follow the goddess Artemis. Three priestesses who each represent one aspect of the goddess (the Huntress, the Warrior, and the Mother) preside over the Temple. They surrender their names and take up the face of the goddess they represent as their name until they step down. They serve as an advisory council to the Queen.

The Huntress cares for the younger Amazons from childhood to the time they make their first kills and become warriors. The Warrior is the patroness of the military and of all Amazons who have become warriors but who are not mothers. The Mother concerns herself with Amazons who've borne children and those who've grown too old to actively pursue warfare as a way of life. Traditionally the Huntress counsels for defense and patience, the Warrior for war and aggression, and the Mother guile and wisdom.

The Amazons sacrifice to Artemis on holy days (every four months on the night of the full moon) by driving a wild animal into a sacred enclosure where it's burned to death. Smaller sacrifices, usually of birds, occur more frequently at the individual worshipper's request for a divination or omen for some task or event. The Amazons do not practice human sacrifice, and consider tribes who do barbaric; they do not permit it within their sphere of influence. Ritual services include drums, cymbals, flutes, and a vocal chorus.

The center of worship is the Temple of Artemis, where the three priestesses and their followers live and conduct the private ceremonies that sustain Artemis's blessing over the city and the Amazon people. The priestess's quarters are in a bank of buildings located behind and to the southwest of the raised temple, each priestess residing in a separate two-level building with her under-priestesses and postulants. They typically spend their days in study and conducting ceremonies, but younger priestesses band together in groups to occasionally attend matches at the arena or performances at the theatre. Priestesses only have to perform a reduced level of martial practice, but they aren't exempt from military duties entirely; priestesses following the Huntress are considered excellent archers.

WARFARE

The Amazons have lost none of the skill at arms that made them a force to be feared by the ancient Greeks. They understand, down to the level of the common soldier, all the tactics of the Classical world and such improvements and innovations to those tactics as their leaders have made in the years since the Fall of Troy. They're disciplined and highly trained troops accustomed to following orders and executing surprisingly complex maneuvers on the battlefield in concert with their sisters.

The Amazons prefer to fight running battles where their skill with archery and the mobility their mounts provide can be used to best advantage. They rush forward, firing their bows, and then, as their opponents counter-charge, the Amazons retreat, firing backwards from their mounts or even reversing their seating so they're still facing the enemy and trusting to the training of their mount to stay in formation as they continue to fire. If forced to fight afoot they adopt similar tactics, often ambushing opponents and fading away to ambush them again and again if feasible.

If placed in a situation where such tactics are not feasible, they Amazons switch to their deadly *labrys* (double-bladed) axes and shields and close with their foes, attacking in a whirlwind of motion. Most Amazons fight with their Combat Skill Levels in OCV, trusting to their armor and shields to protect them in combat, although older and more experienced warriors allocate CSLs as needed. If forced to fight on the defensive (a distasteful task), the Amazons form phalanxes around a core of archers, keeping opponents at bay with their spears as the archers rain arrows down on them until their opponents are weakened enough for a charge.

The Amazons have little experience with firearms but recognize them as weapons from the way they're carried and readied and don't fear them as a less warlike or more primitive people might. Particularly ruthless commanders might sacrifice a few warriors to gauge the weapons' effectiveness and range, but most unit commanders are more likely to, at worst, dress a slave or two up in armor and sacrifice them if they felt the knowledge was crucial. Given the opportunity, the Amazons will happily add the knowledge of how to use and maintain firearms to their arsenal.

In combat, the average Amazon warrior wears an undecorated, personally-fitted shaped breastplate of boiled leather with a skirt of leather "dags" (DEF 3; covers Hit Locations 9-14), leather greaves and vambraces (DEF 3; covers Hit Locations 7, 16-17), and a bronze helm of the Corinthian pattern (DEF 5; covers Hit Locations 3-5). They also carry crescent-shaped shields (DCV +2, 2d6 Normal Damage when used to bash, STR Min 13). Commanders wear the same equipment except for the greaves and vambraces which are bronze (DEF 5); their armor is also slightly more ornate and they have crests on their helmets. Members of the Royal Family wear armor of identical design made from iron (DEF 6 everywhere but Hit Location 14, which remains 3); their armor is more ornate than that of the commanders.

All Amazons fight with a Scythian-style double recurve bow (1½d6, STR Min 12, 165" Range, 24 arrows), their *labrys* axe (1½d6, STR Min 12), a dagger or dirk (1d6-1, STR Min 6), and a spear (1½d6, STR Min 10, 1" Reach). They typically carry their bows in combined bowcase/quivers that hold 24 arrows and are worn at their side or on the side of their mount. Occasionally they use javelins (1d6+1, STR Min 8, Range Based On STR) when hunting. Many Amazons know several Wrestling maneuvers (it's a popular sport), and a select few, including their Queen, maintain knowledge of the art of Pankration (*The Ultimate Martial Artist*, page 48).

LOCATIONS

THE ROYAL PALACE

Made from the same stone as the great dam above it and whitewashed to a gleaming white, the royal palace of the Amazons is based on classical Achaean designs. Legend states it owes much of its design to the very palace King Priam of Troy slept in during the siege that ultimately destroyed his city. Nestled on a slight "step" down from the level holding the Temple of Artemis, the palace looks out over the city like a guardian. It can be reached only by the stairs and a ramp that lead back up to the Temple level. The palace's entrance faces the Temple and the royal quarters on the second floor face outwards; the Queen need but look out one of her windows to see the city.

1) Entrance: A wide set of stairs leads up to the palace's porch, which supports an overhanging roof on columns. On festival or feast nights, large braziers are placed to either side at the top of the stairs to welcome guests; otherwise light comes from lanterns hung between the columns.

2) Courtyard: Guests are greeted here; some casual social functions occur in this area. The walls are covered in murals depicting Queen Penthesilea's battles and death at Troy and the Amazons' subsequent journey to the site of Neos Themiscyra. A pair of guards is always found here, one guard to either side of the entrance. Above it is the start of the long open-air center of the palace that allows individuals on the second story to walk completely around the center of the building and look down into the lower level. The palace's reflectors gather light on the roof and distribute it around the building.

3) Central Hall: This area serves many purposes: throne room, feasting hall, debating chamber, social gathering place. The open central core of the palace continues overhead to the back of the room, with smoke from the central hearth escaping up through the opening. The walls are covered in murals depicting famous deeds of Amazons from legend, and those deeds performed by Neos Themiscryan Amazons that past rulers considered worthy of inclusion on the walls. The throne is a simple carved wooden seat without a back, said to have been Priam's in the last days of Troy; when not in use, it's stored safely away.

During feasts carved tables and benches are set up for use by the guests. Most days, there are benches along the walls for people to use.

- 4) Stairs:** There is storage space under the stairs, and the dark corners here are a common spot for guests and residents to steal a few moments of a favorite's company with some hope of privacy.
- 5) Slave Quarters:** The palace slaves live here, sleeping six to eight to a room.
- 6) Baths:** The palace has a sophisticated set of baths with hot and cold water pools, a pair of massage tables, and a steam room. Heat comes from a cunningly-designed oil-burning furnace; water is piped in from the city's aqueducts. Most of the palace's water is drawn here. Everyone, even the slaves, has assigned times when the baths are set aside for their use, although the royal family has the right to interrupt the schedule as desired. The Queen likes to take long soaking baths with her favorite of the moment in the late evenings, displacing the slaves until early mornings on occasion.
- 7) Kitchens:** The central hearth in the Central Hall is used for cooking only during festivals and feasts. At other times food preparation takes place on the smaller hearth here, where there are ovens for baking. Water comes in via pipes from the aqueduct. The cook frequently sleeps here with one or two assistants so he's ready if the Queen wants something to eat in the middle of the night.
- 8) Lower Guardroom:** The eight guards assigned to the lower floor of the palace sleep here when not on duty. They work in shifts of four, rotating off every eight hours to rest and sleep. Two guards are stationed at the entrance; the other two patrol the level and relieve the stationary guards. A tour at the palace is considered a reward for good performance and lasts for ten days.
- 9) Storage Rooms:** Aside from the two rooms closest to the kitchen, these rooms are used to store all the items needed to make the palace run: furniture, clothing, festival decorations, and so on. The two rooms closest to the kitchen store more foodstuffs, amphorae of wine, and other items. Both sets of storerooms are always kept locked, with the Queen and the palace's steward holding the only keys to the regular storerooms, and the Queen and the cook holding the ones to the food storage.
- 10) Upper Stairs:** Two of the upper palace's guards are always stationed here, one to each set of stairs.
- 11) Balcony:** Circling the opening to the lower floor (and the one that opens to the "sky" above), this railed balcony allows access to the open deck over the entrance stairs. Should it become necessary, archers on this level can fire on any point of the Central Hall and Courtyard below with arrows.
- 12) Guest Quarters:** Although the palace sees few guests other than at festival times, these rooms are always kept clean and ready should the Queen feel the need to invite someone to spend the night as a sign of respect (the priestesses and the army's Field Commander are the most common recipients of such invitations).

13) Royal Quarters: Currently, a single guard always remains stationed outside the door to the Royal Chambers, but when there's a royal heir one guard for each member of the royal family is present. A central chamber of restrained elegance takes up most of the royal chambers, serving as a combined public area, work space, and private dining chamber. Two rooms for the royal children (if any) are at one end of the quarters; they're currently used as additional storage space. The Queen's Chamber is opposite them; Queen Andromache has decorated it in a more sybaritic fashion than is common, but not so much so that it arouses more than the occasional (and very quiet) comment.

14) Retainer's Quarters: These quarters are reserved for the non-slave staff who oversee the running of the palace. The Captain of the Guard, a stern older Amazon named Hethella, has quarters here, as does the steward Nethis. The Queen occasionally rewards a skilled artisan with one of the rooms while he works on the murals or a piece of statuary. The room nearest the Heirs' Rooms is usually given over to the Queen's current favorite.

15) Upper Guardroom: Ten Amazons are stationed here, working in two shifts of five. Three are on permanent stations (the stairs and the royal quarters), while the other two constantly patrol the level and relieve the others. As on the lower level, rotations are for ten days, although the Queen has favorites she frequently requests. When guests are present, the guards are increased accordingly.

THE TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS, UPPER LEVEL

Built on the first ledge below the dam, this structure is made from the same stone used in the great dam, and, like the Royal Palace, whitewashed to a gleaming brightness. Special reflectors installed on the city's mirror towers reflect the light of the moon onto the Temple, turning it into a glowing white vision during nights when the moon is full; the effect is heightened by a solution derived from phosphorescent mosses added to the temple's whitewash that gives the Temple an otherworldly glow under the moonlight. The structure is built on an artificially-raised foundation to mimic the original hilltop structures common in the ancient world.

1) Entrance Stairs: Typically there are four Amazon guards here at all times: two stationed at the bottom of the stairs and two at the top. The Amazons consider Temple duty an honor, so the guards assigned here are always skillful and alert. A stone framework holds to the right at the top of the stairs holds a gong; the guards sound it at the first sign of trouble, summoning every available priestess as well as the roaming guard detachment patrolling the city (and likely the Queen and all her guards as well).

2) Main Temple: The large open main portion of the Temple is lit day and night by oil-burning lamps tended by junior priestesses (one or two of whom are always cleaning and performing tasks around the Temple at all times). Tall columns are spaced out along each side of the Temple with oil lamps placed between them. During the day, the

Temple bustles with activity as priestesses lead ceremonies and city residents come to pray. At night, there are fewer priestesses working unless it's a full moon, in which case there are even more people present for ceremonies and sacrifices. There are no seats — the Amazons believe if they cannot stand on their own feet to face their goddess, then it's time for them to die.

3) Altar: The simple stone altar holds the most precious possession of the Amazons — one of the sacred Black Stones that Artemis flung down to the Amazons from the sky as a sign of her favor, and which Queen Penthesilea carried with her to Troy so Artemis's blessing would fall on the defenders of the city. Carried to safety by Evandre, the Stone now rests here. Physically it's an irregular black rock more modern scientific minds would recognize as a meteorite, albeit a large one (the Amazons needed a wagon to move it during the trip to Troy and the subsequent escape). There are many small pockets and pitted areas on the Stone's surface. Amazons sometimes place white pebbles in these to petition Artemis for a child (1 pebble) or a new relationship (2 pebbles). After two weeks, the priestesses remove the pebbles and new petitions may be made.

4) Statue Of Artemis: The 30' tall statue of Artemis at the back of the temple almost reaches the interior ceiling of the Temple. She's portrayed seated on a throne in a mixture of her three forms: she has the weapons and companion hunting dogs of her Huntress aspect, wears the helm, greaves, and vambraces of her Warrior aspect, and is garbed in the formal chiton of her Mother aspect. The statue is set on a large dais against the rear wall of the temple. A cleverly concealed door (-6 to Concealment rolls to find) in the base of the dais drops down and slides to the side, allowing access to the rooms built into the foundation of the Temple. It's operated by pressing down on both of the statue's big toenails at once (requiring two people or a successful DEX Roll at -2)

THE TEMPLE OF ARTEMIS, LOWER LEVEL

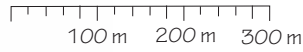
Constructed within the raised foundations of the Temple itself, the walls and floors here are plain and undecorated, but there's no dust on the floor, suggesting that no one has entered this area in at least a generation (which is incorrect). The ceilings are a surprising 10 feet high.

1) Stairs To The Main Temple: This hidden door opens up above, then drops down and slides aside to reveal a short drop (½") to a stone platform that faces into the first of the lower rooms. Three stairs lead down to the floor from the platform.

2) Guardian Chamber: This plain room has two statues in it (one to either side in the center of the walls) and a barred, heavy bronze door directly ahead. The statues, one of Artemis the Huntress with drawn bow on the left as one enters, and the other of Artemis the Warrior with raised spear, are set on hemispherical platforms. As a character walks across the floor, the statues turn to follow him as if tracking the character with their weapons (which, thanks to an ingenious system of pressure plates, they are). If a character attempts to lift the bar to open the doors, the statues "throw" the spear and "fire" the bow (OCV 7, RKA 1½d6) at the character (they're actually launched by spring mechanisms). If more than one character is available to target, choose between them randomly. To disarm the system, a character just has to stand directly between the two statues in the position Artemis the Mother is always shown in (there are examples in artwork all over the city for characters to recall). It takes a Security Systems roll at -2 or an INT Roll at -4 to figure this out if the players don't deduce it themselves. Once the trap is disarmed, the mechanism doesn't activate if the bar is lifted; it resets after the doors are closed and the bar replaced again.

3) Treasure Vaults: The treasures of Troy spirited away by Evandre and her fellow Amazons at King Priam's request are stored here in six vaults, three to each side of the corridor. Gold, statuary, vases of gems, and chests of raw gold ore spill out from each vault into the hall. The treasure is literally a king's ransom, capable of supporting an entire campaign's adventuring if disposed of properly and slowly. At the end of the corridor is a larger vault containing treasures some might consider more valuable than gold and jewels: the historical treasures of Troy, carefully preserved. These include Hector's armor and weapons, the bow with which Paris slew Achilles, the sarcophagus of Queen Penthesilea, scrolls that tell the story of the war from Troy's perspective, various other rare books and scrolls, and more.

Neos Themiscyra



Key

(open to outside)

Crane

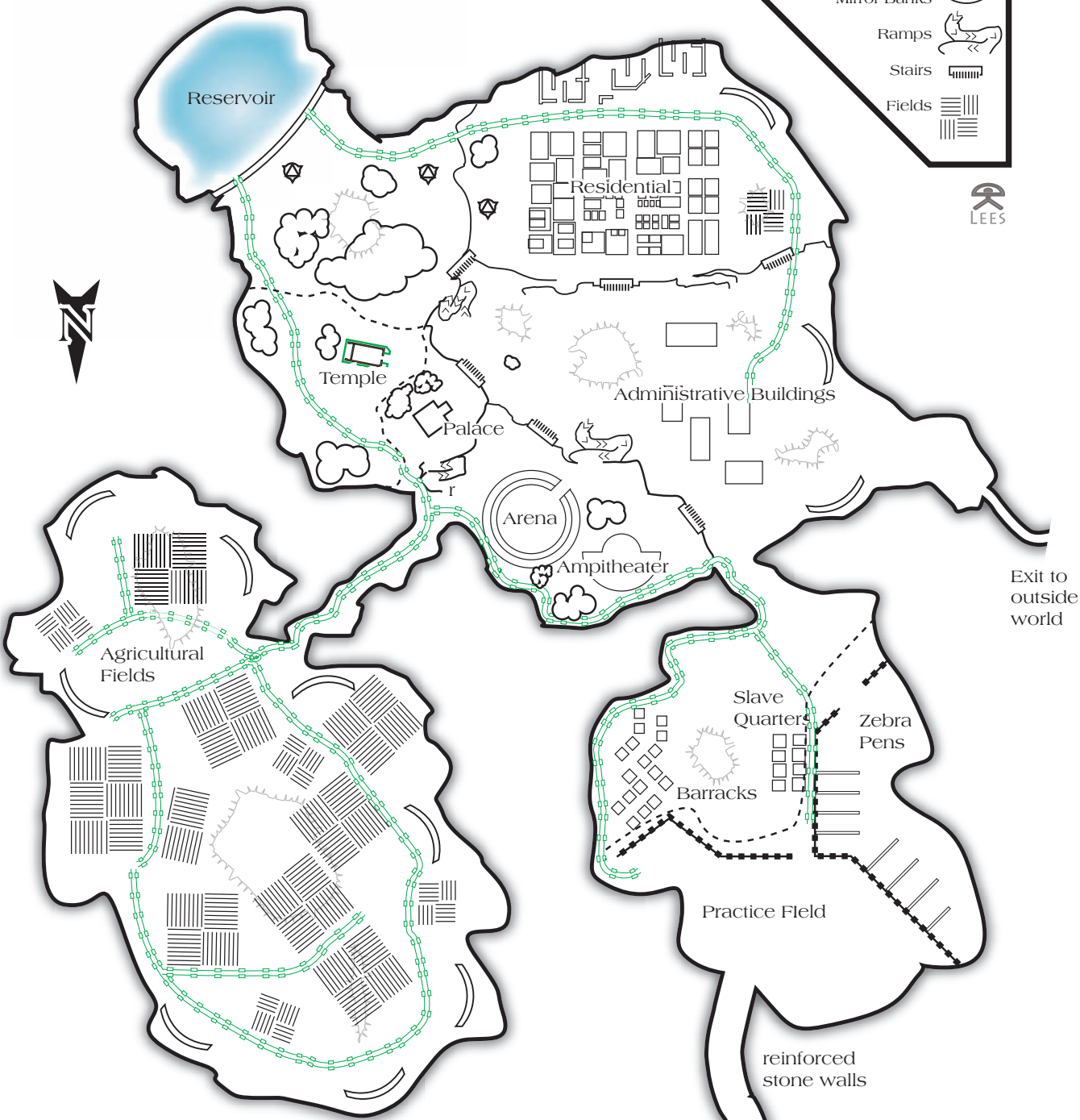
Aqueducts

Mirror Banks

Ramps

Stairs

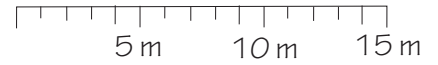
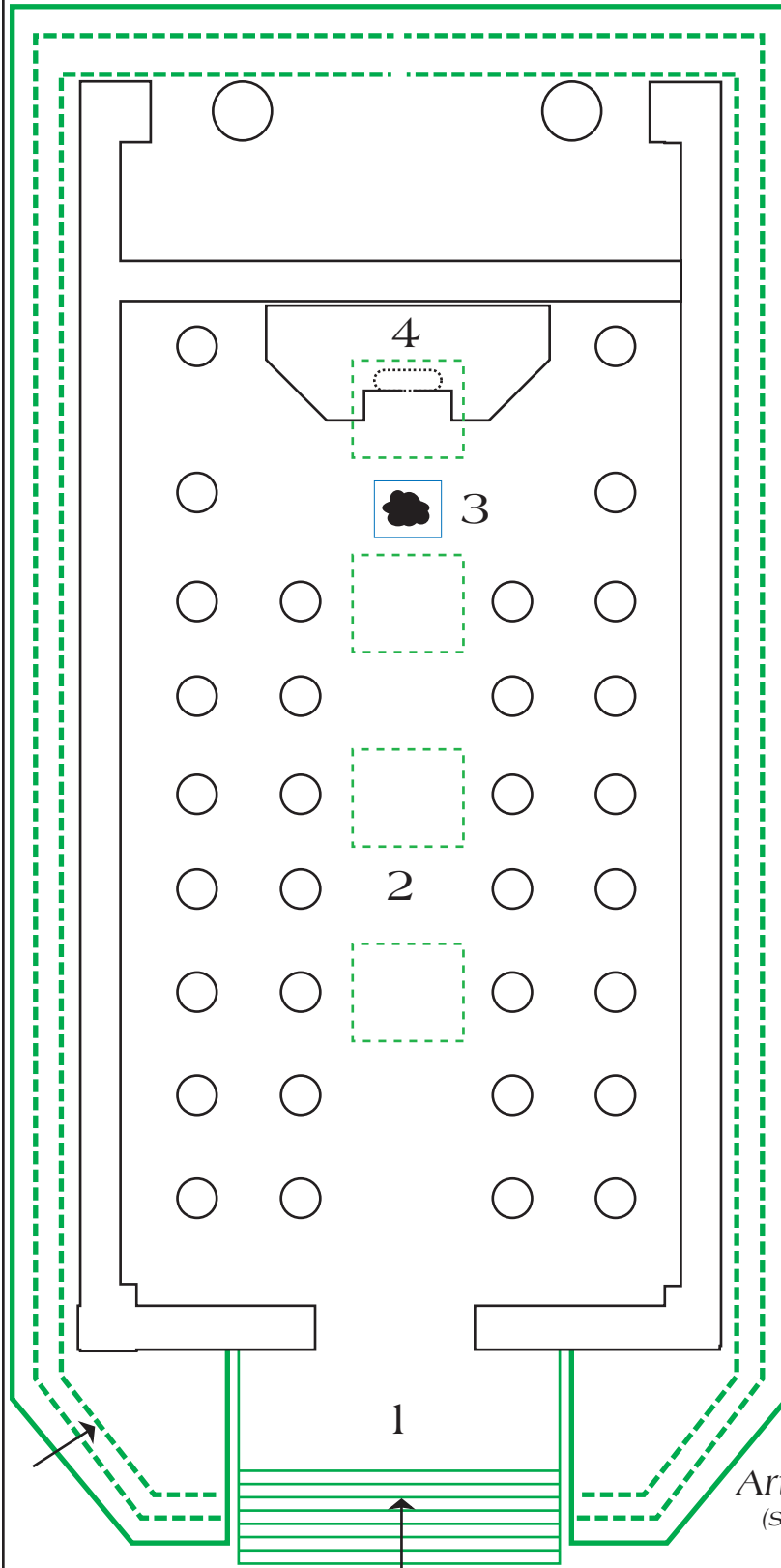
Fields



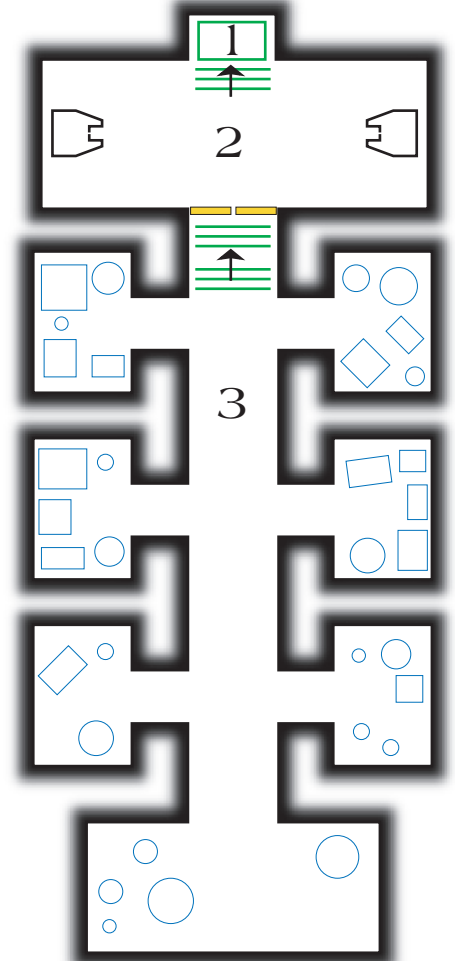
Exit to outside world



Exit to outside world

The Temple of Artemis



Lower-Level



- ceiling cut-out (Roof of Selene) 
- Statue Dais 
- arrows point toward highest elevation

INDIVIDUALS

QUEEN ANDROMACHE

16 STR	18 DEX	15 CON	15 BODY
13 INT	14 EGO	18 PRE	17 COM
7 PD	4 ED	4 SPD	6 REC
30 END	35 STUN		

Abilities: +3 with All Combat; +2 with Pankration; Martial Arts (Pankration); Combat Luck (6 PD/6 ED); Animal Handling (Canines) 13-; AK: Neos Themiscyra 12-; KS: Amazon History 11-; Oratory 13-; PS: Queen 13-; Riding 13-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 12-; Tactics 13-; Teamwork 13-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons; Fringe Benefit (Queen of Neos Themiscyra)

75+ Disadvantages: Enraged: when refused/denied, go 8-, recover 11-; Psychological Limitation: Amazon Superiority; Psychological Limitation: Believes Artemis Speaks To And Counsels Her; Psychological Limitation: Jealous And Vain; Social Limitation: Restraints Of Rulership

Notes: Andromache, the reigning queen of the Amazons, has been on the throne since her sister was exiled eighteen years before. Now in her mid-30s, she's the model of an Amazon queen: powerful and skilled in battle, a stirring orator, an experienced politician, and generally speaking a wise ruler. Her decisions are almost always conservative and traditional in leaning (a trait most Amazons appreciate); she opposes change reflexively, allowing it provisionally only in small ways and studying the effects it has before allowing it to become a permanent fixture. She has few friends and no real confidantes; she keeps her own counsel much of the time. She gets irritated when things don't go the way she envisions or desires and has been known to smash vases and hurl objects at servants when in that state.

Andromache, a striking beauty, exercises regularly to keep her figure remains attractive and to maintain her martial skills. She's the city's best practitioner of Pankration and is equally skilled with all weapons known to the Amazons. She takes great care to always appear her best, wearing only the finest garments. She owns the most ornate set of armor worn by an Amazon queen in centuries (though it's quite functional despite its inlay and decoration). She has yet to produce an heir (although she does not suffer for lack of male companionship) and her subjects have begun to sacrifice to Artemis to help her continue Evandre's line.

Andromache believes Artemis speaks to her when she's alone in her rooms, offering her counsel and advice on problems she faces — advice she always takes. That advice led her to spy on her older sister and then report her “unnatural behavior” to the priestesses and arrange her sister's exile (and that of her sister's unborn heir) to avoid spilling the blood of the royal family. This left her the sole candidate for the throne. She's killed many of her lovers taken from the slave class (she hunts them with her pack of hounds outside the city) and arranged the death of some of her Trojan ones lest they reveal her secret conversations with Artemis.

OKYALE

13 STR	18 DEX	15 CON	13 BODY
12 INT	13 EGO	15 PRE	16 COM
6 PD	4 ED	4 SPD	7 REC
30 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: +2 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups; +5 OCV with Bow; +1 HTH; Martial Arts (Wrestling); Running +4”; Swimming+1”; Luck 2d6; AK: Neos Themiscyra 14-; PS: Hunter 13-; Riding 13-; Shadowing 13-; Stealth 13-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 13-; Tactics 11-; Teamwork 13-; Tracking 13-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted (Watched by Priestesses of Artemis); Psychological Limitation: Secretly Longs To Find A Man Who Is Her Equal; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Okyale, whose name means “swift as the wind” is the considered the best archer in Neos Themiscyra despite her youth. She hasn't lost a match since she joined the army. A skilled wrestler and huntress and winner of many footraces, she spends most of her time prowling the outer reaches of Neos Themiscyra, hunting and watching for interlopers.

Unlike most of her sisters, she lacks the fierce belief in Amazonian superiority; she uses her long hunting and scouting trips to help hide that fact. Although she would die before admitting it, she secretly longs for the sort of relationship the legends say the Amazon Antiope shared with the Greek hero Theseus: a marriage of equals. She's not aware of it, but the Priestesses of Artemis are watching her as a possible candidate for elevation to the priesthood as a possible Huntress when the current priestess steps down. She's the first Amazon many groups of PCs are likely to encounter, although they may not know it as she shadows them and observes their strengths and weaknesses before returning to report them to her superiors.

When encountered, Okyale will probably be wearing only her hunting costume of short tunic, ankle-laced sandals, bracers, a bow and arrows, a knife, 6) and a small bundle of supplies. She possesses the standard arms and armor of an Amazon warrior if encountered during time of war.

AVERAGE AMAZON

13 STR	14 DEX	14 CON	12 BODY
10 INT	10 EGO	13 PRE	10 COM
5 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
28 END	26 STUN		

Abilities: +1 with Bow, Axe and Spear; AK: Neos Themiscyra 11-; Navigation (Land) 8-; Riding 12-; Survival (Temperate/Subtropical, Tropical) 11-; Tactics 11-; Teamwork 12-; TF: Zebra; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Common Missile Weapons

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Amazon Superiority; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: This character brief represents the typical Amazon warrior. More experienced warriors like unit commanders have slightly higher Characteristics, additional Skills, and another Combat Skill Level or two. See above regarding weapons carried.

PLOT SEEDS

Queen Andromache hears rumors from a subser-vient native tribe of a blonde woman who lives in the jungle and wields the spear and bow with unmatched skill. Fearing that this is the daughter of her banished sister, she sends a group of Amazons to capture Cimba Janakadi (see *Masterminds And Madmen*, pages 112-13) and return her to Neos Themiscyra to determine the truth. While in central Africa, the characters are approached by a contact or group of natives who tells them that Cimba Janakadi has been kidnapped by “women with metal heads.” Since Cimba has protected the jungle near their homes, they want someone to find out what’s happened to her and rescue her.

A noted archaeologist, a friend of one of the characters, approaches him with information acquired from his recent excavation at Troy. He’s found hints that a group of Trojans fled the sack of the city and journeyed south. If the characters will assist him, he plans to follow his clues, locate the lost Trojans’ last resting place, and astound the world of archaeology!

One of the characters (or a Follower or favored NPC) is fiddling around with the group’s long-range short-wave radio when he picks up an odd transmission. The voice sounds familiar, so he brings it to the attention of the remaining characters, one of whom recognizes the voice of the Nazi Agent Valkyrie (see *Hero Plus Adventure 14: Four Fiends*). Locking in on the frequency, the characters determine that she’s conversing in Ancient Greek with someone code-named Andromache, answering to the codename “Artemis” and using code phrases like “the gods are pleased” and “the thunderbolts are being prepared.” With considerable effort, the characters can triangulate and locate the responding unit somewhere in central Africa. What kinds of weapons are dubbed as “thunderbolts”? Who is she talking to in central Africa, and how did the Nazis get a radio transmitter into the Queen’s bedchamber? What do the Nazis want with the Amazons anyway?

THE PHAROAH CLUB



Located in the heart of Hudson City's Highlands District just a short distance south of City Hall on the eastern side of Northampton Street between 5th and 6th Avenues is an exclusive nightclub like no other in the Pearl City. The wealthy and powerful come night after night to dine, dance, and do business in an environment where they're treated like the god-kings who once ruled the long-ago sands of Egypt.

HISTORY

When it was originally built in 1919 by Marion Carpenter and Justin Boatman, a pair of New York businessmen with extensive interests in the entertainment industry looking to invest outside the Big Apple, the Pharaoh Club was a more traditional nightclub called the Iridium Club. The project showed signs of success until the Volstead Act dealt the owners a crippling blow less than four months after opening. Forced to abandon the enterprise to concentrate on their other businesses in New York, the two men closed the Iridium Club's doors and advertised the property for sale.

Less than six months later, the Iridium Club reopened as a private club for members and their guests under the management of Antonio Valderama, a lieutenant to Juliano Marcelli, the head of the Marcelli Mafia family. With access controlled by memberships (which were sold only to the upper-crust of society and business), payoffs to the right people in the HCPD to ignore the liquor, and Marcelli soldiers to make certain that no one got any funny ideas, the Iridium Club quickly became known as one of the "in" places to be among the glitterati of the Roaring Twenties in Hudson City. Everybody who was anybody came there to dine, socialize, dance, and play high-stakes card games with the men and women who really ran the Pearl City. For just over a decade, the Iridium Club, Valderama, and the Marcelli Family rode a wave of popularity and success — until the summer of 1931, when one man took it away from them.

Surprisingly, it wasn't a figure like the Raven or the Scarlet Shadow who managed the feat. Since Valderama had banned any activity more illegal than the sale of alcohol or private card games between patrons on the premises and had Marcelli muscle to make the ban stick, the club had long been considered a more-or-less harmless facet of the Marcelli's enterprises, and had been left alone by those who warred against the mobs from the shadows. It wasn't Sam Spivey or any of his fellow G-Men either; they tended to regard the effort

required to shut the club down in the face of the politically-backed opposition to any investigation of Valderama or the club's activities as not being worth the gain. It was a man with no vigilante agenda or axe to grind with the Marcelli family or anyone else, and he did it without guns, knives, or even dynamite — just four aces.

Vincent "Soldier" Slade had been many things since the end of the Great War. As he sat at the private gaming table upstairs in the Iridium Club and watched the reactions of the wealthy men around him as they looked from his hand of cards to Antonio Valderama's, and back to his, it dawned on him that "respectable" had not been one of them. Four aces and a king had just changed that, because his opponent — unwilling to lose in front of his powerful friends and certain that his full house of queens and kings was the winning hand — had offered up ownership of the Iridium Club to cover the last raise of the game. As the businessmen and politicians who'd crowded around the table to see the conclusion of a game like none they'd witnessed before began to congratulate Vincent and console Antonio, the new owner of the Iridium Club realized that with the simple flip of a few cards, he was now one of the men around him: respectable... and wealthy.

It wasn't quite that easy, of course. The Marcellis wanted the club back but couldn't just kill Slade — not only had Valderama lost it fair and square, but the rich and powerful of Hudson City were watching. Slade refused their offers to buy it back. Their attempt to win it back in a rigged card game failed because someone — Slade doesn't know who, although he suspects the Raven — knocked out the man who was using a peephole and a small telescope to see Slade's cards. Whoever did it fed false information to Valderama until the playing field was level again. Next came other "offers" to sell that were made by specialists, men who didn't want to take "no" for an answer and were quick to point out how Slade's lovely young wife Zühal could get into trouble in a place like Hudson City if she wasn't careful. Slade knew how to respond to that kind of offer as well. After a few demonstrations of the skills that earned him his nickname, the Marcellis decided to back off.

His ownership of the club secure, Slade took a month to observe how things worked before he made some changes. While the club itself did the same excellent business it always had, it just didn't feel... right. It wasn't *his* club, not in its current incarnation. He'd spent too much time in the Near East in the

years after the Great War; it was in his blood now. Since he couldn't take the club and his new life back there, he reversed the idea and bring the Near East to the Big Apple instead. With a little research, some of his newly-acquired money, and the help of a local architect who was fascinated by the idea, Slade closed the Iridium Club for three months, reopening it in December 1931 as Hudson City's most exclusive and exotic nightspot: the Pharaoh Club.

DESCRIPTION

Its choice position along Northampton Street between 5th and 6th Avenues places the Pharaoh Club only seven blocks from City Hall and eight from the start of Embassy Row — both locations from which it draws a good deal of business. Just two blocks north are two of the other three most exclusive clubs in the city: the City Club, atop the Flag National Bank Building; and the famous Carthage Club, both on 4th Avenue. (The third, the Elite Club, is further north and east, on Steele Street above Dunlop Avenue.) The four clubs are sometimes referred to as the “Four Pillars of Society” in news stories and society columns because of their restrictions (monetary, social, or merely apocryphal) on membership as well as their relative nearness to one another. (That's actually an exaggeration; the Carthage Club in particular has more than a few members who are not counted among the wealthy and powerful, and all four allow members to bring guests without inquiring as to the guest's social status. Perception is, however, everything.)

A rectangular structure 15” (100 feet) long, 12” (80 feet) wide, and five stories (10”) high, the Club is situated toward the southern end of the block with only one other building between it and the corner. The Club's exterior façade is finished in white marble cut to resemble the facing stones used on the outside of Egyptian pyramids. There are no exterior windows on the building, a structural feature Slade decided to retain from the Iridium Club to help to make the structure more distinctive. The recessed entrance is located in the center of the façade, with a single Egyptian-style column set to either side in niches; the columns are decorated top and bottom with a traditional design of brightly colored thin triangles that swap ends. There's enough space for a person who's not too bulky to fit into one of the niches and seek shelter from the elements — or flying bullets. Several broad, shallow steps arc down to the street from the landing just outside the plain doors. There are bands of Egyptian hieroglyphics carved into the stone of the door frame; they copy the words of a spell taken from an rare ancient Egyptian text intended to protect the building from harm by disasters of natural and supernatural nature (GMs must decide for themselves how effective it may or may not be).

The alley in back, where all deliveries are made, is accessed only from the southern end of the block and ends one building past the Club in a small cul-de-sac. Employees all enter through the alley, either taking

cabs or walking from the nearest subway or elevated station to work. Employees normally leave in groups of three to six after work, sticking together to reduce the possibility they'll be the victims of street crime. If one of the employees has problems with someone bothering him after work (an abusive boyfriend, a customer who didn't know what “no” meant, and so on) and word reaches Slade, he'll try to make sure that one of the al-Rahman brothers is conveniently and coincidentally leaving at the same time... and going in the same direction.

The building's roof is notable for the rooftop garden that Slade's wife installed so she can sometimes go outside (she usually remains in the building as protection from Marcelli thugs). The roof also has a nonstandard rooftop water tank: it's cylindrical and lies on its side in a small cradle covered by a reinforced shed, instead of being the more traditional “barrel on stilts” model seen in other places. Slade had it installed after the Marcellis started shooting holes in the old one to force him to keep replacing it. Access from inside is through a set of stairs on the north side or the fire escape in the back. More athletic individuals could easily climb up from the roof top to the north or step over from the one to the south. Once a month, usually on the first Monday, the building's façade is cleaned and polished by a group of men who drop down from the roof on ropes with wooden seats at the end.

The Club is bordered on the south by the Hawling Building, a five-story office building currently leased by one of the city's most successful law firms, Thomas, Waters & Keith. (It handle all of the Pharaoh Club's legal affairs.) All three named partners are Club members and often entertain important clients there; the oldest of the three, 63-year-old Nathan Waters, dines there almost every evening since his wife died a year ago. To the north, the Club is bordered by a four-story building housing the Hudson City branch of Fellows Investments, a successful New York City investment brokerage firm looking to establish a presence locally. The local manager, Clarence Fellows, the youngest son of the firm's founder, is not a member, but is considering joining to build up contacts in the local community if he can convince his father the expense of a membership is justified.

INFRASTRUCTURE

All of the Club's utility services are in excellent condition, having been replaced or upgraded during the remodeling a few years ago. Surprisingly (more jaded observers would say “suspiciously”) regular visits from city inspectors since then have ensured that Slade makes certain there's nothing for them to find and cite him for. It's a common occurrence to see a workman checking the plumbing, testing the furnace, or working on the gas and electrical lines during the day while the Club is closed. After a sabotage attempt which led to a hefty fine, all of the staff knows to call one of the al-Rahmans imme-

OTHER CITIES, OTHER CLUBS

You can transplant the Pharaoh Club “as is” into most major cities in America without revisions, if necessary. Transplanting it to other countries or using the floorplans and staff for another club is equally easy — you just have to change the “theme” of the club, a few names, and some cosmetic details to produce a different experience. Some examples might be:

The Chicago Look:

Change the décor to reflect a Hollywood-style “Chicago-esque” theme by adding simulated bullet holes in the brick walls and sturdy furniture, dressing the male staff in pinstripe suits and the women in “gun moll” outfits, and changing the menu to lean toward Italian cuisine to create an exclusive and popular gangster-themed club in Hong Kong or Shanghai. To keep things lively, have the owner be an actual American mobster who left the country because things got too hot and is now raking in so much dough with the club he's thinking of not going back (which means his enemies would have to go to him). You can also add an expatriate American singer whom a pair of local gangsters have both set their sights on.

Castle Club: Revise the descriptions to reflect a medieval theme (actual weapons and shields on the walls are a must for fight scenes), add some tapestries to brighten up the faux-stone walls, dress the staff in appropriate medieval garb, and alter the menu to include a few dishes of

Continued from last page

the sort that European royalty dined on, and you've got an exclusive club in the heart of virtually any major European city. Add a nobleman with a slightly shady background and an eye for the ladies (married or not) as the owner, a singer with a husky German accent who may or may not be a Mata Hari-style spy, and you're set.

Rajah's: To simulate a club based on a British-occupied India theme, decorate the walls with hunting trophies and exotic prints (maybe even a live tiger or two pacing behind a hopefully sturdy glass wall above the bar), make the furniture wicker and rattan, have the staff dress in Indian costume (be sure to have a few burly, bearded Sikhs as bouncers and one as the doorman) and serve up a menu with some Indian cuisine choices. Make the club's owner a retired British colonel who served in India as part of "the Foreign Service" (but not nearly as heroically as he'd like people to believe), and add a lovely Indian girl who sings like a dream and has a few cobra-worshipping cultists on her tail because she fled the cult, and you're good to go.

diately if they see a workman walking around who's not accompanied by one of the Club's security staff.

There are bathrooms on both levels of the club proper for patrons, as well as another set upstairs on the third floor for persons using one of the private gaming rooms or the two reception rooms set aside for private parties. Club employees have access to a pair of bathrooms in the basement under the kitchens and another pair on the fourth floor near their changing rooms; the set on the fourth floor also has facilities for employees to shower if needed. (The al-Rahmans use this set.) The fifth floor has another full bath set aside as part of Slade's suite there.

All of the exterior doors are reinforced with metal inserts (DEF 9, BODY 8), have very high quality locks (-7 to Lockpicking) and have bars that the al-Rahmans drop into place after closing time to make it harder to force the doors (increase doors to DEF 9, BODY 11). All of the doors leading to residential areas are also reinforced (DEF 5, BODY 5) and have quality locks (-4 to Lockpicking rolls). The windows on the back of the building all have bars that unlatch from the inside (-3 to Security Systems rolls) and have good locks (-2 to Lockpicking rolls).

BUILDING LAYOUT

All of the interior walls have been redone to resemble those of an Egyptian temple, with colorful patterns along the floorboards and ceilings, and sandstone tan wallpaper that has blocks of hieroglyphics painted on it to imitate the murals and interiors visitors would have seen in temples and tombs during Egypt's heyday. Slade hired an expert (perhaps a PC?) to select all the hieroglyphics. The ones on the first floor include prayers for protection, songs to praise the gods, and the like. The hieroglyphics on the balcony level are of a more adult nature, including some spicy love poetry. The ceilings under the balcony level are painted to resemble the interior ceilings of temples, but the second floor ceiling has been painted to resemble the night sky over Cairo, complete with small twinkling lights set in the correct patterns to duplicate the stars visible in the summer sky, and a few wispy clouds drifting across the full moon.

The female staff dresses in figure-accentuating, sleeveless dresses cut in a pseudo-Egyptian style and made from a gold-bronze gauzy fabric that isn't really as transparent as it looks. Their outfits are accentuated with gold headbands, armbands and necklaces, some set with turquoise and/or coral (none of it's real, although they're excellent copies), and cross-laced sandals on the feet. For female staff without naturally dark hair, high-quality wigs are available. The featured singer wears more elaborate versions of the same basic outfit that show more décolletage, and are accessorized with shoulder-width Egyptian-style collars and hats with sweeping wings that come down on either side

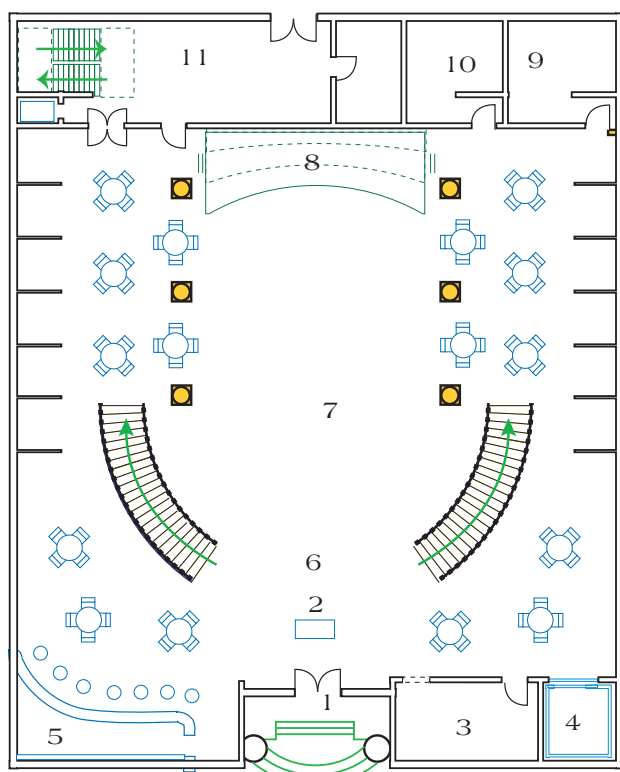
of her face. The male staff (except for Alphonse St. Fontaine, who wears a tuxedo) all dress in round collared jackets made from dark burgundy brocade, loose white pants, and short boots. They're accessorized with a gold sash and a tassel-topped fez in the same color as the jacket; the al-Rahmans thrust wickedly-curved knives in decorated metal scabbards through their sashes. (Most people assume the knives are fake; they're not.)

FIRST FLOOR

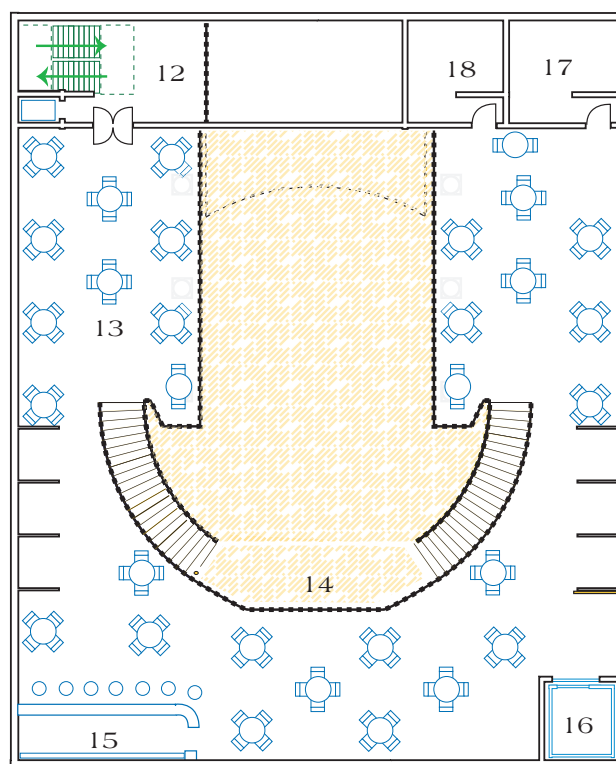
- 1) **Entrance:** In inclement weather, it's common to see cars waiting at the curb until the recessed doorway clears before the next batch of patrons decamps and makes a dash for the door.
- 2) **Maitre d' Stand:** This is a stone stand with an ancient Egyptian welcome to guests written on the front of it in hieroglyphics. Alphonse St. Fontaine, the maitre'd, is a holdover from the Iridium Club, where he held the same position for a decade. A true professional, he remained when many of the old staff left, stating that his loyalties were to the club and its patrons, not Valderama. He's secretly glad to have the mobsters gone, and finds the changes in the club — particularly the marvelously uncouth al-Rahman brothers, whom he never passes up an opportunity to needle in a friendly way — to be all for the best.
- 3) **Coat And Hat Check:** The coat and hat check is always staffed by a pair of smiling girls who never seem to need to look at a ticket to know who goes with what item of clothing, and who spend a good deal of time watching the elegant Alphonse and sighing when they think he's not looking.
- 4) **Elevator:** A young man dressed in the same garb as the other male staff mans the elevator. A key is required to go to the 4th floor, and a different key is required to go to the 5th. The elevator operator has neither — one of the al-Rahman brothers or Slade has to ride along if someone's going to one of them.
- 5) **Bar:** A pair of bartenders in the standard male costume tend bar and make conversation with the customers.
- 6) **Stairs:** These elegant, unsupported double stairs provide access to the balcony level. There are booths under them and tables set in an arc to either side.
- 7) **Dance Floor:** The club's dance floor has a two-story ceiling (the "balcony level" on the second floor rings it). With the lights turned down, it's easy to imagine that one's dancing under the open sky in a temple in ancient Egypt. The columns lining the sides of the dance floor to support the balcony level are painted identically to the ones outside the door.
- 8) **Stage:** A standard nightclub performing stage. The band lines up in two rows; the back row is raised on a platform higher than the front, and both rows have a scalloped "shield" decorated with Egyptian iris patterns running along their fronts that covers the seated musicians to the waist. The featured singer performs out front.
- 9) **Ladies Room**

The Pharaoh Club

5 m 10 m 15 m



First Floor



Second Floor



10) Men's Room

11) Kitchens: The kitchens bustle with activity the entire time the club is open, as the two chefs, Bernard Montenegro and Mohareb Bahrin, argue with each other and prepare meals. Montenegro cooks in the French style and Bahrin in a Near Eastern one, leading to some unexpectedly excellent dishes and a lively kitchen. There's a large walk-in cooler to the north, and the doors to the alleyway are in the west wall. Stairs up to the second floor and down to the basement are in the southwest corner; the kitchen staff's bathroom is at the bottom of the stairs in the basement next to the locked door of the wine cellar. A dumbwaiter for sending food to the balcony level is next to the stairs. The ceilings are high in the kitchen, reaching up to the second floor to help dissipate heat.

SECOND FLOOR

12) Staff Stairs And Landing: The stairs and dumbwaiter from the kitchen continue here.

13) Balcony: The balcony level contains more tables and booths and is especially popular with older customers who aren't interested in dancing. Businessmen making deals over dinner and individuals wanting a romantic dinner frequent this level to take advantage of the lower noise level and greater privacy.

14) Stairs To Main Floor

15) Balcony Bar: Similar to the bar on the lower floor, but with only one bartender and a slightly smaller selection of liquor. Drinks that can't be made here are brought up from the main bar.

16) Elevator

17) Ladies Room

18) Men's Room

THIRD FLOOR

19) Staff Stairs And Landing: The stairs and dumbwaiter from the kitchen continue here.

20) Catering Kitchen: This is a smaller kitchen set up to provide support for parties and receptions on this floor, and to serve sandwiches and other finger food to the private rooms.

21) Men's Room

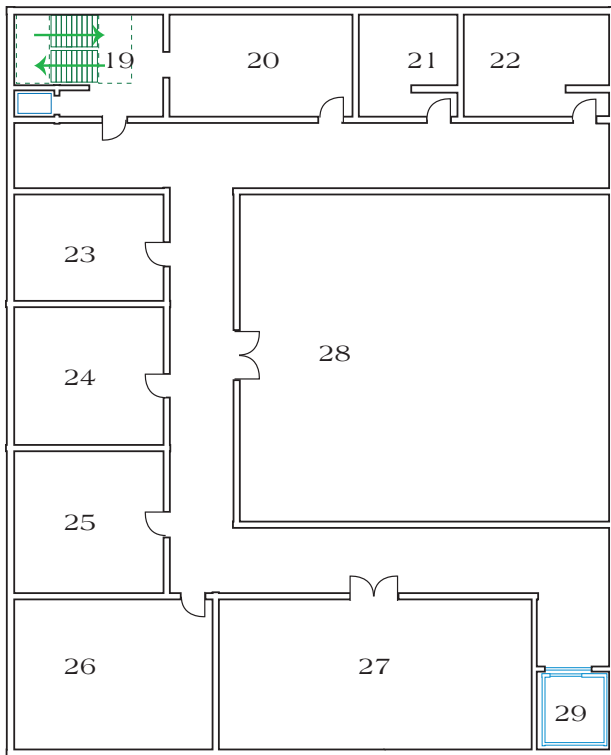
22) Ladies Room

23-26) Private Rooms: These rooms are primarily used for events like the poker game in which Slade won the club. Each has a small self-serve bar, a sideboard, and a couch in addition to a central table and chairs. They all have small brass plates naming them for ease in serving and making reservations: 23 is the Cairo Room; 24 is the Giza Room; 25, is the Alexandria Room; and 26 is the Heliopolis Room.

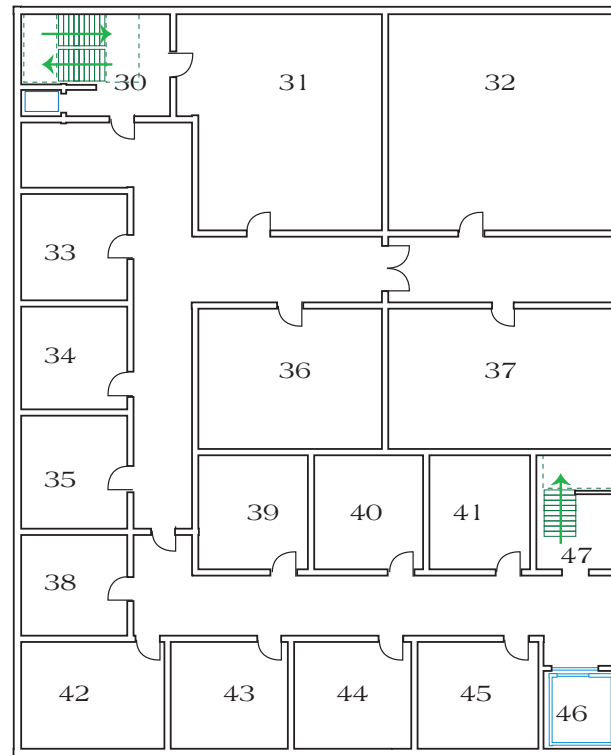
27) Small Reception Room: This large room has an open floor plan; it's configured according to a customer's needs and is named the Thebes Room.

The Pharaoh Club

5 m 10 m 15 m



Third Floor



Fourth Floor



28) Large Reception Room: The largest of the private rooms, known as the Memphis Room, is also left empty normally and configured according to a customer's needs. There's a semi-permanent stage in the center of the north wall for announcements, speeches, and small-scale performances (such as a jazz trio).

29) Elevator

FOURTH FLOOR

30) Staff Stairs And Landing: The stairs and dumbwaiter from the kitchen continue here; the stairs stop on this floor, but the dumbwaiter continues to the 5th floor.

31) Male Staff Bathroom And Showers: This room is set up so that several of the male staff can shower simultaneously before or after a shift. There are lockers for possessions and racks of outfits for staff to change into. There's a metal plate sandwiched in the wall between here and the female showers to prevent the staff from making peepholes.

32) Female Staff Bathroom And Showers: This room is set up so that several of the female staff can shower simultaneously before or after a shift. There are lockers for possessions and racks of outfits for staff to change into. The door in the hall locks and only female employees are given keys; because of this, the female staff tends to treat this room and room 37 as one large dressing area, constantly moving back and forth between the two in various states of undress.

33) Featured Singer's Dressing Room

34) Band Leader's Dressing Room

35) Storage

36) Male Staff Dressing Room: The main changing room for male staff who don't need to clean up before going home or starting their shift. The walls are lined with lockers and racks of clothing to change into. There's a metal plate sandwiched in the wall between here and the female changing rooms to prevent the staff from making peepholes.

37) Female Staff Dressing Room: The main changing room for female staff who don't need to clean up before going home or starting their shift. The walls are lined with lockers and racks of clothing to change into. See Room 32 above for more.

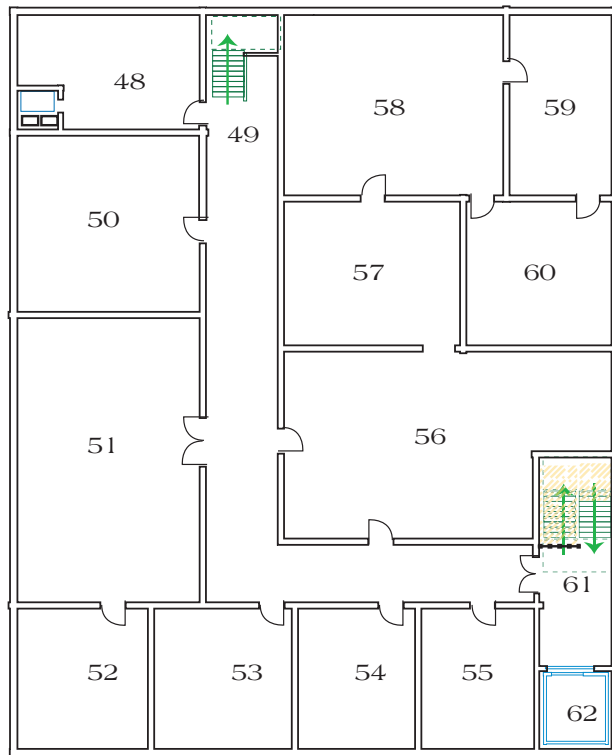
38) Storage

39-45) The al-Rahmans' Rooms: This section of the 4th floor is reserved for the six al-Rahman brothers, who live here. The door to the rest of the 4th floor is always locked, and the elevator requires a key to come to this level. Room 39 is Ahmed's; Room 40 is Abdullah's; Room 41 is Kemal's; Room 43 is Hassan's; Room 44 is Musa's, and Room 45 is Mehmed's. Room 42 is the brothers' parlor, where they entertain visitors and relax.

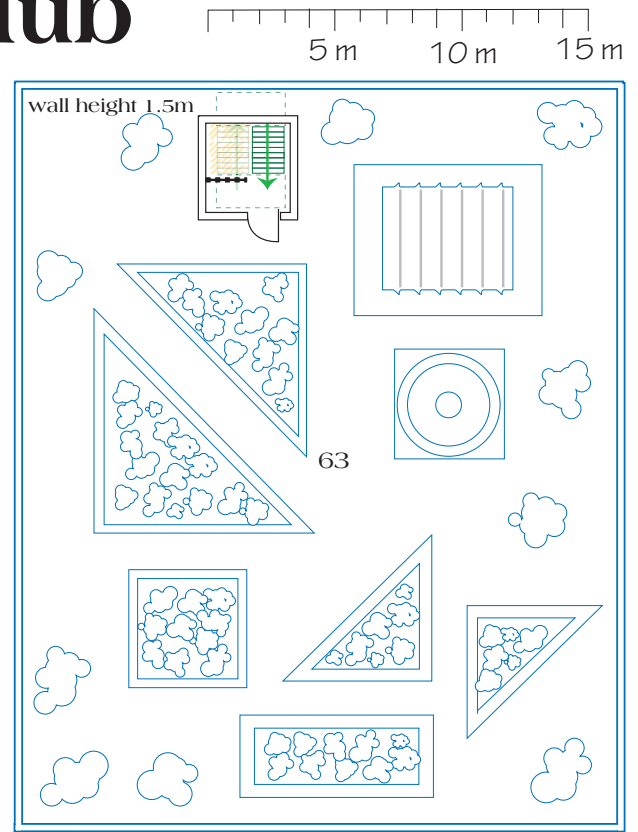
46) Elevator

47) Private Stairs To 5th Floor

The Pharaoh Club



Fifth Floor



Roof



FIFTH FLOOR AND ROOF

48) Master Suite Kitchen: This kitchen is large enough that Zühal can prepare meals for herself, Slade, and a reasonable number of guests. It also has dumbwaiter access to the main kitchens so that bottles of wine and meals (should she choose not to cook) can be sent up.

49) Stairs To Roof: Since they're exterior access, these doors are locked and barred as described above. They also have an alarm set up to sound if they're opened; it's switched on and off by a simple toggle on the wall next to the doors (-2 to Security Systems rolls to bypass or disable).

50) Master Suite Dining Room: This room has a massive rectangular table that seats 12 in the center of the room, with a pair of sideboards on the north wall, and a large china cabinet against the south wall.

51) Master Suite Library: Zühal is a voracious reader and revels in the ability to read books she once only knew of by reputation. The collection is large, varied, and rotates frequently as she buys new volumes and gives old ones to friends, club staff, and charity sales. Slade reads less often, but always enjoys the books he lets Zühal "bully" him into reading.

52) Storage: This room is primarily used to store books that haven't made it to the shelves or are being boxed up as donations, paintings Zühal plans to hang in their home once they can have one outside the Club, presents awaiting shipment to Zühal's

friends and relatives in Egypt, and so on.

53) Master Suite Music Room: This room contains a piano against the north wall (arranged so someone playing it's facing the door), a pair of chairs and a comfortable couch set up in the southwest corner, and a cabinet for storing music. Neither Slade nor Zühal play the piano, so this room is essentially untouched from Valderama's days as owner.

54) Club Office: This room has a secretary's desk facing the door, several comfortable chairs and a table for use by people with appointments, a pair of file cabinets, and a door to Slade's Private Office. Zühal currently acts as Slade's secretary, glad that she can contribute to the running of the club and make his life easier. She's decorated the room with small artifacts and pictures of Egypt.

55) Slade's Private Office: Slade manages the club from behind a heavy wooden desk left over from Valderama's days as owner; it was too large to fit through the door, so Slade left it here. Slade isn't aware that Valderama also left incriminating documents that would be damaging to both Valderama and the Marcellis in a secret compartment (-8 to Concealment rolls to find) in the desk. There are always fresh flowers in the room (arranged by Zühal), and Slade has replaced the rest of the furniture with pieces that have a more Near Eastern feel.

56) Master Suite Living Area: This large room has been set up like a comfortable den in a wealthy Near Eastern home — there are a pair of low divans

and scattered sets of cushions set around the room instead of chairs, thick hand-woven carpets from Persia on the floor, tables set at the right height for the lowered seating, and a brass *kanaka* for brewing coffee to be served in small glasses in the Near Eastern fashion. There's a pair of intricately carved cabinets against the north wall, one contains a radio and the other a phonograph. Zühal is looking forward to making more friends so there will be people coming up to visit often.

57) Master Suite Sitting Room: A smaller, more intimate version of Room 56; it's just for Slade and Zühal's use.

58) Master Suite Bedroom: Decorated in an Egyptian style, with a large, low bed complete with hanging curtains and many pillows, this room might have been taken straight from a sheik's palace (it was, in fact — a friendly sheik gave the room to Slade as a wedding gift).

59) Master Suite Bath: Slade extensively remodeled this room so it would resemble a lavish bath of the sort Zühal was used to. It sports a raised pool large enough for several people and other such amenities.

60) Walk-In Closet/Storage: Most of the space is used for Slade and Zühal's clothing (mostly Zühal's), but there's a set of locked trunks in a back corner containing the tools of Slade's former trade in case he needs them again.

61) Private Stairs To 4th Floor

62) Elevator

63) Roof: Zühal's rooftop garden sprawls across the whole of the roof, brightening it and giving visitors the feeling they've stepped into another part of the world (as long as they don't look too closely at the surrounding skyline). It's shielded from winds and weather by a 1" (5 foot) raised lip that runs around the edges of the roof. Zühal has installed large planters, small potted palms (her brothers and some of the staff move them into the water tank's shed during storms), and even a circular fountain. Despite the effort required to keep it clean (the local birds find it irresistible), Slade enjoys relaxing here with her so much that he'd scrub the roof himself if that was required to keep Zühal smiling.

INDIVIDUALS

VINCENT "SOLDIER" SLADE

15	STR	20	DEX	18	CON	15	BODY
14	INT	15	EGO	18	PRE	12	COM
8	PD	4	ED	4	SPD	8	REC
36	END	33	STUN				

Abilities: +2 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups; Luck 2d6; Martial Arts (Dirty Infighting); +3 with All Combat; Breakfall 13-; Bureaucratics 13-; Climbing 13-; Combat Driving 13-; Concealment 13-; Demolitions 13-; Gambling (Card Games) 13-; High Society 13-; KS: AK: Hudson City 12-; AK: The Near East 12-; CuK: Near Eastern Cultures 12-; KS: The Military/Mercenary World 12-; Persuasion 13-; Language: Arabic (idiomatic, native accent, literate); Language: French (fluent conversation, literate); Language: German (completely fluent, with accent, literate); Language: Persian (fluent conversation); Language: Turkish (fluent conversation); Paramedics 12-; PS: Club Owner 12-; PS: Soldier 12-; Stealth 13-; Survival (Desert) 12-; Tactics 12-; Tracking 12-; TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Riding Animals, Small Rowed Boats, Small Motorized Boats; WF: Artillery, Common Melee Weapons, General Purpose/Heavy Machine Guns, Small Arms; Contacts (3 points in Hudson City, 7 points in the Near East); Followers (the al-Rahman Brothers); Money: Wealthy; Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Marcelli Family; Psychological Limitation: Loves/Protective of Wife; Psychological Limitation: Disbelieves In The Supernatural

Notes: Looking at Vincent Slade now — a wealthy man who owns one of the most sophisticated nightspots on the East Coast — most people would never think he had to fight for almost everything he's ever had. A more observant person might see through his smooth façade, notice his controlled movements and occasional steely glance, and realize Slade can be an exceedingly dangerous man.

Slade grew up in Sister Bethany's Foundling Home in Hudson City, spending most of his unsupervised time roaming the dockyards and listening to the multitude of foreign tongues and accents. He gave in to his wanderlust, lied about his age, and joined the U.S. Army, shipping out with the first units of the American Expeditionary Force. The trenches and forests of France were harsh taskmasters, but Slade was an apt and willing pupil. He became a near-perfect soldier, cautious and daring as needed, adept at killing and outmaneuvering his opponents, and able to teach others the same skills. After the Armistice, he joined American troops sent to Russia to fight the Bolsheviks. Leaving the Army in 1921, he joined the French Foreign Legion and served against the Rif in Morocco. He mustered out from the Foreign Legion in 1924 and began working as a mercenary, developing a well-deserved reputation as a soldier who worked for his employ-

er's interests without unnecessary bloodshed. By the late Twenties he'd assembled a small group of former soldiers who sold their services as guards in dangerous places; they protected archaeological sites, relief expeditions, and the like.

Slade's travels through the Near East gave him a healthy respect for its peoples and cultures. A visit to the home of friends radically changed his life. Meeting the beautiful sister of the al-Rahman family, he felt something open inside his heart. Slade made no sign of his feelings, knowing his friends were fiercely protective of their sister, but he was determined to make her his wife. Expecting a difficult battle, he was surprised at how often she managed, in perfectly respectable ways, to meet and talk with him. By the time of his epic struggle with her brothers, he realized that she'd waged her own war to win him as her husband, and succeeded.

PLOT SEEDS

One of the characters with knowledge of the supernatural and a good reputation finds themselves approached by one of the al-Rahman brothers with a message from Zühal. She's heard that he has some experience with the supernatural and wants him to look into a series of "accidents" that have happened at the Club. The catch is, he can't let Slade know why he's nosing around. She feels the accidents are the result of someone placing a curse on the Club and its staff, but every time she mentions it to him, Slade won't even talk about it and refuses to let her have someone investigate the possibility. Will the character agree? If so, can he keep Slade from discovering what's going on? And just what is going on with all those accidents, anyway?

Slade's looking for someone to arrange a permanent truce with the Marcellis so he doesn't have to keep his wife a virtual prisoner in the Club all the time. He approaches the characters and asks them to see what they can do. If they pull it off, he'll make them lifetime members of the Club and see that they're introduced to all the right people (thus opening doors to possible investments, social contacts, and financial backing for projects). He'll even offer to use his network of contacts in the Near East to help them out on their next adventure there as a bonus. What will it take to convince the Marcelli Family to back off and let him be?

While Caroline Madison (see *Masterminds And Madmen*, pages 157-58) visits Hudson City to assist with the opening of a new Egyptian exhibit at the city's most prestigious museum, one of her associates talks her into visiting the Pharaoh Club. Caroline enjoys herself, but Nefret seizes on the Club as a home away from home due her appreciation of the accuracy and sincere passion involved in the decorations and furnishings. During Caroline's time in Hudson City, Nefret spends most of the time she can control their body enjoying herself at the club, taking a brief sabbatical from her schemes. Unfortunately, while she's relaxing in a corner of the balcony, she overhears enough of a conversation between two of the Marcelli's goons to understand that they're about to resume operations against the Club. Incensed that these thugs would dare to plot against her host, Nefret decides to punish them. Now the Marcellis face the powers of a priestess of ancient Egypt — now they will learn why they fear the night!

Slade is in his mid-thirties, with an athletic swimmer's build. He stands 5'10" tall and moves with leashed gracefulness. He returned to the States to find a less dangerous lifestyle, but anyone seriously threatening this man or his family may not live long enough to regret it.

ZÜHAL AL-RAHMAN SLADE

10 STR	15 DEX	15 CON	12 BODY
14 INT	14 EGO	15 PRE	16 COM
5 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	5 REC
30 END	25 STUN		

Abilities: +1 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups; +1 with Ranged Attacks; Conversation 12-; High Society 12-; AK: Hudson City 12-; AK: The Near East 12-; KS: Ancient Egypt 12-; KS: Near Eastern Layman's Arcane And Occult Lore 12-; Language: Arabic (Native); Language: Ancient Egyptian (fluent conversation); Language: Coptic (completely fluent, with accent, literate); Language: English (completely fluent, with accent, literate); Persuasion 12-; PS: Interior Designer 13-; Seduction 12-; Stealth 12-; Survival (Desert) 12-; TF: Riding Animals; WF: Small Arms

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Believes in the Supernatural; Psychological Limitation: Loves/Protective Of Husband And Family; Social Limitation: Minority; Social Limitation: Woman

Notes: Growing up with six overprotective older brothers is often difficult for a girl, particularly in Egypt during the Roaring Twenties. Fortunately her parents were very proud of her quick intelligence; Zühal received an education far superior to that of most Egyptian girls, even learning to read hieroglyphs from an archaeologist with whom her father worked.

When her parents died in an airplane crash, the 18 year-old took over running the family home. Several suitors showed interest in her, but Zühal found none of them interesting. Her brothers decided they would consider only a truly worthy man for their sister. She was too busy dealing with her grief and taking care of her brothers to consider this more than an annoyance... until her older brothers brought their American friend home for a meal.

Zühal fell deeply in love with Slade and felt he returned her feeling, although his behavior remained perfectly proper. Her campaign to win Slade's affections and her brothers' approval was complex and daring, finally succeeding after he beat each of them in single combat. Then it was just a matter of staunching the assorted wounds, sending for a physician to tend the few broken bones, and planning the wedding.

Zühal is a very pretty Egyptian woman in her mid-twenties, 5'3" tall with a slender build and sophisticated tastes both Western and Near Eastern. Her talents guide Slade's decisions on the décor and arrangements of the Pharaoh Club.

THE AL-RAHMAN BROTHERS

20	STR	15	DEX	18	CON	15	BODY
10	INT	12	EGO	15	PRE	10	COM
8	PD	4	ED	3	SPD	8	REC
36	END	34	STUN				

Abilities: HA +3d6; +1 with Sight Group PER Rolls; +2 HTH; +1 with Ranged Attacks; Breakfall 12-; AK: The Near East 12-; Language: Arabic (Native); Language: English (completely fluent, with accent, literate); Stealth 12-; Survival (Desert) 12-; Tactics 11-; TF: Riding Animals; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms;

75+ Disadvantages: Physical Limitation: Unfamiliar With American Culture; Psychological Limitation: Loyal To Slade; Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Family; Social Limitation: Minority

Notes: The six al-Rahman brothers — Ahmed, Abdullah, Kemal, Hasan, and the twins Mehmed and Musa — share a strong family resemblance: they're large Egyptian men (6'0" tall and averaging 250 pounds) with a variety of beards, mustaches, sideburns and scars. Ahmed is 35 years old, the twins are 27; the others range in age between these numbers. They're devoted to their little sister, which almost resulted in her becoming an old maid since none of her suitors before Slade were found worthy of aspiring to her hand. Even Slade, although already a friend of the oldest three, still had to fight each one in turn before they would consent to his courting their sister. Of course, now that he's their brother-in-law, Slade also has their unswerving allegiance (and they have his). They work at the club as security, escorts for employees or guests who are expecting trouble, and general "anti-muscle muscle." They formerly assisted their father as guards at archaeological sites and are quite capable of appropriate levels of violence.

JESSICA LAPIN

8	STR	12	DEX	14	CON	10	BODY
10	INT	14	EGO	15	PRE	18	COM
3	PD	3	ED	2	SPD	5	REC
28	END	21	STUN				

Abilities: +1 with Interaction Skills; Acting 12-; AK: Hudson City 12-; AK: New York City 11-; KS: Classical Music 11-; KS: Popular Music 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Dancing 12-; PS: Musical Arrangement 11-; PS: Singer 13-; PS: Singing 13-; Stealth 12-; Seduction 12-; Streetwise 12-; WF: Pistols; Perfect Pitch

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Believes In Her Musical Destiny; Psychological Limitation: Self-Centered; Rivalry (with other singers); Social Limitation: Trapped by Contract; Social Limitation: Woman

Notes: Jessica grew up in the riverside city of Memphis, Tennessee. Her whole family was musical, but Jessica was the star of the family show, singing in a pure sweet soprano that made folks stop and listen. A promotion took her family to New York City when she was 16. The transition to the booming metropolis gave Jessica a chance to find new teachers and learn new types of music. She became

determined to "be somebody" — a singer whose name would be in the papers and up in lights. After high school Jessica began taking singing jobs to pay for her continued training.

Jessica found a number of jobs, including some work in chorus lines and off-Broadway productions. She was extremely pretty, could dance and had a marvelous voice. She grew discouraged after a year without being "discovered," not realizing that her ability to support herself in the heart of the Depression was quite an accomplishment. Jessica did get a break, though, even if it wasn't a single leap to the heights of stardom. She had a singing role in a small production that ran three weeks; Vincent Slade, a nightclub owner from Hudson City saw her and offered her a contract at his club there. After checking his *bona fides*, she took the job and moved to Hudson City.

That was three years ago. Jessica was thrilled with her new position at first. She learned a great deal about fitting her performance to the audience, varying her song selection and working with other musicians. After the first year, she was very pleased to become the club's headliner. Lately, though, she's become increasingly dissatisfied with her position at the Pharaoh Club. Jessica has only been back to visit her family twice and, though she'd never admit it, is often lonely. She feels her contract is holding her back; she has been approached by three agents so far and believes that her next career step involves leaving the club. She wants to break her contract, but finds Slade intimidating and is afraid to approach him. What she really needs is a big strong man to break the news to her employer...

ANTONIO VALDERAMA

13	STR	10	DEX	10	CON	13	BODY
12	INT	13	EGO	15	PRE	10	COM
6	PD	2	ED	2	SPD	6	REC
20	END	25	STUN				

Abilities: Bribery 12-; Bureaucratics 12-; Conversation 12-; Gambling (Card Games) 11-; High Society 12-; PS: Club Manager 11-; Streetwise 12-; WF: Small Arms; Made Man

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Watched by the HCPD; Hunted: Watched by the Marcelli Family; Psychological Limitation: Compulsive Gambler; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Five years ago, Valderama was a made man, lieutenant to Juliano Marcelli, and manager of Hudson City's most popular private club, the Iridium. He was a big man, friends with some of the biggest names in Hudson City. They came into his club, drank his booze, ate his food, and danced to his orchestra. He was important, a real somebody.

Now, thanks to one lousy hand of cards and a two bit doughboy, he's lost all that. Oh, he tried to get it back, had the perfect scam, too, but that punk the Raven put an end to that. Polite offers didn't work. Threats didn't work. Sabotage didn't work. But he's not through. There has to be some way to get his club back. And Valderama will try anything. He's tired of being just another Marcelli soldier.

SCHLOSS EISENWOLF



High on a mountainside overlooking the Danube between Nuremberg and Munich sits Schloss Eisenwolf, the family seat of the *Gräfs* Eisenwolf since the twelfth century. A forbidding edifice with a long history of blood, death, and treachery, the castle is also purportedly home to both a legendary artifact and a restless spirit who guards it even in death.

HISTORY

The original Gräf Eisenwolf, Konrad, was ennobled in 1150 after saving the life of Otto IV, Count Palatine, during a hunting mishap in Bavaria. Along with the title came the limited right to tax river traffic on the Danube, a much-coveted privilege. Within only a few years, Konrad had parlayed this right into a tidy fortune and used the funds to begin construction on Schloss Eisenwolf prior to his death in 1163. Construction continued during the life of his son, Otto, but it was his grandson, Klaus, who completed the construction of the castle.

In 1271, while on crusade to the Holy Land, the Gräf Maximilian formed an alliance with a French knight, Reynard de Braci, and contracted marriage with the Chevalier's young daughter, Mellisande. Upon his return to Bavaria in 1274, he brought with him his fifteen-year-old bride and a relic that had long been in the possession of her family: the Gauntlet of St. Denis of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, an item reputed to allow the wearer, should he (or she) be the rightful leader in a righteous cause, to heal his followers of any wound, no matter how deadly.

The Eisenwolf family prospered until the Peasant Revolt of 1525. While the Gräfin Walpurga's husband was away serving with the Bishop of Würzburg, the populace of Eisenberg rebelled against her rule, accusing her of infidelity and witchcraft. She was tried, found guilty, and died the horrible death meted out to those so convicted. With her dying breath she called down a curse on the inhabitants of the town and declared she would not rest until her name was cleared. She also took to her grave the location of the Gauntlet of St. Denis.

Whether or not Walpurga was actually a witch is still disputed, but during the next 400 years the Eisenwolf family seemed to suffer under her curse and the alleged attentions of her ghost. Walpurga's husband died in Würzburg without ever returning to the Schloss. His three year-old son assumed the title. Since then the family's children have been sickly or have died young. Those

who survive to adulthood find themselves in monetary difficulties; the family has "married for money" several times, the most recent being the Gräf Friedrich-Wilhelm, who wed an American heiress, Amelia Welles, in 1890. During her tenure as Gräfin the family moved out of the Schloss and into a residence in the town.

Leaving the Schloss didn't mean escaping from Walpurga's curse. Friedrich-Wilhelm and Amelia's only son, as well as the Graf himself, died during the Great War, leaving behind a sickly two year-old grandson. As soon as the War ended, the Gräfin Amelia took her grandson and returned to America. The young Gräf was educated in the United States and remains there to this day.

But the Gauntlet did not leave Germany with the Eisenwolf family. Records discussing it were recently unearthed by members of Himmler's *Sonderkommando H* (Special Unit H), an agency devoted to investigating matters pertaining to the occult, and even now members of the *Sonderkommando H* and the *Thulegesellschaft* are searching old records for any hint of the location of the Gauntlet.

TERRAIN

A region of rich, softly rolling hills, Bavaria is drained by several rivers (notably the Main, Danube, Isar, and Inn) and bounded by mountain ranges (especially the Bavarian Alps and the Bohemian Forest). Upper Bavaria, with Munich as its capital, rises to the Bavarian Alps along the Austrian border, and culminates in the Zugspitze, Germany's highest peak. Between the Alps and the Bohemian Forest, which forms the border with the Czech Republic, lies the Franconian Jura plateau and the Danube — and Schloss Eisenwolf.

The area around Schloss Eisenwolf contains predominantly alpine flora, including various flowering plants, trees (both evergreen and deciduous), and mosses. Many of the hill slopes are terraced and cultivated, but the mountainsides are heavily forested (predominately pine trees) and cultivation is chiefly confined to the valleys. The rivers abound with fish, including salmon and trout, and the mountains of Bavaria still preserve several wild forms of animals that are extinct or nearly so in other areas of Europe. Hunting in the area of the Schloss is excellent, with abundant wild boar, deer, and small game.

WEATHER/CLIMATE

Highs in the Bavarian region of Germany range from the 10s Celsius (30s F) in January to the high teens and low 20s Celsius (low 70s F) in the summer. Precipitation varies from two to three inches per month in the winter (generally as snow) to four inches in the summer, with June being the rainiest month.

SCHLOSS EISENWOLF

A classic medieval castle, Schloss Eisenwolf is no longer the primary residence of the Gräfin Eisenwolf, but still holds a significant amount of the family's possessions. It's located a mile outside of Eisenberg on a ridge overlooking the town. A single steep and winding road is the only access suitable for use by vehicles, although there are a few trails recommended only for the young and healthy which also lead to the Schloss.

Three towers rise above the main part of the Schloss, a four-level stone construction built with ten foot (1½") thick walls to withstand sieges by the Gräfin's enemies. Ceilings on the first level are twenty feet high, ten feet high on the second, and eight feet high on the third level; interior walls vary from three to five feet thick. The walls on the outer sides of the Schloss are pierced only by thin cruciform windows at the end of recessed niches some 3-4 feet above floor level (and there are none on the first level). Windows on the courtyard side of the Schloss are rectangular and slightly larger, but still reached via recessed niches raised above the floor. The window glass is wavy with age, the courtyard windows on the first level are barred, and heavy curtains (now faded and tattered) hang at the interior end of the niches, which are very slightly slanted toward the exterior walls (originally to prevent rain water or snow from coming into the rooms).

The rooms inside the Schloss itself are remarkably clean for its having been deserted for decades. While there are cobwebs in all the rooms and a layer of dust, it's obvious most of the rooms have been cleaned within the past two or three years.

Castle Layout

Visitors reach the ground level of the Schloss through a wide passageway secured at both ends by a portcullis. The actual entrance to the passageway is also blocked by a huge oak door bound with iron bands and secured on the interior with large bars. Additional portculli close the passageway at two places between the gatehouse and the guard house.

FIRST FLOOR

1) **Gatehouse:** The gatehouse flanks and covers the passageway. A two story construction, it has a single doorway on one side. A circular stairwell leads to the second floor, which is one large room and serves as the barrack area for the guards assigned to the gate. Another circular

OTHER CASTLES, OTHER LANDS

Since Schloss Eisenwolf is based on a relatively common medieval castle plan, it can easily be shifted to other European locations, from the Pyrenees on the French/Spanish border to the Carpathian Mountains in Romania, depending on the type of scenario and the atmosphere you're looking for.

Castle Schwartzquelle: A dark and brooding castle situated on an island in the middle of a lake, feared and shunned by the local villagers. The only figure anyone interacts with is the caretaker, a hulking man with piercing eyes named Gregor, who comes to town occasionally to buy supplies, express sorrow at the latest local youth who has vanished into the Black Forest, and glower menacingly at anyone new to the area. Simply shift the furniture back a few centuries, add a few more cobwebs, and populate the crypt with vampires, have a lovely young village lass romance a character and then vanish herself, and a horror-themed scenario is ready to go!

Castillo Perdidas: A doctor driven mad by the massacres of his family and village in the Spanish Civil War has gotten his hands on a set of notebooks from an old Inquisition library, notebooks purportedly written by Leonardo da Vinci in which he reveals the secrets of life and death. The doctor plans to use the forbidden knowledge contained within them to bring his family and the villagers back to life (after a few experiments to make certain he's got things right). Just remove the servant quarters from the third floor and install a mad scientist's laboratory complete with skylight and lighting rods, add the presence of a group of Basque separatists who are helping the doctor in the hopes that he'll be able to bring back their lost comrades to join in the struggle for independence again, and your players may never forget — or forgive — you.

Dunwick Castle: Situated on the shores of a remote loch in the mountains of Scotland, Dunwick castle is a grey and brooding pile of stone. The reclusive order of suspiciously healthy monks who dwell there shun all outside contact and turn strangers away at the door — obviously something's going on! Clear out the cobwebs and install a group of Nazi operatives with a plan to spy on a neighboring weapons testing range — or the last vestiges of the Templars hiding out and gathering strength to oppose a demon they've bottled up in one of the artifacts rescued from the purge that destroyed the Order — then mix in some suspicious locals, an attractive and lonely local lass who wanders the hills tending her family's sheep, and the ill-tempered local bully with his eye on her, and you're set.

stairwell goes down to the other first story room and up to the roof. A door from the central area on the second floor leads to an opening atop the section of the passageway between the gate house and guard house. Large fireplaces line the walls, and channels and holes in the floor so defenders can pour boiling oil down on anyone unlucky enough to be caught between the two structures. The gatehouse is unfurnished and now contains only spider webs and dust.

2) Guardhouse: The two lower floor rooms of the guardhouse once served as storage for the guards' weapons. Stairs in each end lead to the second floor and from there to the third floor, both of which served as barracks. The guardhouse is also empty.

3-4) Tower Rooms: These rooms served as storage and contain stairways to the second level.

5) Stables: The stables, hay loft, and stable hands' rooms are in serious disrepair, the last of the horses having been sold long ago. Tarnished and rotting bits of tack lie scattered around, and bales of musty hay are stacked in one end of the loft.

6) Courtyard: The southwest corner of the courtyard contains the ruins of a small kitchen garden, a flower garden, and an herb garden. Heavy two inch-thick iron-banded wooden doors at the southeastern corner of the house lead to the crypt. A team of draft horses (or a winch) is necessary to open the doors (or a rope and combined STR of 40). They haven't been opened in decades. They have DEF 7, BODY 11.

SECOND FLOOR

1) Gatehouse: Second floor of the gatehouse.

2) Guardhouse: Second floor of the guardhouse.

3-4) Guardrooms: These rooms atop the north and south towers formerly housed the guards who patrolled the castle walls. A fireplace in each allowed the guards to warm themselves during harsh weather. Narrow windows admit some light, but serve better as arrow slits.

5) Chapel: This is a small Catholic chapel with several carved wooden benches padded with dusty velvet cushions and an altar. A carved wooden crucifix hangs above the altar. Two small side altars contain statues of the Virgin Mary and St. Denis. Dusty votive holders sit on the altars, but no candles have burned here in many years. A narrow stairway behind the altar leads down to the family crypt.

6) Priest's Quarters: This room served as both the residence and office of the Gräfs priest. A narrow bed stands in one corner, a *prie-dieu* in another. Bookshelves contain a few dusty volumes of theological works.

7) Still Room: Used by the Gräfin and her serving women to preserve foods and herbs for household use and medicinal purposes. It's ringed by long stone counters topped by shelves and contains an ancient heavy wooden table. A metal gridwork rack hangs from the ceiling (for hanging herbs for drying) and several large marble mortars and pestles sit on the counters.

8) Housekeeper's Quarters: At one time the residence and office of the Schloss' housekeeper. It contains plain bedroom furniture (although the bedframe has no mattress) and a large desk. The drawers and cabinets are empty.

9) Kitchens: The kitchens contain two large fireplaces, one with a rotisserie for cooking meat that looks like it could roast an entire deer or boar at

once, the other with several rods a cook can swing out to hang kettles and pots on. Built into the chimney beside the second fireplace is a large baking oven. A cast iron stove stands to one side; it vents into the chimney for the fireplaces. A sturdy table 0.5" (3.5 feet) high occupies the center of the room, scarred with knife and burn marks from centuries of use. Shelves line the southern wall, and a door in this wall leads to a stairwell down to the cellars.

10) Great Hall: A huge room dominated by the fireplace at the western end. Tall enough for a grown man to stand in and over 1.5" (10 feet) wide, it's topped by a mantle and overmantle of dark wood intricately carved with hunting scenes. On the walls beside the overmantle hang pennons of various colors and banners ornately embroidered with the Gräfs crest; all were once bright but are now faded and dusty. On the north wall hangs a large stuffed elk head and several deer heads, also dust-covered. Below the pennon poles are sconces once filled with candles, and many-branched candelabra line the table.

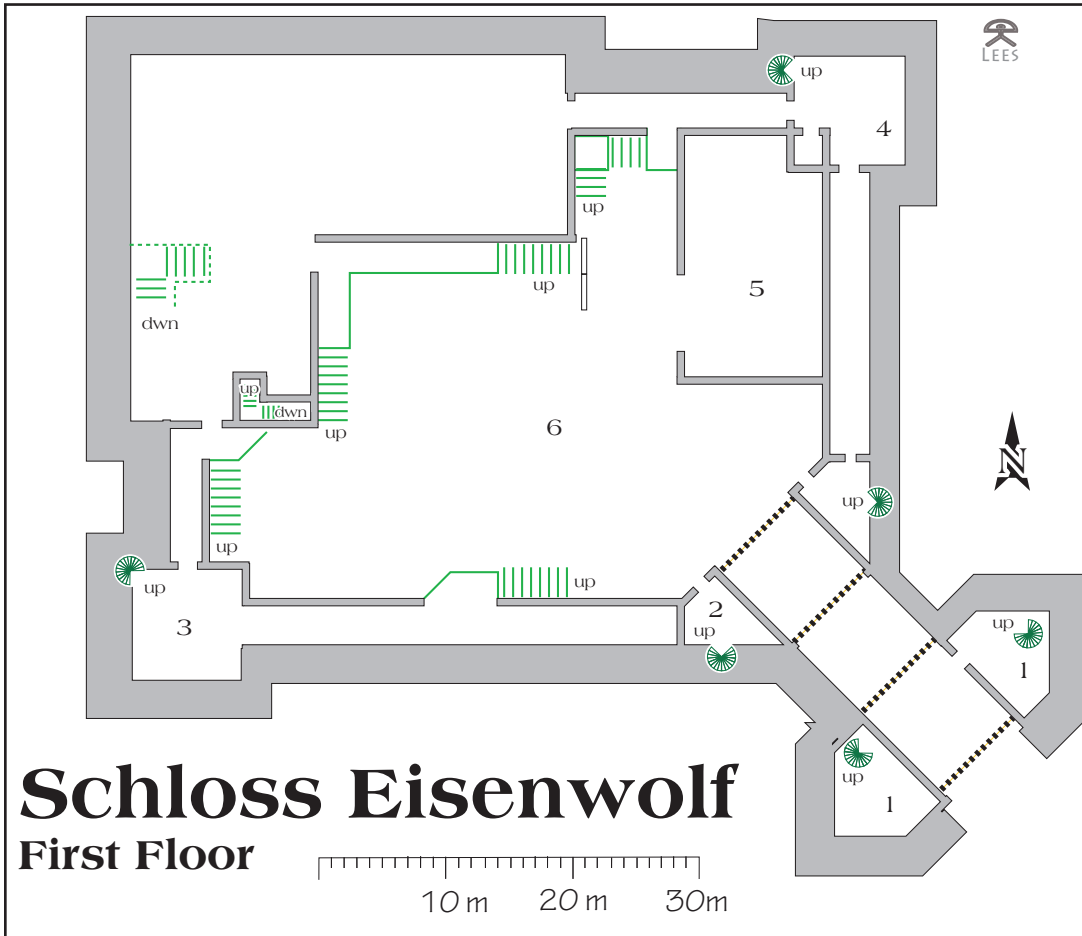
A huge table, capable of seating 35-40 people, fills the center of the room, and two carved throne-like chairs stand against the northern wall. At the east end of the hall is a minstrels' gallery reached by a small circular stair. The carvings on the gallery railing match the ones on the overmantle. A door below the minstrels' gallery leads to the library.

11) Library: This bookcase-lined room contains several upholstered chairs and settees, all flanked by candelabra. A balcony rings the room at a height of 2" (twelve feet); it's reached by a circular staircase. While many of the books have been removed, many remain, ranging from works of fiction of the Victorian age to illuminated medieval manuscripts. None of the books in the library are particularly valuable, but anyone purposefully searching the library will find a number of interesting volumes, including several rare sixteenth century works by Johannes Trithemius.

The north wall of the library contains a secret panel that gives access to a passageway through the walls to the Graf's bedroom and down into the cellar below, where it emerges in the north wall of the crypt (-5 on Concealment rolls to find, -2 on Lockpicking rolls to open). Once a hero locates one of the secret passages in the Schloss, it becomes easier to find the others (reduce the Concealment roll penalty to -3, and remove the penalty to Lockpicking). Finding or opening any panel from within the secret tunnel doesn't require a roll at all.

12) Graf's Study: A large desk made of dark oak stands in the center of the room flanked by two chairs of the same wood. Large cabinets lining the wall contain several hundred years' worth of estate records. After the mid-1880s no records exist (that's when the Gräf and his family moved into a residence in the village).

13) Parlor: The parlor is furnished in the style of the late 1880s, with several settees and chairs grouped around small tables. The upholstery of the seating arrangements is velvet brocade and in much



Schloss Eisenwolf

First Floor



better condition than that in any other room of the Schloss. Victorian-era paintings hang on the walls, which are covered with painted silk.

14) Music Room: Sliding doors open from the parlor into this room, which contains a piano and a floor harp as well as a settee and three chairs. The upholstery on the settee and chairs matches the upholstery on the seating pieces in the parlor, and the walls are hung with the same silk. It's obvious this room and the Parlor were redecorated around the time of Gräf Friedrich-Wilhelm's marriage. The windows in both this room and the parlor are covered by heavy drapes matching the wall silk.

G) Garderobe/Bathing room: The garderobe (privy) is built into a niche in the wall. The garderobes on the first floor have no other furnishings. The ones on the second floor also contain cast iron tubs for bathing. There's no running water; water must be hauled by the servants, with waste water disposed of down the garderobe.

THIRD FLOOR

1) Guardhouse: Third level of Guard House.

2-3) Tower Rooms: Upper levels of towers.

4) Graf's Bedroom: This room is the most sumptuously furnished of the bedrooms in the Schloss. The furniture is all heavy wood, ornately carved with gargoyles and other mythical creatures. A full length mirror in an ornate gilded frame hangs to one side of the armoire, and a

china pitcher and basin adorn the top of the washstand. The bed is an elaborate tester bed with carved posts, a high headboard, and hangings and a spread of heavy red velvet that match the hangings over the windows. The walls are covered with oak paneling; the fireplace in the western wall has a carved oak mantle. Several undistinguished paintings hang on the walls. A secret drawer in the desk contains the diary of the Gräf Dieter (Friedrich-Wilhelm's father) and details his romantic escapades in Paris in the 1860s (-1 to Concealment rolls to find).

The north wall contains a secret panel that gives access to a passageway through the walls to the library and down into the cellar below (it emerges in the north wall of the crypt). A branch of the passage also leads to the Gräfin's

bedroom (-5 to Concealment rolls to find, -2 to Lockpicking rolls to open). Once a hero locates one of the secret passages in the Schloss, it becomes easier to find the others (reduce the Concealment roll penalty to -3, and remove the penalty to Lockpicking). Finding or opening any panel from within the secret tunnel doesn't require a roll at all.

Four feet up from the floor in the east wall, behind a sliding wooden panel, is the Gräf's safe — a hollowed-out stone block, one foot long in all dimensions that weighs 50 kg. After the panel is moved the release mechanism causes the block to shift out of the wall so it can be removed from the wall. Characters must succeed with a Concealment roll at -5 to find and open the safe (once they locate either this safe or the one in the Gräfin's bedroom, the other becomes easier to locate; reduce the penalty to -3). The Gräf's safe is empty.

5) Bedroom: This was once two smaller rooms (scars where the wall was removed can still be seen on the wood floor) that were converted into a bedroom for a lady's maid. It's large for a servant's room.

6) Gräfin's Bedroom: The Gräfin's bedroom was also obviously redecorated in anticipation of the Gräfin Amelia's arrival. The furniture, which consists of a bed, a dressing table with mirror, two chests of drawers, and armoire and a writing desk, is of a light wood and the carving is much lighter in nature than in the Gräf's room. A slipper bench

stands at the foot of the bed and is covered in soft blue velvet that matches the bed hangings and coverings. The walls are covered in silk hangings over wood paneling.

Behind a sliding wooden panel in the west wall is a safe identical to the one in the Gräfs bedroom, except that it's located only one foot above the floor. It hasn't been opened in several centuries; characters will need some sort of lubricant (oil, soap, or something similar) and brute force (20 points' worth of STR) to move the wood panel. The safe contains the Gauntlet of St. Denis in its reliquary (see text box). This is also where Walpurga's ghost (see below) resides.

The north wall contains a secret panel that opens into a passageway from the Gräfs bedroom. A branch of the passage also leads to the Gräfin's bedroom (-5 to Concealment rolls to find, -2 to Lockpicking rolls to open). Once a hero locates one of the secret passages in the Schloss, it becomes easier to find the others (reduce the Concealment roll penalty to -3, and remove the penalty to Lockpicking). Finding or opening any panel from within the secret tunnel doesn't require a roll at all.

7-9) Bedrooms: All the bedrooms are furnished in a similar fashion — large, ornately carved furniture of dark wood, including a bed (without mattress), chests, and armoires (which are either empty or contain clothing from the early 1880s). Faded tapestries hang on the walls.

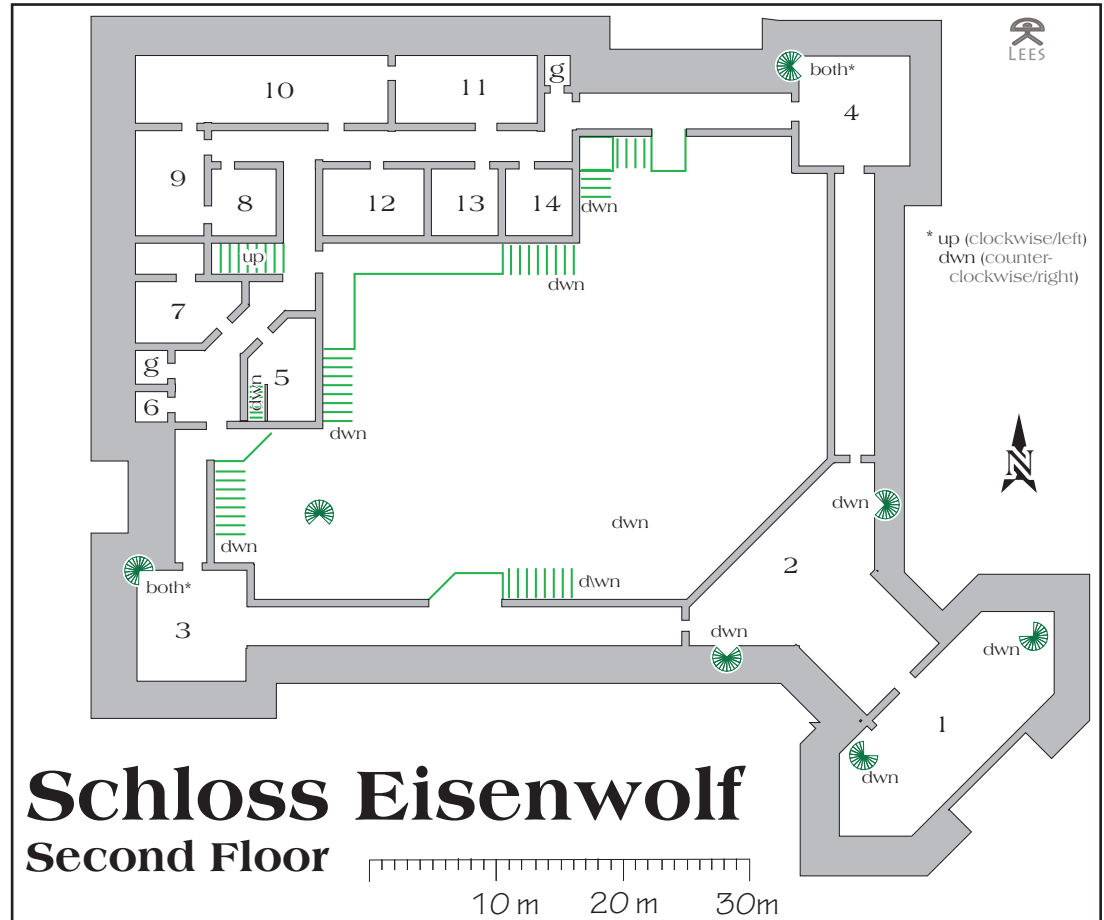
10) Nursery: Furnished with lighter wood than most of the other rooms, the nursery contains a crib, a small table and chairs, several chests, and a single bed for the nurse.

11) Solarium: The Solarium is the best lit room in the Schloss, with large (albeit barred) windows on two sides. This is where the Gräfin and her ladies would assemble to do needlework or talk. It contains several relatively comfortable-looking chairs upholstered in green velvet, a few occasional tables, a loom, a spinning wheel, and a large empty tapestry frame which stands against one wall.

12-13) Bedrooms: Identical to rooms 7-9 above.

S) Servant's Quarters: These small rooms are unfurnished.

G) Garderobe/Bathing room: See above.



Schloss Eisenwolf

Second Floor

10 m 20 m 30m

FOURTH FLOOR

S) Servants Quarters And Storage: This floor originally served as weapons storage and a platform for fighting. At some time in the past a Gräfs converted it to storage rooms and servant bedrooms. The storage areas contain old furniture (some in good condition, some broken), chests full of ancient clothing (dating from the various periods during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), and boxes of miscellaneous items.

BASEMENTS

1) Food Storage: This room has shelves for food-stuffs, bins for root crops, and hooks for hanging meat. There's no food here anymore.

2) Wine Cellar: The storage area for wine contains racks for wine bottles and cradles for kegs of beer. It, too, is empty.

3) Guard Room: This room served as a guard room while prisoners were being kept in the nearby cells. It hasn't been used or cleaned for several centuries — the extent of the spider webs and depth of the dust is amazing.

4) Family Crypts: The family crypts date back to the construction of the castle and contain the stone sarcophagi of the Gräfs and Gräfin Eisenwolf. Other members of the family rest in niches in the walls, some in wooden coffins and some merely wrapped in leather or cloth bindings. The sarcophagi stand in rows, beginning under the chapel with Konrad, who died in 1163, and ending near the northeast corner with Frederick-Wilhelm, who died in 1919. Need-

THE GAUNTLET OF ST. DENIS

The Gauntlet of St. Denis is a jewel-encrusted white kid leather glove heavily embroidered with gold thread and sized for a small man's hand. The reliquary in which it's kept is a narrow rectangular box of pierced metalwork, gilded and set with jewels. The interior is lined with scarlet doeskin; the domed lid hinges on one side and closes with a hasp on the other. The glove is in miraculously good condition, still soft and supple in spite of its antiquity. It will fit a man (or woman) who's no more than 5'8" (173 cm) in height, weighs no more than 165 pounds (363 kg), has a small frame, and doesn't have unusually large hands. If someone attempts to force the Gauntlet onto a hand too large for it, it splits along the seam lines and then crumbles into dust.

Gauntlet Of St. Denis: *Healing BODY 4d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); OIF (-½), Independent (-2), Side Effect (Drain END 3d6, always occurs; -1), Will Only Work On The Hand Of The Rightful Leader Of A Righteous Cause (-1). Total cost: 11 points.*

St. Denis, one of the patron saints of France, was also one of the *Fourteen Holy Helpers*, a group of saints invoked with special confidence because they had proven themselves useful in adversity and difficulty. They were originally invoked as a group during the Black Plague, which devastated Europe from 1346 to 1349, although each of them had been individually invoked before then. This particular group of saints' devotion began in Germany, and the tradition has remained strong there.

The Fourteen Holy Helpers and their patronages were Achatius (against headaches), Barbara (against fever and sudden death), Blaise (against ill of the throat), Catherine of Alexandria (against sudden death), Christopher (against plagues and sudden death), Cyriacus (against temptations, especially at time of death), Denis (against headaches), Erasmus (against abdominal maladies), Eustachius (against family trouble), George (for protection of domestic animals), Giles (against plagues), Margaret of Antioch (for safe childbirth), Pantaleon (for physicians) and Vitus (against epilepsy).

less to say, it's rather crowded in the crypt. Some of the sarcophagi (beginning in the fifteenth century and ending in the eighteenth) have effigies of the occupant. (The Gräfin Walpurga does not have a sarcophagus. Research reveals that after she was burned in the town square, the peasants scattered her ashes.) At the eastern end of the crypt is a set of large wooden double door leading to a shaft up to the courtyard (this was used to lower the sarcophagi into the crypt). While the doors from inside the crypt open relatively easily, the doors leading from the shaft into the courtyard are almost impossible to open from inside (it takes a lifting capacity of 6,400 kg to move them).

C) Cells: These small, dank rooms almost exude a miasma of despair. Lit only by light coming from the corridor, they each contain a stone shelf against the rear wall that's not even long enough for a short adult to lie down. The doors are solid wood with a small grating at the top and a slit at the bottom to pass food to the prisoners — should the guards remember to feed them.

PLOT SEEDS

The PCs receive word from an old contact who's retired to a quiet Bavarian village that Hitler is sending his Sonderkommando H goons to search a nearby castle for a relic of one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, which legend says was in the possession of the Grafs Eisenwolf. If *der Führer* finds this relic it would be a huge propaganda coup, as well as possibly giving him whatever divine assistance the relic may actually provide. Once more unto the breach....

Traveling through the backwaters of Germany as tourists (and possibly picking up information on the Nazis), the characters stop for a day or two at the picturesque village of Eisenberg. They begin to hear talk among the villagers of the haunting at Schloss Eisenwolf — a new spirit has appeared, the ghost of a dwarf or kobold. Could it be there to guard the Eisenwolfs' ancestral treasure? Or, unbeknownst to the characters, could one of Fafnir's (see *Masterminds And Madmen*, page 134-35) contacts have passed on information about the lost relic? If they're interested in the castle, the local barmaid is said to know something about it....

One of the characters receives a letter from a younger fraternity brother at his university, Herman Wolfe. Remembering stories of the character's exploits, he's invited the PC and any companions to visit him in Germany. It seems that he's the last Gräf Eisenwolf and has gone to Bavaria to examine his ancestral home, but is having a few minor problems. The castle is deserted (and rumored to be haunted) and has been visited by unauthorized intruders. The German authorities have been hovering politely over him with repeated offerings of help. Lastly, the villagers, while happy to see him, keep giving him sad, worried looks every time he so much as sneezes. Can the characters come over and give him a hand?

EISENBERG

Typical of small villages all over Europe, Eisenberg is a rural community whose members mostly farm, raise pigs and goats, and brew an excellent local lager. The people worry more about the average rainfall and who's courting who's sister than national politics. Located in a small valley overlooked by the Schloss, it's a cluster of tightly-packed buildings separated by narrow, winding streets and alleys all arranged around a central square. Within the village are a pair of taverns, one inn that hasn't seen much business since the Gräfin left for America, and a number of small shops that only open when the owners get word strangers are on the way into town. The best dwelling in town is the former residence of the Gräf and Gräfin, followed (somewhat distantly) by the Bergermeister's home. Most villagers would happily welcome the return of the Gräfs Eisenwolf to the castle, since that would restore jobs and prestige to the community, both of which it needs.

SPEAKING TO THE VILLAGERS

All the local people speak German, and any character having at least one point in the language will be able to make himself understood. About a

third of the villagers speak at least some English, but almost none of them above a crude “basic conversation” level.

IF A FIGHT BREAKS OUT

Between the Franco-Prussian War, various military actions around Germany’s colonial empire, and the Great War, nearly every surviving adult male in Eisenberg over the age of 30 has some form of combat experience. While most have let their skills lapse, those in the younger end of the age range retain more than a little of their former knowledge. The townspeople lack firearms more dangerous than simple hunting weapons (shotguns and single-shot rifles) but knowledge of how to use them is widespread. If a shooting incident breaks out they may unearth old war trophies that were “accidentally” forgotten when Herr Hitler’s mandatory firearms registration and collection laws went into effect. A friendly fistfight is another matter, however — as in many small towns filled with men who work with their hands, a healthy brawl is almost a social event and could as easily lead to friendship (or at least grudging respect) as ongoing enmity.

THE NAZI OPPOSITION

The heroes aren’t necessarily the only ones looking for the Gauntlet. Two Nazi organizations mentioned above would both be interested in getting their hands on the object... or anything else of mystic significance.

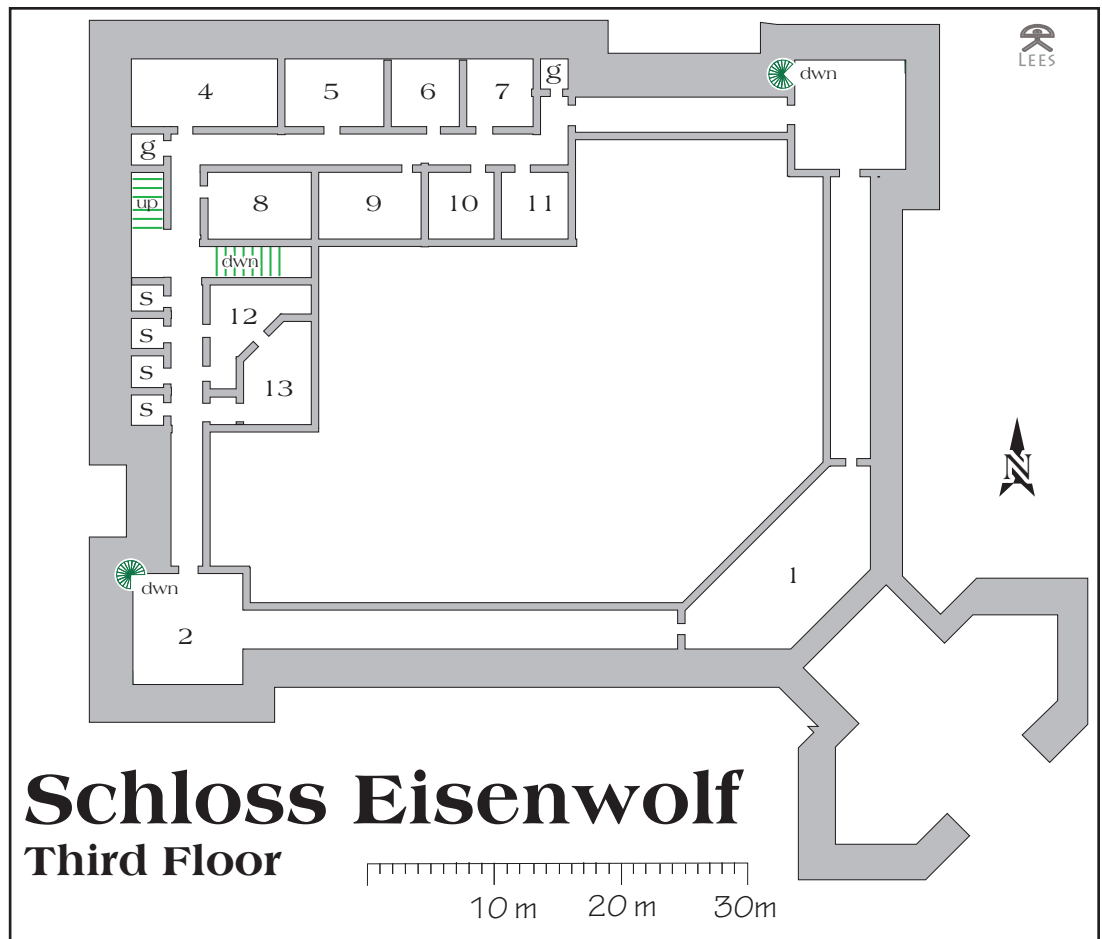
SONDERKOMMANDO H

The Sonderkommando (“special command”) designation was applied to individual task forces within the overall structure of the SS that were formed to carry out specific, specialized jobs. Most of the Sonderkommando units were involved with tasks relating to the Nazi’s “Final Solution,” including the identification of undesirables and providing actual assistance in the operation of the Nazi death camps. But some units, like Sonderkommando H, were assigned other missions by Heinrich Himmler, the leader of the SS.

Historically, Sonderkommando H (the H stands for *hexen*, or “witch”) was created in 1935 and assigned the task of researching witches and

witchcraft, particularly the witchcraft trials conducted under the auspices of the Catholic Church. It was a small group with approximately two dozen members, primarily academics, who spent the majority of their time poring through Church records and compiling reports on the historical effects of the witch hunts (both racial and economic), attempts to reconstruct elements of the original Germanic people’s religion, and the potential for the utilization of information from the files and cases studied as anti-Christian (and especially anti-Catholic) propaganda.

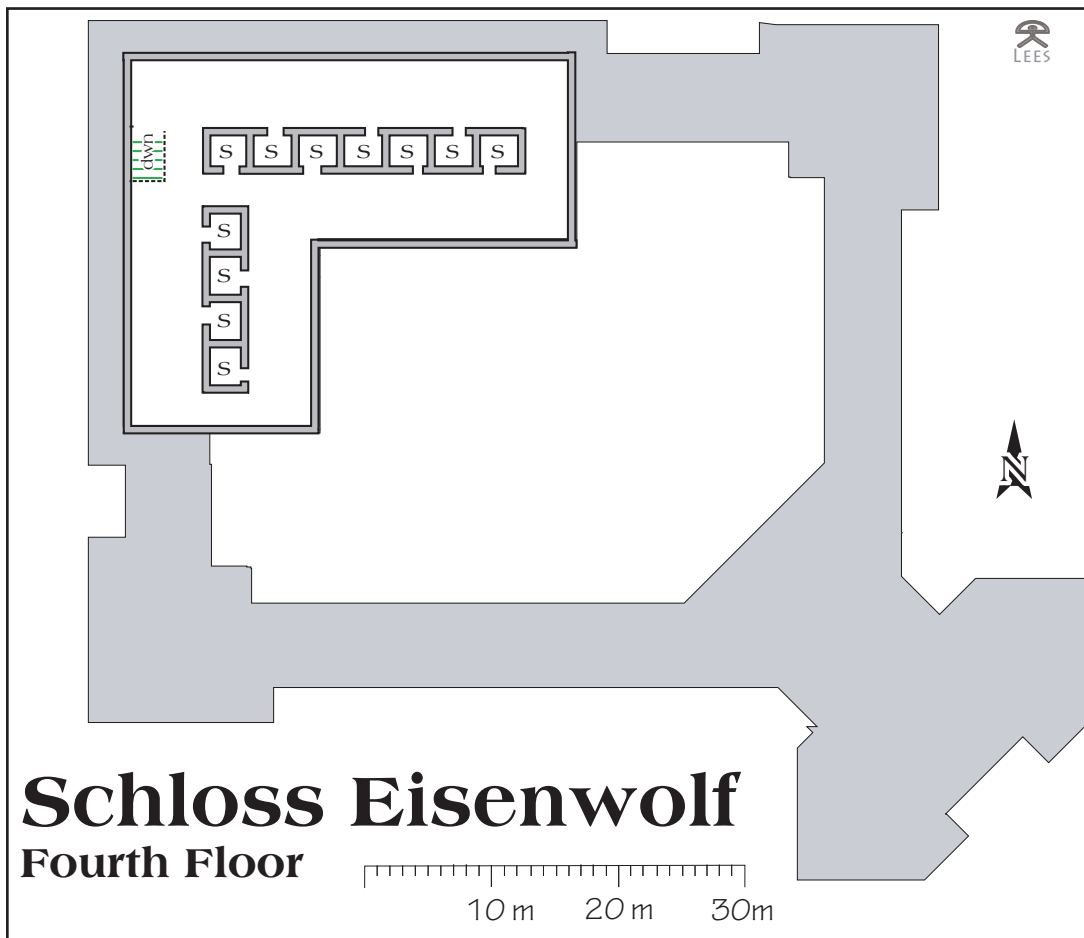
In a *Pulp Hero* game, Sonderkommando H’s established purposes don’t need to be changed radically — simply establish they actually *find* evidence of the occult, and are tasked with other mystic-related programs. Of course, Himmler keeps the group’s discoveries a secret from all but the highest Nazi circles, but he funds it lavishly in the hope of further revelations about the occult and the power it might provide to the Nazis. H’s files of copied and stolen records and documents (especially those compiled by the Inquisition) contain references to artifacts, spells, supernatural entities both hostile and benign, holy relics, and more — all waiting to be investigated. Heroes could encounter operatives and teams from Sonderkommando H literally anywhere in the world as the group pursues leads on occult items, still-practicing circles of mystics, and so on. Agents will vary in physical ability and age, but all possess legitimate academic credentials and loyalty to Himmler and the Nazi cause. It’s possible a few members of Sonderkommando H have



Schloss Eisenwolf

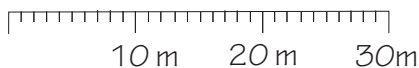
Third Floor

10 m 20 m 30m



Schloss Eisenwolf

Fourth Floor



mastered the ability to cast some ritualized spells or that the organization has a carefully-hoarded supply of functioning mystical artifacts it occasionally sends out into the field with trusted operatives.

THE THULEGESELLSCHAFT

Founded in 1918, the *Thulegesellschaft* or Thule Society was an offshoot of the German *Völkisch* movement that sought to establish an ethnic and historical identity for the nation of Germany, which had only existed in its current united form since 1871. It counted among its members such influential future members of the Nazi Party as Rudolph Hess and Karl Haushofer (Hitler himself was not a member). It espoused many ideas which would later become central to the Nazi ideology, including anti-republicanism, anti-Semitism, and the creation of an Aryan super-race that would exterminate those inferior races. Although the actual Thule Society was outlawed by the Nazis after they came to power, rumors persisted that the organization was simply absorbed into the new government rather than truly eradicated.

One of the central Thulist beliefs was the idea that the remains of a lost, highly-advanced civilization (referred to as “Thule”) existed in the far north near Greenland or Iceland. The remains of this civilization were said to be guarded by ancient beings of great intelligence and power, much like the “Hidden Masters” associated with Theosophy (not surprising, since many Thulists had Theosophical leanings). If located and approached properly,

the Hidden Masters would endow the initiated with supernatural strength and energy. Other core Thulist concepts historically included the belief that the Earth was hollow and had another world located inside it, and the idea the Aryan race came from a lost continent such as Atlantis or Thule and had been diluted by interbreeding with the “lesser” races.

Using the Thule Society in a *Pulp Hero* game is, like using the Sonderkommando H, extremely easy. It’s a group of individuals with great wealth, powerful political connections, oppressive and genocidal racial views, and occult beliefs who preferred to direct the actions of others as opposed taking direct action themselves. If publicly outlawed by the Nazis the group

would simply give up its name and operate as a shadow organization within the structure of the political machine it helped create. For example, Heinrich Himmler, if not actually a Thulist, certainly had Thulist leanings; he’d be a logical choice for one of the Thule Society’s Shadow Masters within the Nazi organization. Members of the Society would work to influence research into the occult and proving the existence of a lost Aryan race. They’d be especially interested in any expeditions related to seeking lost civilizations or the Inner-Earth. Any such expeditions would be backed by Thulists or at least have Thulist agents within them.

INDIVIDUALS

FELIX HOFFMAN, NAZI ARCHAEOLOGIST

15 STR	18 DEX	15 CON	16 BODY
20 INT	15 EGO	15 PRE	14 COM
6 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
30 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: Climbing 13-; Concealment 13-; AK: Germany 12-; AK: Europe 12-; KS: Archaeology 11-; KS: History of Germanic Area 12-; Languages — German (native), French (fluent), English (fluent), Arabic (fluent), Spanish (basic); PS: Archaeologist 12-; Stealth 13-; Riding 13-; Streetwise 12-; Trading 12-; Fringe Benefit (Member of Theosophical Society)

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Feature: Facial Scar; Hunted (Watched by Sonderkommando H); Psychological Limitation: Believer In The Occult; Rivalry (with Archaeologist of the Sonderkommando H); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders.

Notes: Of medium height, dark haired, and sturdily built, Hoffman was educated at the University of Regensburg. He's worked on various digs throughout the world, culminating with his attachment to Sonderkommando H. While Hoffman is outwardly loyal to the Third Reich, his true loyalty lies with the Theosophical Society; he's more interested in proving that the occult exists than in finding proof of Aryan superiority. It's possible the characters could persuade him to work with them rather than against them.

Although numerous people have mistaken it for the prestigious Heidelberg dueling scar, Hoffman actually acquired his facial scar from an incident involving an inebriated co-worker and a trowel while on a dig in Egypt. Generally, Hoffman says nothing to dissuade people who want to think otherwise.

FRIEDA SCHMIDT

8 STR	13 DEX	9 CON	10 BODY
15 INT	13 EGO	16 PRE	13 COM
3 PD	2 ED	2 SPD	4 REC
18 END	22 STUN		

Abilities: Climbing 12-; Conversation 12-; AK: Schloss Eisenwolf 15-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Barmaid 12-; Seduction 12-

75+ Disadvantages: DNPC: Mother (Incompetent Normal); Psychological Limitation: Virtuous; Psychological Limitation: Wants to believe the best of everyone; Social Limitation: Harmful Secret (mother is Jewish).

Notes: Eighteen-year-old dark haired beauty Frieda Schmidt is the barmaid at the local alehouse, working to support herself and her invalid mother. She's a charming girl, always laughing and friendly to everyone. Prior to his death two years ago, her father was the caretaker at Schloss Eisenwolf, and Frieda and her mother would often accompany him there to help him with the cleaning. Frieda knows all the "ins and outs" of the place. She'll assist the characters if — and only if — they agree to make arrangements for her and her mother to leave Germany.

ERNST SCHLEIM

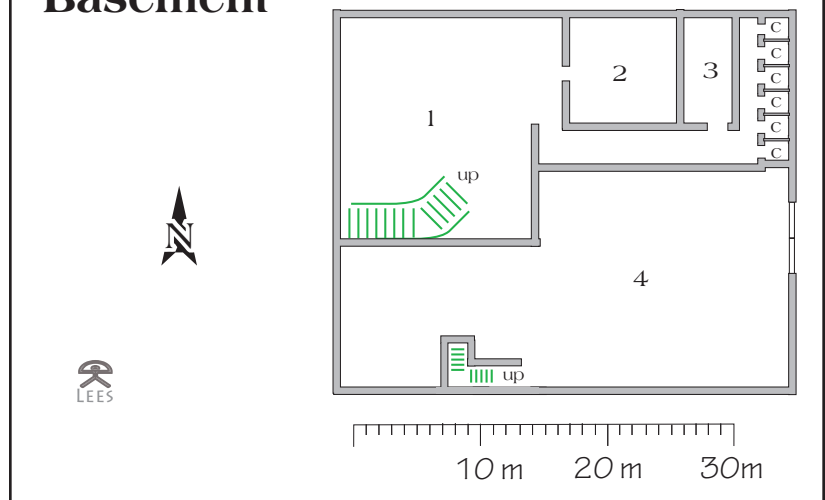
18 STR	10 DEX	17 CON	16 BODY
10 INT	13 EGO	13 PRE	14 COM
6 PD	4 ED	2 SPD	7 REC
34 END	33 STUN		

Abilities: Climbing 11-; KS: Nazi Doctrine 11-; Mechanics 11-; PS: Hitler Youth 11-; Tracking 11-; Fringe Benefit (son of the Bergermeister)

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Jealous Of Frieda; Rivalry (with other Hitler Youth and with any perceived romantic rival for Frieda's attention); Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Ernst Schleim, also eighteen, is Frieda's former boyfriend. He's an avid member of the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth), and should he

Schloss Eisenwolf Basement



learn of her background would not hesitate to turn Frieda and her mother over to the Nazis — unless, of course, Frieda agreed to accept his less-than-romantic advances.

Ernst is medium height and stocky, with dark blond hair and green eyes. His father's position as Bergermeister is important to him, and he likes to remind people of it on all possible occasions. He'll attempt to thwart the characters in any search of the Schloss, and will most likely inform the local authorities of their presence — particularly if they obtain Frieda's assistance.

WALPURGA'S GHOST

Walpurga's restless spirit does indeed haunt the castle and the village. For her use the basic Ghost character sheet on page 120-21 of *The HERO System Bestiary*, with the "Tableau Of Horror" optional ability and a final, terrifying power granted her by the manner of her death:

Body Of Fire: HKA 1d6, Affects Physical World (+2), Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (does damage in HTH Combat; + $\frac{3}{4}$), Reduced Endurance (0 END; + $\frac{1}{2}$), Persistent (+ $\frac{1}{2}$), Inherent (+ $\frac{1}{4}$) (90 Active Points); No STR Bonus (- $\frac{1}{2}$).
Total cost: 60 points

Walpurga is bound to protect the Glove by her dedication and refusal to surrender it to her accusers, even in the face of her own death, and must keep it out of the hands of those who are unworthy. She's lonely, and might manifest as the beautiful woman she was in life to a handsome man that embodied the knightly virtues she loved in her husband. She cannot travel more than 2,000 feet (615 meters, or 308"), from the Glove, and cannot touch it directly with her powers. She first tries to scare or frighten threats away (she's very creative in use of her Tableau Of Horror power), then use Psychokinesis to create accidents that injure them, and only if that fails will she manifest her Body Of Fire and slay them directly.

THE ROYAL VIRIDIAN THEATRE



Hudson City's famous theatre district, the "Golden Avenue," is the home to more than a dozen playhouses, theatres, and music halls of assorted sizes and qualities... and one lone movie palace, on the very fringe of the district between North Adams and Caxton Streets. Despite the sneers and condescension of the theatre district and a slow start, the Royal Viridian has begun to thrive, drawing a steady flow of customers from the upper crust of society away from the other entertainments available along the Golden Avenue... and jealous whispers from its competitors about how it's doing that.

HISTORY

The Royal Viridian Theatre began life shortly before the turn of the century as the Royal Viridian Opera House, a project near and dear to the heart of its builders, Hercule Frontenac and his wife Giselle. The pair, wealthy French émigrés to Hudson City in the early 1870s, settled into life there without much difficulty and quickly became noted patron of the arts. Giselle, despite how much she enjoyed the theatre productions and shows she and her husband helped to bring to their new home, still despaired of hearing again the operas they loved so much in Paris. Hercule vowed to make his wife's dream possible and set about building an opera house grand enough to attract the greatest of touring companies from Europe to Hudson City.

The Royal Viridian Opera House — named, it was said, for the color of Giselle's eyes — became an obsession for the Frontenacs, consuming their attention and the majority of their fortune. Construction began in 1889 and continued for six years, thanks in large part to delays caused by two extensive redesigns of the plans during construction, the theatre growing larger each time as adjacent properties and new ideas were incorporated into the design. Finally, over half a decade later, the Royal Viridian was ready and the first production — *La Forza del Destino* by Giuseppe Verdi — was to be performed on opening night: July 4, 1895, the day Hudson City burned. (The opera, which was considered unlucky by Verdi himself, remains under a cloud in Hudson City; in the 40 years since the fire no attempt to perform it has ever been made for fear of the "curse" that burned the city.)

The fire burned for four days and devastated the city. Miraculously, the Royal Viridian escaped

the flames... but Hudson City had other things on its mind than opera. The Frontenacs set aside plans for their opera house's grand opening and poured their remaining fortune into assisting the displaced and homeless victims of the fire, leaving nothing for themselves. They died penniless five years later. The opera house that was to have been their gift to the city was sold for far less than it was worth to pay the last of their debts. It passed into the hands of a series of promoters for the next few decades, slowly slipping downhill with each transaction. The final sale, to one of Herman "Two-Time" Tannenbaum's legitimate construction businesses, marked the end of the road. The rest of the Golden Avenue's establishments expected to see it demolished and replaced with tenements... or worse.

One man — Julius Levine, an entrepreneur with his eye on the future — rescued the Royal Viridian from that fate. He believed that despite the competition and the building's condition, the Royal Viridian was too valuable to tear down. It simply needed to find a market it could make its own, and he knew just the one: moving pictures. The success of movie palaces around the country was just beginning, but there were none planned for Hudson City... yet. He reasoned that by converting the opera house into a movie palace he could shave off years of construction time and thousands of dollars in expenses, since the basic structure of the building remained sound. The unneeded areas, such as the extensive backstage area and the underground levels for prop storage and creation he could close off to save a fortune in restoration costs. He put together a prospectus and took it to his boss, who passed him up to his superior, who, in turn, passed Julius up to Mr. Tannenbaum himself — who thought the movie business had potential and was willing to invest some capital to see what could be made from the old opera house (all the while thinking that if the business failed, the improvements would drive the insurance settlement from a "mysterious fire" into a range that made him happy just thinking about it).

Armed with a supply of capital, Julius restored the public access parts of the opera house to their former glory, installed modern lighting, plumbing, and power systems, and brought in specialists to ensure the projection screen was as perfectly aligned on the old stage as possible. In less than ten months he was done and the Royal Viridian opened as Hudson City's first movie palace with a showing of Douglas Fairbanks Sr.'s classic *The Mark Of Zorro*. Within only a few weeks the crowds he'd known would come were starting to arrive and

everything was coming up roses — but he'd forgotten that all flowers eventually wither and die.

With the introduction of the Volstead Act, there was suddenly money to be made in illegal booze — a lot of money. Even though he was primarily based out of New York City, "Two-Time" Tannenbaum wasn't going to let the opportunity to get his hands in the business in other cities slip by him. His business interests in Hudson City weren't vast, and none of them looked right for conversion to a speakeasy. Then Julius's brother, Maury "The Drummer" Levine, one of Tannenbaum's rising young lieutenants, remembered the drawings his brother had showed him of the extra levels in the Royal Viridian, some of which had been sealed off since the Great War. Perhaps, he suggested to his employer, something could be done with all that space?

A week later, Maury walked into his brother's office and gave him the good news that they were going to be working together... followed by the bad news as to where and what that business was. He was going to operate a speakeasy named "The Green Room" in one of the lower levels of the theatre. Julius argued in vain against the project, but Tannenbaum's mind was made up, and after a few months' quiet work under the guise shoring up some walls in the lower levels the Green Room opened its doors to the wealthy of Hudson City. Catering to the upper crust, the speakeasy was a quick and profitable success and has remained one of the Tannenbaum Mob's most consistent money-makers ever since.

Between Maury Levine's payoffs to the local cops, his careful planning, and the subtle influence of the speakeasy's wealthy customers, the Green Room has run smoothly for eight years now despite the repeal of Prohibition (though the place now caters to other vices, such as gambling, as well). Two local mobs have tried to muscle in at different times and failed — the burgeoning Morelli family was hurt badly enough in the attempt that it's unlikely to try again, but the well-established Marcelli family is just biding its time until an opportunity to take over presents itself. An attempt in 1934 to secure control of the operation by rival New York mobster Vinnie "The Axe" Colletti was stopped by the odd pairing of the Raven and the minions of the Iron Claw, who both objected to Colletti's plan to burn the Royal Viridian down if he couldn't seize control of the Green Room. No one knows why the crimebuster and the crimelord joined forces to protect the theatre — maybe they're both movie buffs!

DESCRIPTION

The Royal Viridian Theatre was originally designed to be an opera house on a grand scale, and it retains the exterior look and finish the Frontenacs envisioned for it. Its six-story frontage is located on the north side of 1st Avenue, occupying the center of the block between North Adams and Caxton Streets, just one block past the traditional end of the Golden Avenue. As with many European opera houses, the Royal Viridian was originally meant to have enclosed gardens to either side of the entrance stretching to the end of the block in both directions. That space was sold off by former owners and is now occupied by a series of equally-tall stores that box the street-front side of the theatre in. The bulk of the theatre spreads out a short distance back from the streetfront to occupy almost the whole of the block's interior.

The stone facing of the theatre is covered in green marble with black veins running through it, and the windows and wide entrance are trimmed with black granite. Six stories in height — equal to the buildings to either side of it — the Royal Viridian has a single flag-topped onion-domed tower on top at the front, increasing the height of the theatre to nine stories. The marquee was worked into the overall design with some care, so only a close observation reveals that portions of the facing were removed and the entire entranceway altered to allow for its attachment. It extends some ten feet out from the recessed entrance, providing shelter from the elements to patrons as they enter or wait in line to purchase tickets.

The two freestanding ticket booths (each has room for two ticket-sellers and is accessed through a locking door at the back) are located twenty feet back from the building's front edge. Behind them are three pairs of heavy wooden doors with brass fittings and green glass inserts that lead into the theatre proper. Marquee posters advertising current and upcoming films line the walls of the ticket booth alcove.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Royal Viridian's physical plant is located on the opposite side of the courtyard to separate any mechanical noises from the theatre proper. On the other side of it there's a small three-story parking garage used by the theatre and other local businesses.

All of the basic utilities in both the theatre and the speakeasy are in excellent working order. It has three on-site generators for use during a blackout or emergency (one in the third underground level; two in the physical plant). The plumbing was updated during the refurbishing and is in good shape.

Up And Down

The Theatre's elevators originally came in two varieties: the one for the patrons in the public areas; and service elevators for use by employees and stage crews in other areas. The patrons' elevator is the primary means of access for customers of the speakeasy. The ever-present operator ferries patrons

down after receiving one of several code phrases and being shown one of the Green Room's cards (or a sufficient cash "donation"). He has to insert a special key into a concealed keyhole in the elevator (-2 to Concealment rolls or -4 to PER Rolls to find it) to make the elevator go down to the speakeasy — otherwise it won't descend further than the main level. The Green Room's staff normally uses the two elevators located backstage to reach the speakeasy; they, too have operators. Both of the backstage elevators have also been rewired so they won't descend to any of the lower levels without inserting a key into a concealed keyhole. There are no floor indicators on the backstage elevators, so the only way to know how many levels there are below the theatre is to physically visit them one by one. The Drummer had the courtyard elevator's doors bricked over when he had the elevator refurbished — it now only goes to the Green Room's level, and is, in effect, invisible to the other levels.

There are two sets of public stairways that reach all of the theatre levels and terminate in roof doors, and a set of backstage stairs in the northeast corner running from the network of catwalks above the stage all the way down through the underground levels. The public stairs don't go below the first underground level, and getting to that level means passing through a securely-locked iron grate. (Julius has one key, the head of maintenance has another, and the Drummer has a third.) The backstage stairs also have locked grates at each floor. Additionally, the Drummer has had the lowest landing — where the Green Room is — bricked off so it appears that there simply is no fourth underground level. In case of a fire, he has sledgehammers stored there so his men can knock the wall down if needed.

THE ROOF

A raised wall that follows the line of the original structure surrounds the roof of the theatre, making the building appear ten feet taller than it really is. This turns turning the rooftop into a private space where the theatre's elevator mechanisms, the metal water tanks, the skylight over the open atrium, and the spotlights housed on the roof are out of sight. A walkway, much like the ones found on castle walls, runs around the inner side of the raised wall, allowing someone to peer over the edge and down into the street below. In good weather the Drummer assigns a pair of men to watch the streets around the theatre from here for signs of a gangland or police raid approaching.

The onion-domed tower has a door opening out onto the walkway. This allows access to the circular stair that runs 30 feet up into the room at the top of the tower where a theatre employee can raise or lower the flag atop the tower. There's a house phone in the tower room that the Drummer's sentries use to communicate with the Green Room.

NEARBY BUSINESSES

To the east of the theatre, in order from closest to furthest, there are three stores that occupy the rest of the frontage space on the block (most of

which rent out space above themselves to professionals in need of offices): Madame Bendral's, a woman's dress shop; Kellan Galleries, an art gallery; and Detwiliger's Fine Instruments, a music store. Madame Bendral's is fairly exclusive and specializes in high-quality made-to-order dresses on a budget or time limit, although it has a number of good lines of less individualized dresses and other garments for sale. Its displays often feature copies of clothing worn in productions currently playing on the Golden Avenue that the owner and her staff have literally turned out overnight to demonstrate their skill. Kellan Galleries primarily deals in paintings by local artists of good skill, usually recreations of more famous works but sometimes original pieces that the owner (a sharp-eyed critic and self-taught art expert) deems worthy of a showing. A number of Hudson City's more prominent artists honed their skills (and paid their rents) by painting works for the gallery before they were "discovered." Detwiliger's Fine Instruments primarily deals in pianos and harpsichords for the home, but has supplied organs to two churches. The owner also does a brisk business tuning and maintaining such instruments all over town.

To the west, in order of closest to furthest, there are: Marcel's, a French restaurant; Lassiter's, a gem and jewelry dealer; and Rosedale's Rare Books. Marcel's offers quality dining for patrons of the shows along the Golden Avenue with speedy enough service that customers can dine before a show, and high enough quality French cuisine that they want to repeat the experience. Despite the restaurant's name and focus, the owner isn't French. He's a Russian immigrant named Ivan Dragomiloff who came to America in 1917 when the family he cooked for fled the Bolsheviks. Lassiter's is a respected upper mid-range jeweler specializing in reset stones and older pieces purchased at estate auctions in America and overseas. Geoffrey Lassiter is a fussy British man whose talent lies with settings (rather than shaping stones), and he has used it as the basis for a successful business. Rosedale's Rare Books, the most recent owner of the last storefront to the west, hopes to beat the "corner curse" that seems to drive any business there into foreclosure in less than a year (ten businesses in the last eight years). The owner, Kevin Rosedale, has made a good start, securing a name for himself as a dealer who can find rare books at a fair price and in a short time. His secret is his French war bride, Evangeline, whose father and brother act as agents for him in Europe.

There are no stores along the Caxton Street side of the block past Detwiliger's — that's the back wall of the theatre, behind the stage (and the projection screen). A large set of iron-bound double doors that look like they'd be more at home on a castle (DEF 5, BODY 8) are situated halfway down the wall. They were designed so horses and horse-drawn carriages and wagons could be brought directly onto the stage for some productions but remain locked and barred from the inside now. Further down Caxton is a heavy gate that allows access into the courtyard where the theatre (and the speakeasy below it) receives deliveries and both establishments' staff enters and leaves. A guard (one

of the Drummer's men) stays on duty here around the clock to open the gates and sound the alarm if the law or another mob tries a raid. Within the courtyard are several doors and a loading zone for goods, as well as a long forgotten secret the Drummer repaired and makes good use of: an elevator capable of lowering an entire truck and its load of illegal booze down to any of the underground levels. It was originally designed to bring large loads of materials or prefabricated set sections straight down to the storage areas below the stage. It has a cunningly-crafted "hatch" in the courtyard floor that swings down and locks seamlessly into place as the platform lowers, hiding the elevator's existence. The "false floor" is heavy enough to withstand having a car parked on it and matches the courtyard so well it's practically invisible to the casual observer (finding it involves searching the area carefully and making a Concealment roll at -4 or a PER Roll at -7).

The Garland Avenue and North Garland sides of the block are taken up with more of shops with office space above them; most of the shops are owned and operated by people who support the playhouses and music halls of the Golden Avenue in some fashion (talent agents, production companies, etc) and the majority of the upstairs offices are empty.

THE THEATRE'S INTERIOR

Despite the apparent height of the façade, there are only three stories and the theatre foyer inside the Royal Viridian. The internal stories are twice normal height — 20 feet — to allow for the necessary amount of open space and balcony seating. Some patrons think the "extra space" implied by the windows outside means there are secret rooms and passages above the seating area.

The interior of the theatre is decorated in a grand fashion. A cushioned, sound-dampening carpet patterned in spirals of green, black, and gold covers the floors. The stairs are green marble with black granite inserts in the center and have ornately-carved banisters. Rich-colored green wallpaper with black and gold fleurs-de-lis on it covers the walls, which have gilded crown molding and sculpted ceilings. Lavish black velvet curtains with threads of green and gold woven through them hang at the corner of every internal window and many doorways. The theatre seats and the cushions on the chairs and couches in the many lounges are covered in the same fabric. The bathrooms feature equally elaborate décor and fixtures.

FOYER

The theatre's foyer is essentially unchanged from the building's original design. It features a centrally-located, open-air atrium along the west wall that rises past all three of the floors above it to a large rooftop skylight. A pair of spacious lobby lounges flank the atrium to north and south. Two sweeping staircases against the west wall under the atrium provide access to the Orchestra Level; opposite them is a long marble and glass concession

stand centered on the eastern wall. Behind the concession stand are storage rooms for concession supplies and a pair of bathrooms for the theatre staff.

The theatre manager's office is located along the east wall to the north of the concession stand; he keeps the receipts (and, on Fridays, the payroll) here in a safe and transfers them to the bank nightly. To the south, also along the east wall, is a smaller lobby with seating and the theatre's elevator. At the extreme northern and southern ends of the east wall are the secondary stairs that go up through all three seating levels and down one level underground to the level formerly assigned to more offices and dressing rooms (currently blocked off with a stout floor-to-ceiling iron grate; see above). Theatre employees enter through the front doors under normal circumstances.

ORCHESTRA LEVEL

The two atrium stairs stop on this level, each one terminating in another large lobby area where patrons can socialize and stretch their legs during intermissions. Both areas contain some seating but are primarily open so people can see and be seen by their peers. Two open archways lead into the Orchestra Level's seating; they both have false walls in front of them to prevent direct light from shining through into the theatre proper. Immediately after one passes through the archways are another pair of small lounges with seating; the actual entrances into the theatre itself are to the inside of the structure after you come through the archways; the elevator lets out in the southern lounge. Along the northern and southern walls run long corridors leading to the access for the four private boxes on this level (which aren't used much anymore since they provide a relatively poor view of the movie screen). The corridors also have cleverly-designed doors leading to the backstage area; they blend into the wall unnoticed (-2 to Concealment rolls or -5 to PER Rolls to find them).

The Orchestra Level's seating runs almost all the way down to the stage — the former orchestral pit still exists, but isn't used for seating during films because it's too close to the screen. The theatre's organ is stored there behind locked panels. The first 20 feet of the stage is visible before the theatre's movie screen, but that shrinks to only 10 feet when the curtains are closed.

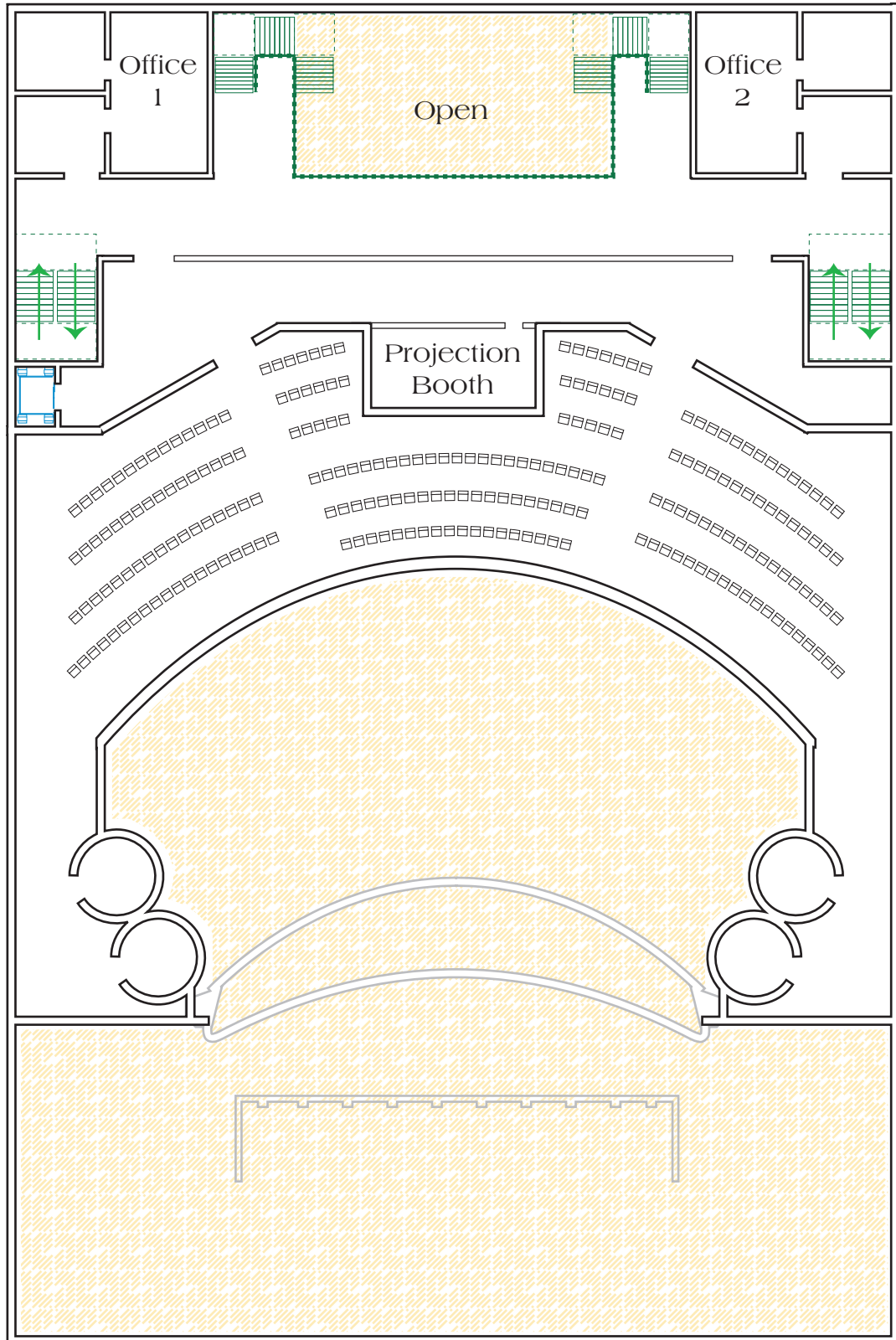
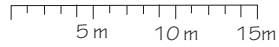
PROJECTION BOOTH

The projection booth is located between the Mezzanine and Grand Tier in the area of the "notch" at the back of the Mezzanine seating. It's accessed through a door on the Mezzanine. Normally there's at least one projectionist on duty during any film showing, and often two.

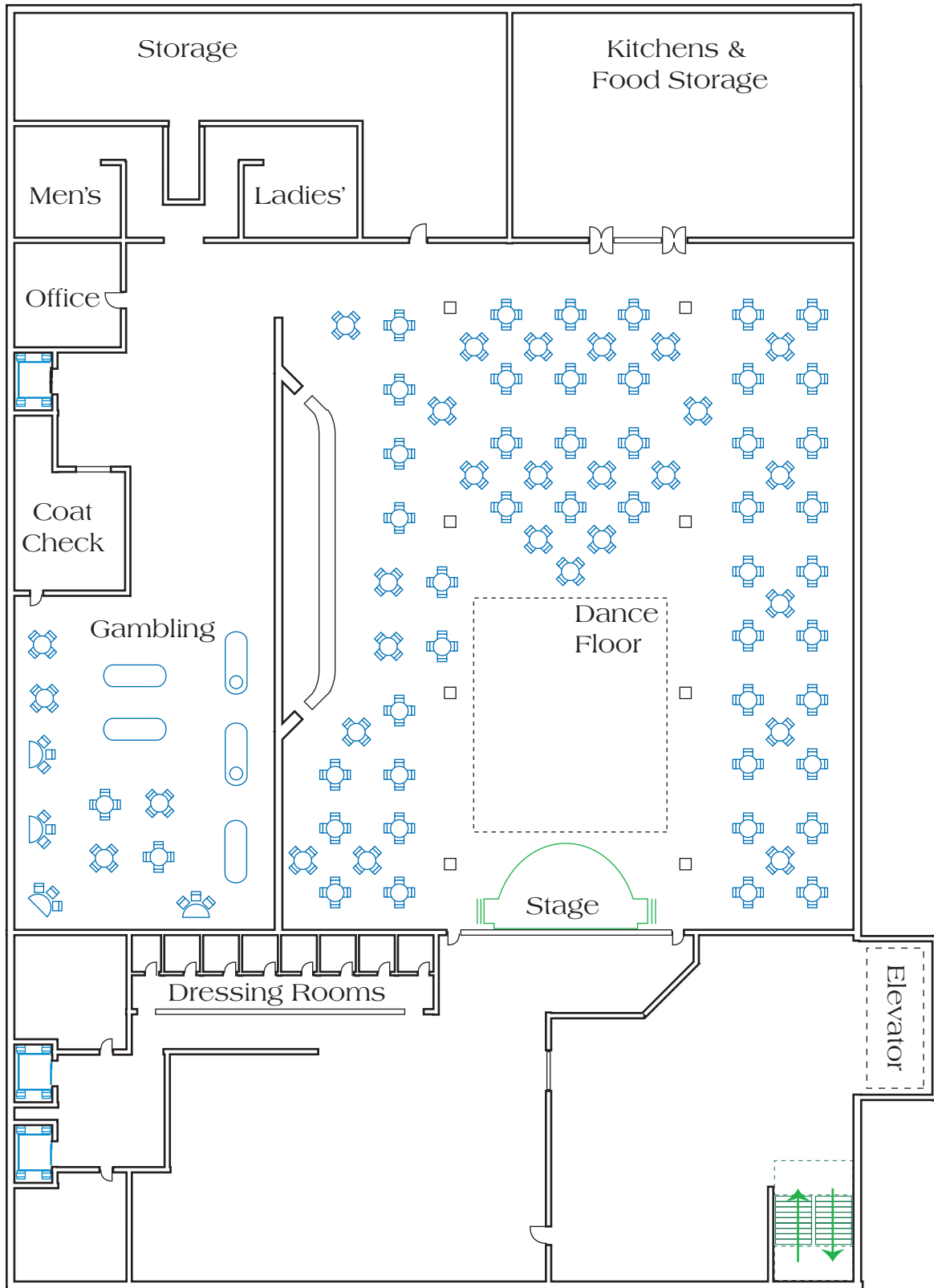
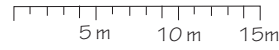
BACKSTAGE

The backstage area has not been altered since the theatre's days as an opera house. It's still a maze of curtains, ropes, catwalks, trapdoors, and the occasional set piece Julius chose to leave there. He's had most of the hanging sets lowered to prevent them from accidentally falling on someone and has instructed

Royal Viridian Theater Grand Tier



Royal Viridian Theater's Green Room



the theatre staff to stay out of the area because of the possibility of injury. A “watchman” (actually one of the Drummer’s men) stays backstage at all times to prevent anyone from “playing around” and interfering with the Green Room’s operations.

A pair of elevators backstage run up to the top of the catwalks and down to the lowest underground levels, and there’s a set of stairs covering the same areas (see above). A door leads from backstage out into the courtyard; most employees of the Green Room enter through it and take one of the elevators down to the speakeasy. In inclement weather, regular theatre employees enter through the same door and exit off the stage and through the seating to come to work.

MEZZANINE

The open atrium continues through this level, with luxurious benches at regular intervals around the rail so people on other levels can see patrons as they sit and relax. The theatre’s public restrooms are located on this level. Both have a smoking room that must be passed through on the way to the actual facilities; the men’s is decorated in dark woods with green leather-covered chairs and gold and black wallpaper, while the women’s is wallpapered in green and gold with matching upholstery on the chairs and couches and black wood trim. Both facilities make liberal use of marble, polished fixtures, and mirrors to create a memorable experience. There’s a pair of small lounges on this level, one located by the elevators, and the other by the northern stairs; the dim lighting in the latter makes it a favorite for couples who want to sneak off for a few stolen moments during slow periods in a film. The four private booths on the Mezzanine are accessed through the normal seating rows and feature the same locking doors and small lounges as the one on the Orchestra Level, just with less privacy.

GRAND TIER

The highest level of the Royal Viridian features the same open atrium and has the best view through the skylight. There are offices to the north and south of the atrium; Julius uses the northern one for business meetings and other “official” events, but the southern offices are normally unused and kept locked unless caterers need to use them during an event. The open area on this level is designed to be used for parties and other events; there are tables and chairs stored in the unused offices in this floor, and more in the first underground level if needed. The only seating outside of the theatre seats themselves is in a small nook behind the northern stairs that has the same “private moment” reputation among theatregoers that the northern lounge on the Mezzanine does, and the small lounges outside the private boxes. Knowledgeable theatre staffers seeking a private location with their sweethearts choose these boxes for such moments due to their comfort, privacy, normal disuse, and locking doors; an unspoken code prompts them to cover for others taking advantage of the location so that everyone doesn’t lose the privilege.

THE GREEN ROOM

The Green Room speakeasy occupies the entirety of the fourth and lowest level beneath the Royal Viridian, making it the largest such operation in Hudson City. Decorated in the same style as the theatre above it, and using furnishings taken from the ones stored in the three levels above the speakeasy, it might, at first glance, be mistaken for simply another level of the theatre — the restaurant the space was originally earmarked for, perhaps. While the Green Room does serve food, its primary reasons for existence are to convince patrons to purchase and consume alcoholic beverages, and to separate them from even more money during and afterward.

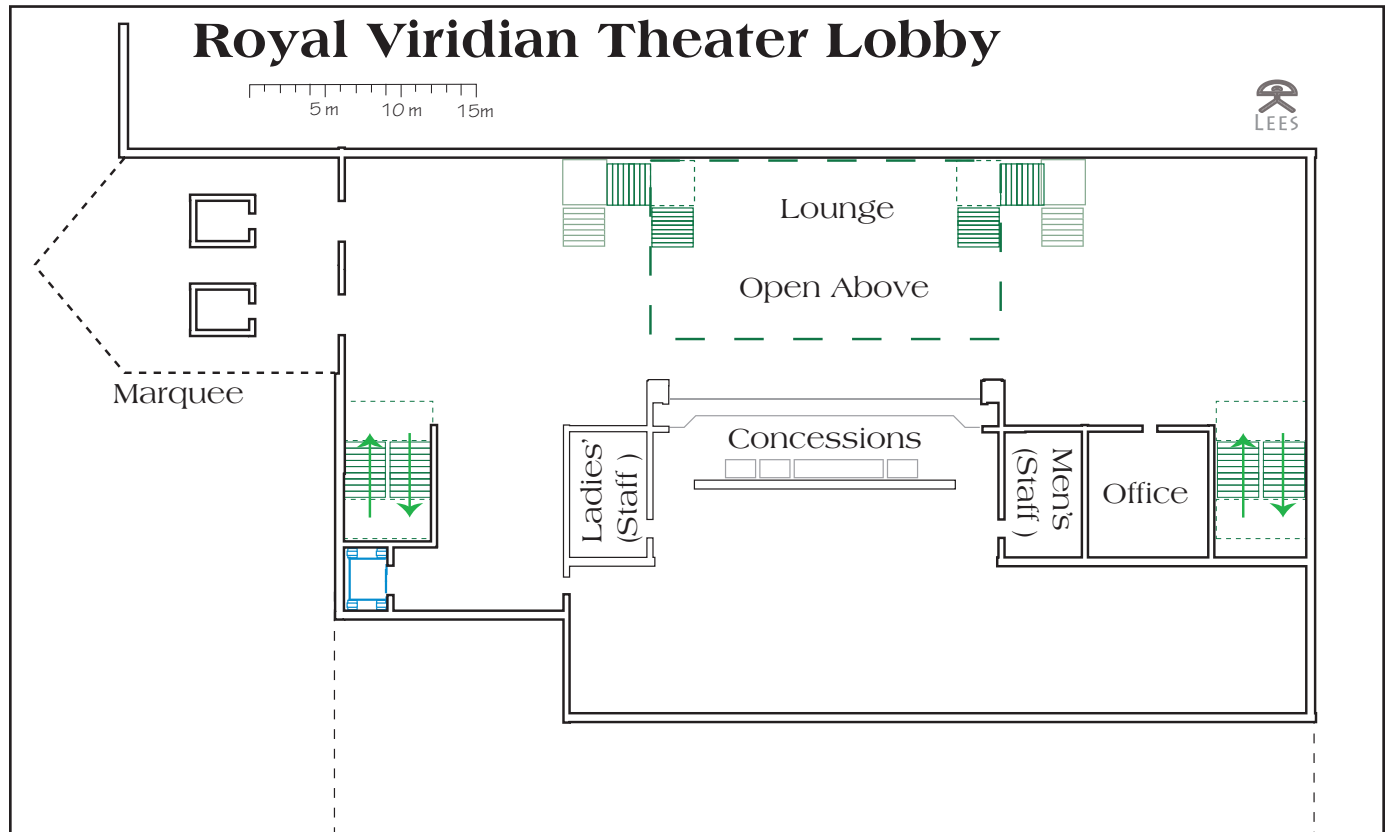
THE COAT CHECK GIRLS

Patrons entering the Green Room do so through the elevator in the theatre’s lobby, which lets out into a lobby much like the one upstairs. There’s a coat check booth immediately to the south of the elevators; the girls there dress in versions of the elevator operator and usher uniforms altered to show more décolletage and leg. In general the coat check girls are honest (from fear of the Drummer if nothing else) but temptation remains a possibility. If properly approached, one of them might be willing to leave a message in someone’s coat for a clever character (or NPC) so long as they’re convinced there’s no risk (or the price is right).

When the signal that the elevator’s descending (a green light) alerts them, one of the girls moves to place her hand on a switch that drops a heavy armored metal plate (DEF 11 Hardened, BODY 10) down just in front of the elevator doors, sealing the speakeasy off from police raiders, rival mobsters, or other intruders. All of the girls know how to operate the switch, and all understand the person who deploys the security door in the event of an intrusion will earn a large cash bonus from the Drummer.

THE CASINO

Once past the coat check girls, the Green Room opens up to the right into a small casino, the Drummer’s latest addition to the operation. He sticks to games with crowd appeal for the most part — roulette, blackjack, craps — though he has set several tables aside for other games. He imported dealers and operators for the tables from one of “Two-Time’s” New York operations after it was raided, and has men stationed around the room as a reminder of the fate awaiting them if they’re caught skimming. The games are, for the most part, no more fixed than in most underworld casinos, and better than most; the Drummer prefers to shift the odds toward the house by only five or six percent given the wealthy and powerful nature of many of his patrons. Girls constantly circulate with cigarettes, cigars, and other items for sale, and the staff is happy to take orders — and money — for more drinks to help keep patrons at the tables.



THE DRUMMER'S OFFICE

To the north of the elevators is the Drummer's office, although he's rarely there during operating hours — he prefers to circulate around the floor. He uses it for meetings when a patron has insufficient cash to pay a bill, there's an issue with the staff, someone requests one, or any other issue related to the running of the Green Room arises. He's pleasant and polite as long as the other guy is, but there's never any question that he's going to get his way. He prefers not to threaten people overtly, but if pushed he reminds them how he got his nickname (see below).

In the southwest corner of the office is a secret door leading to an escape tunnel that takes advantage of one of the city's abandoned subway lines to exit in an alley several blocks away. Levine stores cash in a heavy safe in the northeast corner, but ensures that all excess is cleaned out daily and sent back to New York weekly. It's stored in the vault of a small family-owned bank, the Tallmadge Bank and Trust, on Beck Avenue (see page 5) until then.

THE MAIN ROOM

Around the corner patrons enter the speakeasy proper — a huge open room broken only by a few support pillars. There's a bar running along the western wall, with stools for patrons to sit in some sections and other sections left open so that individuals wishing to stand and drink have a place as well. Three bartenders constantly move up and down the bar, tending to patrons and filling orders. All are experienced in the trade and have a sympathetic ear and a fast hand with a drink refill or a Mickey Finn depending on the needs of the moment. The Drummer prefers to resolve problems

quietly, and the staff always tries to slip individuals who are becoming a nuisance a sedative-laced drink before any physical action is attempted.

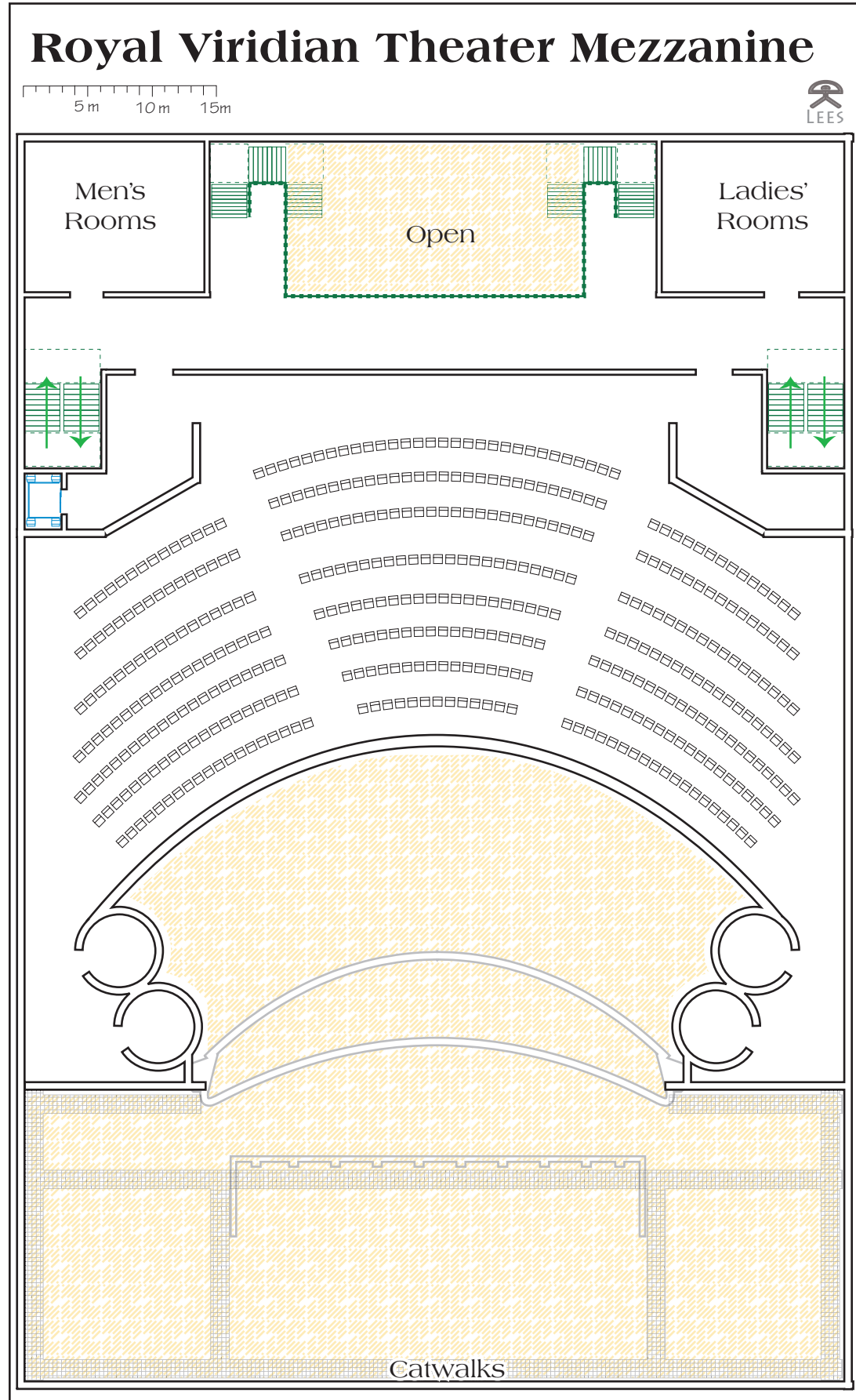
Tables fill most of the main room, through which still more cigarette girls in modified usher's costumes circulate, selling tobacco products, candy, small toys, and other duty-free goods which the Drummer acquires through Two-Time's operations. Other girls are paid to dress in a variety of fashionable clothing and circulate to encourage patrons to buy them drinks and "have one for yourself while you're at it" — the girls, of course, receive watered-down drinks, but the patrons get the real thing. Both sets of girls are attractive, but they don't sell anything other than what's in their trays or the drinks a patron consumes (at least, not on company time). All of them are used to getting pinched by patrons occasionally, but anything worse gets a man thrown out pronto.

The stage at the southern end of the main room is usually occupied by a band that plays well enough that the speakeasy's patrons aren't offended; the Drummer occasionally plays a set with them, just to keep his hand in. Occasionally there are showgirls or other entertainment, but the Drummer prefers to keep such distractions to a minimum, understanding that his business is to sell drinks, not entertain customers. But he encourages the house girls to draw patrons out on the dance floor in front of the stage, knowing that activity like that makes people thirsty.

At the northeastern end of the Green Room is a kitchen. The Green Room doesn't have a large menu, and isn't a five star restaurant by any means, but it serves a selection of tasty and filling sandwiches and some finger foods. The Drummer draws

AFTER PROHIBITION

Since it includes a speakeasy, the Royal Viridian is mainly meant for use in campaigns taking place prior to the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, but you can still use it in games set in later years. First, the Tannenbaum Mob might keep it operating to sell liquor that they've smuggled in to avoid federal taxes. Second, it could transform into just a casino, or perhaps high-class brothel. As long as there's *something* illegal going on the gang can make a profit from, the Green Room will remain open.



PLOT SEEDS

Rumor has it that the Royal Viridian is haunted. Things get moved around or go missing, and lately it's started happening more often. This time, however, the Drummer's guys swear it isn't them. Julius, terrified someone will become too interested in the theatre or that too much publicity will expose exactly what's going on downstairs, hires the characters to try to find out what's going on and put a stop to it. Is it actually the Frontenacs? Or is it one of Two Time's rivals out to close down the Green Room?

Madame Celeste Gilliard is coming to Hudson City to sing at a charity benefit. The organizers have offered Julius enough, between the money and the publicity, that he couldn't turn them down. After all, the Royal Viridian was designed as an opera house, and his renovations haven't changed the acoustics. The wealthy elite of Hudson City will be there, wearing their best duds — and jewelry — and Madame Gilliard is bringing her own gem collection, rumored to be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. It's not a question of whether a jewel thief will make an attempt, it's a question of how many will. Julius hires the PCs to provide security.

Josephine Parkinson approaches the characters looking for help. Her younger brother Adam has gotten himself into a jam. Trying to help bring in some money, he started working for a local mobster, but he's get-

the line at serving real meals since that would tie up too many tables for too long at too small a profit.

STAFF AREAS

Behind the southern wall are the dressing rooms, storage, and other facilities for the staff. The backstage elevators let out here, and the courtyard elevator opens directly into a large storeroom in the southeast corner. Both of these elevators also have "drop plates" like the one found in the speakeasy proper, and both have someone on watch during elevator usage to lower them if need be. The dressing rooms lock, and another of the Drummer's men prowls the halls to make certain no thievery occurs. A group of ten more men is stationed back here 24 hours a day in case of trouble. There are cots and a shower for them, and they rotate out every three days to get fresh air and sunlight. Sometimes one or two sneak upstairs during the day and poke around; the theatre staff believes the ghosts of the Frontenacs haunt the theatre because of the small items that are moved around or missing after such visits.

INDIVIDUALS

MAURY "THE DRUMMER" LEVINE

15 STR	15 DEX	16 CON	13 BODY
13 INT	14 EGO	16 PRE	10 COM
6 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
32 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: +1 to PER Rolls with all Sense Groups; +2 HTH; +1 with Ranged Attacks; Martial Arts (Dirty Infighting, Escrima); AK: Hudson City 12-; Concealment 12-; Fast Draw 12-; KS: the Mafia 12-; KS: Hudson City Underworld 12-; Interrogation 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Mobster 12-; Stealth 12-; Streetwise 12-; TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles; WF: Small Arms, Knives; Fringe Benefit (Made Man)

75+ Disadvantages: Hunted: Police; Hunted: Watched by "Two-Time" Tannenbaum; Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Brother; Psychological Limitation: Loyal To Tannenbaum; Rivalry: Colletti Family; Social Limitation: Criminal Record

Notes: Maury is the younger brother of Julius Levine, who took care of him after their parents died in the Influenza epidemic in 1920. Julius managed one of Tannenbaum's legitimate businesses before coming up with the idea of converting the Royal Viridian into a movie palace. Maury, on the other hand, found his niche as one of Tannenbaum's "extra-legal associates." When the Volstead Act became law, he came up with the idea of opening a classy speakeasy for the moneyed crowd in the basement of the theatre. He feels this is his chance to help out his brother and keep money flowing in and everybody happy. If necessary he might skim the speakeasy receipts and add them to the theatre's take to cover any profit reduction for Julius.

Maury is in his late twenties, 5'9" tall, and appears fit without looking overly muscular. He

prefers tailored suits without ostentation. He picked up his nickname after he learned some neat stick-fighting techniques from a little Filipino sailor who came to him looking to get his girl out of "the business." He has good manners and prefers a polite approach, warning welters about those above him who have no sympathy for their difficulties or excuses. When dealing with troublesome customers at the speakeasy, he prefers to slip them a "mickey" and quietly escort them off the premises without making a fuss.

BIG EDDIE MULDOON

18 STR	14 DEX	18 CON	14 BODY
8 INT	10 EGO	15 PRE	8 COM
6 PD	4 ED	3 SPD	8 REC
36 END	32 STUN		

Abilities: +2 HTH; Door-Smashing Fists (HA +2d6); CK: Hudson City 11-; KS: Hudson City Underworld 11-; PS: Bouncer 12-; Streetwise 12-; WF: Small Arms, Knives;

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Hates Getting Clothes Dirty/Torn up; Psychological Limitation: Loyal To Maury Levine; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: Big Eddie had a career as a bare-knuckle brawler in illegal boxing circuits back in the late Twenties. What he lacked in the "sweet science" he made up for in sheer, bone-crunching knuckle power. The Crash of '29 put paid to his career when his manager stole Eddie's savings to cover his own losses in the Market and skipped town.

Eddie was on the skids until a smooth jasper who'd won money on him in better days offered him a job. The Drummer thought he'd be useful in keeping things on an even keel at the Green Room. One look at Eddie's 6'3", 260 pound frame (carefully crammed into a tailored tuxedo) tends to make even belligerent drunks think twice about starting trouble. Eddie was thrilled to be working again, especially for such a class act. He prefers to keep neat and tidy (one of the few lessons retained from his upbringing), so he usually tries to remove his jacket and roll up his sleeves before any roughhousing. Since this removes the camouflage from his considerable physique, he appears even more imposing when ready for action. He can use a gun or knife, but will almost never do so. He's perfectly capable of breaking bones with his fists, even against a pretty tough egg.

JULIUS LEVINE

10 STR	12 DEX	12 CON	10 BODY
14 INT	12 EGO	13 PRE	10 COM
3 PD	2 ED	2 SPD	4 REC
24 END	21 STUN		

Abilities: +1 with Interaction Skills; AK: Hudson City 12-; AK: New York City 12-; Conversation 12-; Acting 8-; KS: Finance 12-; KS: Municipal Legal Codes 12-; KS: Theatre World 12-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Businessman 12-; PS: Theatre Manager 12-; Stealth 11-; Streetwise 12; WF: Small Arms

75+ Disadvantages: Watched: “Two-Time” Tannenbaum; Psychological Limitation: Protective of Brother; Rivalry (with other large movie theatres); Social Limitation: Subject to Orders

Notes: Julius Levine was born into a fairly prosperous show business family near the turn of the century. At an early age he decided he wanted to be the person in charge of the performers, not one of them. He had a sharp mind and the determination to get through the Empire State College of Business. He suffered a detour when he was drafted in 1918, but the Great War was over before he could be sent overseas. He mustered out and finished college in 1920 — just as his parents and little sister succumbed to the influenza epidemic, leaving only him and his brother Maury alive. Wracked with sorrow, Julius swore he’d always take care of his little brother.

He got a job with Herman Tannenbaum, a prosperous businessman with interests in both New York City and Hudson City. Julius worked his way up in his employer’s service, becoming manager of several different businesses. He soon realized Tannenbaum had a number of business interests that were anything but legitimate, but he made sure to be stay out of those and remained valuable by concentrating on the legal projects. One of his few arguments with his brother Maury came when Julius found out his little brother had joined the illegitimate side of Tannenbaum’s empire, but he failed to dissuade him from his path.

When Tannenbaum acquired the deed to the Royal Viridian Theatre in Hudson City, Julius came up with the brainstorm to convert it into a motion picture palace. He knew the pictures were the up-and-coming thing, much bigger than vaudeville or the legitimate theatre. He persuaded his boss to have the place renovated in a lavish fashion. When Maury suggested turning the sizable basement into a lavish and very private club, Julius argued against it, but lost. The whole Prohibition idea was a mug’s game anyway, and at least it would give him the opportunity to keep a closer eye on Maury. Julius is quite proud of the Royal Viridian. It remains a cornerstone of Tannenbaum’s legitimate empire.

Julius is in his late thirties, 5’5” tall. Although still a dapper and well-dressed figure, he’s beginning to appear a bit stout and his hair has begun to retreat and turn grey. His energy and aplomb can still set him apart from the crowd when he wishes.

JOSEPHINE PARKINSON

10 STR	14 DEX	12 CON	8 BODY
13 INT	12 EGO	14 PRE	16 COM
3 PD	2 ED	2 SPD	4 REC
24 END	19 STUN		

Abilities: Can Handle Her Booze; +1 with Interaction Skills; Acting 12-; Conversation 12-; Gambling 13-; High Society 12-; AK: Hudson City 11-; KS: East Coast Society 12-; KS: Games Of Chance 11-; KS: Hudson City Nightlife 12-; Language: French (completely fluent, literate); Language: Italian (completely fluent, literate); Persuasion 12-; Seduction 12-; Stealth 12-; Contacts (5 points’ worth in high society or mob circles); Fringe Benefit (member of the Upper Crust)

75+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Family; Psychological Limitation: Fearful Of Falling Into Poverty; Rivalry (with other society “party girls”); Social Limitation: Woman

Notes: Josephine Parkinson was born into a wealthy Hudson City family with interests in banking, shipping, and the stock market. She never worried her pretty little head about money, but spent her time in the usual pursuits of her gender and class: clothes, fads, house parties, gossip. Although her family suffered some losses in the Great Crash, it weathered the crisis and continued as before... until the post-Crash failure of some 1,600 additional banks. Her father worked himself to death trying to stave off the disaster, but only succeeded in preserving the family’s home in Hudson City and a small annuity that’s barely sufficient to maintain the house. Mrs. Parkinson was hopeless in money matters, so Josephine had to somehow acquire the money to support herself, her mother, and two younger brothers. She decided to concentrate on her strong suit — socializing. She’s essentially become a shill for Maury Levine, using her social connections to attract upper crust clientele to the Green Room. She’s also a talented gambler who knows when to cut her losses and when to ride a run of good luck. She never cheats, since she figures she’s better off losing some stakes than risking getting banned (or worse).

Josephine is an attractive redhead in her mid-twenties who hates having her name shortened. She dresses well but not extravagantly, since she has an image to maintain but still has to economize. She’s still looking for something better from life, but has so far resisted trying to find a husband and settle down to humdrum domesticity.

Continued from last page

ting in over his head. Josephine is afraid he’ll end up in more trouble than he can handle, but his boss says he likes the kid and is making it difficult for him to leave. Plus, there’s the money he gave the kid up front, which Josephine can’t pay him back... unless, of course, she abandons the Green Room and comes to work for him (and perhaps provide a few more personal services than she’s giving the Drummer).

THE TEMPLE OF THE DRAGON



Deep in the mountains of northern China lies a small monastery. Only a few people know of its existence; fewer still know its location. There mysterious secrets and legendary skills of the martial arts may be learned by the truly brave and the truly wise who dedicate themselves to the search for the Temple of the Dragon and the wisdom contained within it — and are willing to abide by the oaths of secrecy, loyalty, fraternity, and asceticism that those teaching there require of their pupils.

HISTORY

The origins of the Temple of the Dragon and its master, the Sanctified Elder, are shrouded in the hazy past of ancient China. Most individuals who concern themselves with such things consider the Temple to be a contemporary or near contemporary of the original Shaolin temple; possibly one of the priests who survived Shaolin's destruction in 617 AD founded it. A few, however, point to hints in the most ancient of texts that even before the Bodhidharma came to Shaolin, there was another spot where he stopped to impart the wisdom and techniques that would become the basis for Kung Fu. This spot, those scholars maintain, was the Temple of the Dragon — so named because the Bodhidharma supposedly debated with and instructed there a dragon who dwelled in a nearby river. According to the stories, the dragon, having been converted by the Bodhidharma's wisdom, built a temple in a single night where he could carry on his master's teachings.

Regardless of its true origins, some historical documents mention the Temple of the Dragon as far back as the days of Emperor Chen. They describe the requirements the Sanctified Elder placed on those who would learn *Cànlande Lóng Ch'uan*, or Resplendent Dragon, Kung Fu is given. (See *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, pages 68-70.) This story marks the only time the Sanctified Elder actually sought out someone and offered to train him. After that, anyone seeking the knowledge of Resplendent Dragon Kung Fu had to find him and his Temple. In the years since, most of the people who looked for the Temple of the Dragon failed to find it, or if they did find it were turned away as unworthy. Some few, however, proved they were truly brave and truly wise. The Sanctified Elder admitted them to the Temple and trained them in many arts, including Resplendent Dragon Kung Fu. But all whom he honors with his secrets must agree to meet certain restrictions he sets down. Typically

these conditions include a prohibition on teaching the style to anyone else, and either some form of service to the Temple or some service to China as a whole. Only one restriction applies to everyone: the student must refrain from ever hunting the red deer that roam the forests and mountains of China. No matter what the restrictions, the Sanctified Elder somehow always knows when one has been broken and takes the appropriate action. For example, stories in the Martial World claim that if someone teaches Resplendent Dragon Kung Fu, the Sanctified Elder mysteriously appears and touches his former student in the center of the forehead with a single finger. From that moment on the student cannot recall a single maneuver or other ability from the style.

THE COMING OF THE DEMON DOCTOR

During the mid-1800s the existence of the Temple of the Dragon became known to Dr. Fang Shen. Intrigued by the possibilities of linking his name to a martial arts style once known only by the family of the Emperor himself, he began to send out feelers and research stories about the Temple. The search took him thirty years, but finally he learned the location of the Temple from an ancient monk in Tibet whose master's master was said to have trained there. Doctor Fang, enmeshed in the formation of the Legion Of Crime, realized he couldn't spare the years needed to study at the Temple himself. The children he contemplated fathering, though... they could. All he needed was a way to ingratiate himself with the Sanctified Elder and gain them admittance....

In the early years of the twentieth century a deadly fever appeared in the mountain villages surrounding the Temple, one that made its way inside the Temple itself. This was nothing new. There were always fevers coming and going — but this one did not go. Victims became weak and helpless and suffered hallucinations for days before dying; nothing local healers tried could stay the fever's advance. All they could do was make the sick comfortable and wait for the end... until the doctor with the violet eyes came from the south with his potions and medicines. The struggle he waged with the disease was a mighty one, but in the end he defeated it, saving almost all of those who'd been stricken ill... and in the process, earning the thanks of the Sanctified Elder.

The doctor refused payment in material goods, asking only that his infant daughters, once of age, be allowed to study at the Temple. The Sanctified Elder agreed on the condition Dr. Fang — for it was none other — enter into the same agreement

with him that the Emperor Chen did in ages past: neither he nor his children must teach the Temple's arts to others, nor hunt the red deer. Furthermore, he must restore the temple built in Peking by the Emperor Chen. Fang readily agreed. When his daughters were old enough, he brought them to the Temple to be taught, and they both learned much there. Since leaving the Temple, both Li Lian and Ming Wei have periodically returned to learn specific skills and techniques.

Recently, Dr. Fang received an unexpected message from the Sanctified Elder through Li Lian, asking when his third, male, heir would be arriving for training. After referring to the language of his pact with the Sanctified Elder, Dr. Fang believes the request can only refer to Lok Shing, the newest member of the Legion of Crime's Inner Circle. The Doctor has not made plans to free Lok Shing from his duties to take advantage of this unexpected boon, but will do so soon — the opportunities that would arise from Lok Shing receiving the same training as Li Lian and Ming Wei are simply too great to relinquish. The possibilities are great enough, in fact, that he's contemplating giving Lok Shing the gift of *The Years Are As Nothing* in the immediate future to take best advantage of them.

FINDING THE TEMPLE

Locating the Temple isn't an easy task under the best of circumstances. Many have spent virtually their entire lives searching for it without finding it, and Dr. Fang himself, with all of his resources, took over 30 years to track it down. The current geopolitical situation, with the Japanese occupation of parts of China and dozens of warlords squabbling among themselves elsewhere hasn't made it any easier.

There is no single correct way to locate the Temple of the Dragon, but some suggestions include:

—The temple in Peking built by Emperor Chen and restored by Dr. Fang might contain clues hidden in the scriptures on the walls, or concealed on the scales of the dragon statues in the temple, that lead the characters to a chain of locations designed to test their worthiness. Success at each step rewards them with the next clue.

—Characters could approach Dr. Yin Wu, the Dragon Mandarin, and ask for his assistance in locating the temple (see *Hero Plus Adventure 6: The Dragon Mandarin* if you need more information on Dr. Wu). Other than Dr. Fang he's one of the few people who definitely knows the Temple's location... but the price he'd ask in return for this assistance would be very high indeed.

—The PCs could trek to known monasteries and temples and seek out the masters there to ask for assistance. Each one requires of them a new task or agreement as the price of his help.

—For a real deal with the devil, the heroes could try to find a way to get the informa-

tion from Dr. Fang himself. Perhaps if they save his life he'd tell them out of gratitude, or could use the information to ransom himself, his daughters, or something else he desperately wants.

Whatever method your heroes use, it should require them to test themselves to their limits and prove they're both truly brave and truly wise before they even so much as get to see the Temple Of The Dragon.

DESCRIPTION

The Temple of the Dragon is located near the head of a remote gorge running roughly north-south high in the perilous AnyLmaqLn Mountains of northern China. There, on a nearly inaccessible rock ledge approximately 10,000 feet above sea level and just over 350 feet above the valley floor below, stands the Temple.

THE ROPE BRIDGE

The wall on the western side of the gorge is steep and treacherous (-4 to Climbing rolls). It has a two mile-long, winding narrow path just wide enough for one person to traverse that moves by means of switchbacks from the village hundreds of feet below to a point just below the Temple on the opposite side of the gorge. There the path widens out into a small ledge large enough for a dozen people to stand comfortably. A rushing river slices through the stone of the gorge wall and falls along the rock face to form a pool on the valley floor. A rope bridge, anchored to secure stone posts on either side of the cut, spans the cut in the gorge wall made by the water. Due to the spray, the ropes' fibers rot quickly, so the monks essentially totally replace the bridge each year in the spring. As a defensive measure the monks can cut the bridge away; the Temple keeps at least one spare in case of this.

THE GUARD WALL

Across the rope bridge is a larger ledge that slopes upwards at a slight angle until it's equal in height to the Temple across the gorge. Halfway around the ledge is a 2" (12 foot) tall, 3 feet (0.5") thick defensive wall built of stone that completely blocks the ledge from edge to edge. Stairs on the reverse side of the wall allow guards to get to the top so they can address individuals on the other side... or fire arrows at them. In the center of the wall is a reinforced bronze door (DEF 11, BODY 11) that opens from the inside after a heavy bar on a pivot is swiveled out of the way. The guards can use a gong built into a small stone stand next to the gorge wall to summon someone if an attack or other problems occur. The gorge wall in the vicinity of the defensive wall has been artificially smoothed to make climbing more difficult (-6 to Climbing rolls). One Monk and one Novice are on duty here at all times (there's a shelter built into the monastery side of the wall for inclement weather) to open the door in the event the villagers seek refuge

WHAT'S WITH THE RED DEER?

The red deer of China are a species of *cervus elaphus*, or elk, essentially identical to other species of elk found in around the world. You can find a character sheet for one on pages 150-51 of *The HERO System Bestiary* (use the "Moose" option).

Traditionally, the red deer in China have been hunted both for food and for their reputed value in Chinese herbal medicine and alchemy. Virtually every part of the animal has some medicinal property associated with it, from the velvet covering on new antlers to the animal's teeth, bones, and internal organs.

Based on this history, some past students believed the prohibition on killing red deer had something to do with the secret of the Sanctified Elder's apparent agelessness: he must depend on some alchemical potion derived in whole or part from the red deer to sustain himself though the ages. The restriction placed on his students were one of his tactics to ensure he would have sufficient animals to sustain himself. Other students believed the prohibition was a subterfuge designed to make people believe precisely that theory so they wouldn't look deeper into the secret of the Sanctified Elder's longevity. A third group holds that *both* of the others are right — the Sanctified Elder hides his secret in plain sight, expecting that no one will credit such an obvious answer to the question.

or someone wishes admittance to meet with the Sanctified Elder. They let locals through with only a few words, but strangers, especially ones who are obviously not Chinese and/or travel in groups, can expect a more pointed and lengthier questioning before the guards let them in. It's not unusual for the Monk to choose to defer the decision to one of the Masters; if so he sends the Novice to the Temple proper for instructions. The Masters in turn defer to the Sanctified Elder himself if they're uncertain about letting someone enter the Temple grounds.

THE STONE BRIDGE

Past the wall the ledge runs on until it reaches the same level as the Temple on the opposite side, and then continues for a short distance further before ending a little more than 100 feet before the western wall meets with the eastern gorge wall at the gorge's second waterfall. Where the two sides of the gorge are nearest an arched stone bridge spans the gorge. It ends in a pair of reinforced bronze doors (DEF 11, BODY 11) that lead into the Temple itself. Two solid stone pylons serve as anchors for the bronze doors and protrude out far enough to deny easy access from the bridge to the walls on either side of the doors.

When the winds are right, mist from the nearby waterfall can envelop the bridge in a glittering cloud of water droplets that make the stone slick (-1 to DEX Rolls and OCV with HTH Combat). At such times a rainbow arches from the waterfall over the bridge, an event the Monks consider especially auspicious.

THE EASTERN GORGE

The eastern gorge wall is steep and treacherous, with no path up it. It contains only the ledge the Temple sits on and a smaller ledge immediately south of and 70 feet (11") below the Temple. The Monks use the smaller ledge for additional gardening space; it's accessible only by a ladder set into a channel carved into the rock face.

The village in the valley below is known as *Hsia Pao Pu* (Waterfall Gorge). It's home to approximately 250 people. The villagers live in stone huts with thatched roofs clustered in two arcs around the road leading into the valley. They cultivate the valley floor to grow food, and raise herds of yaks and goats for themselves and the Temple. They trade the food and supplies they produce for the protection of the Temple and the right to live and raise their families in the secluded valley.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The weather at the Temple is normal for its altitude and location in China. During most of the year, the temperature is in the low 20s Celsius (low 70s F) and nights are in the mid-teens Celsius (low 60s F), making the Temple a relatively comfortable place to live and train. The winters are cold, with temperatures regularly falling below freezing. Snow is common, frequently sealing the Temple off for days or weeks at a time and occasionally forcing the Masters to suspend training. At these times, the Novices and Monks organize work parties to

clear the path so the villagers can bring in supplies. The waterfalls move too rapidly to freeze, but the spray from the northern waterfall causes ice to form on the stone bridge to the Temple, rendering it treacherous footing for those who are not careful. Summers are much warmer, but seldom truly hot; temperatures tend to peak around 27° Celsius (80° F) at most times thanks to the winds in the gorge — on the rare still days the temperature rises several degrees. Rain occurs in all but the coldest months, but, due to the Temple's altitude, few heavy storms reach it with their full force.

INFRASTRUCTURE

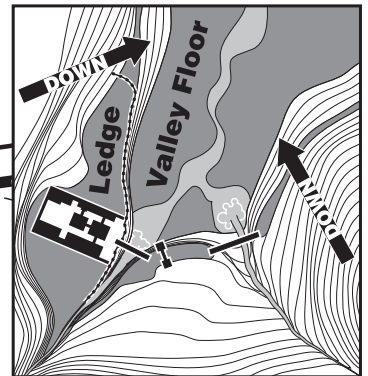
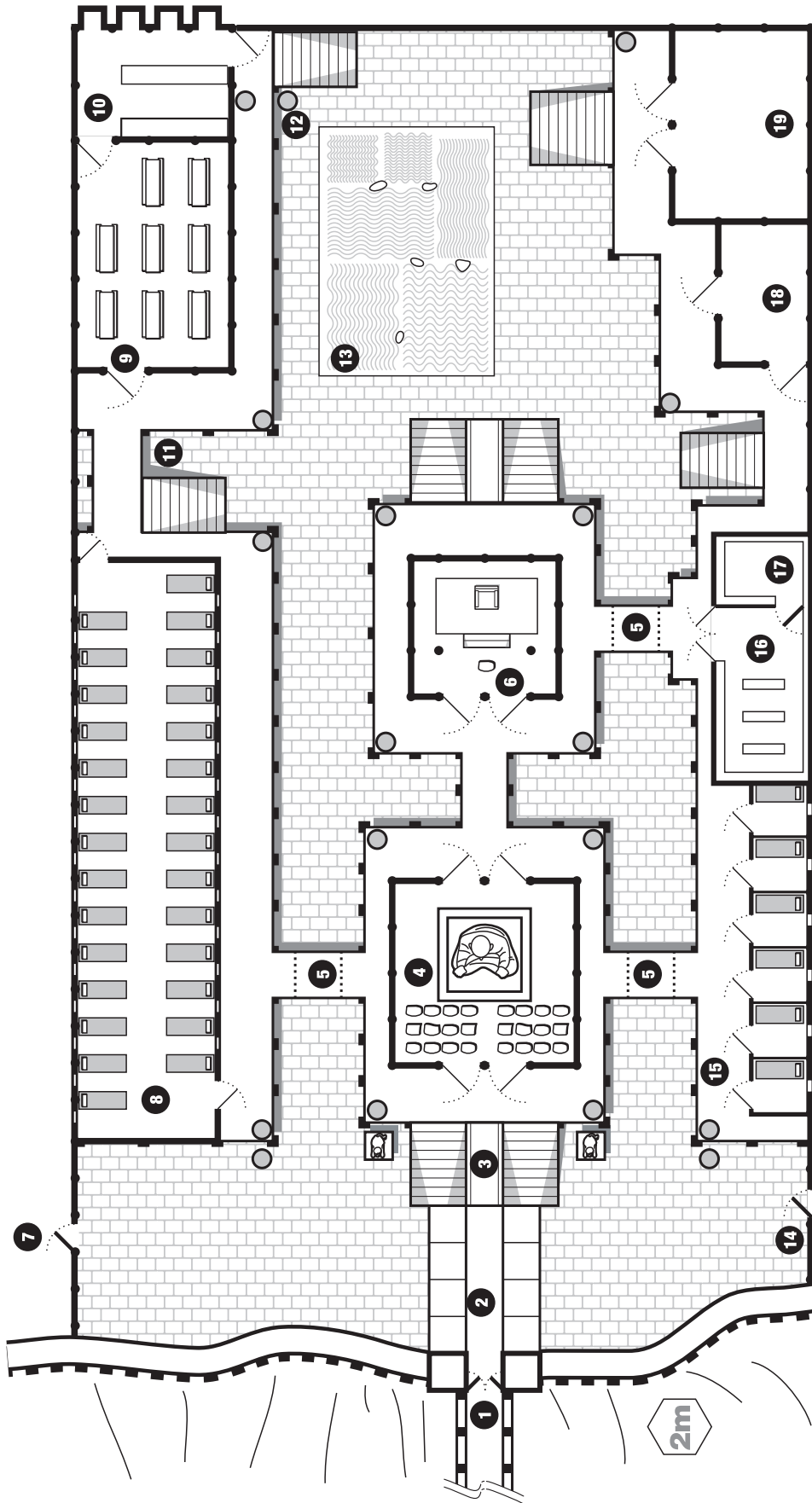
The Temple's residents grow some of their own food in gardens just outside the Temple's walls, and depend on the villagers for the rest. The Monks get water from the river under the rope bridge (or sometimes from the waterfall), storing it in 18 covered cauldrons around the Temple for ease of access.

Candles and small oil lamps light the Temple, but the residents use them sparingly because bringing oil up from the valley is difficult. Most tasks and training cease when darkness falls. In colder months, the small charcoal braziers used to heat the Temple also provide a little light — but hauling the charcoal for them is no easier than hauling lamp oil, so they're used as little as possible.

TEMPLE LAYOUT

The reinforced bronze doors at the end of the stone bridge (#1 on the map) open directly into the Temple itself. The area enclosed by the Temple walls is a rectangle approximately 81 feet (25 meters, or 12.5") wide, and 146 feet (45 meters, or 22.5") long. The internal structures of the Temple divide the space roughly into thirds. The northernmost third is generally the territory of the Monks and Novices, the center third is shared ground, and the southernmost third belongs to the Masters.

Surrounding the actual structures is a courtyard whose rough-hewn flagstones have been polished smooth by the feet of generations upon generations of residents. All of the structures are built on raised foundations of stone that elevate their floors to a height of approximately 10 feet (3 meters, or 1.5") above the courtyard. Some structures have chambers and rooms built into their foundations; a popular rumor among the Novices (and some of the Monks) is that they all do, but the ones that aren't a part of daily Temple life are kept sealed until they're needed. These hypothetical chambers are said to include vaults for the Temple treasures, repositories for scrolls and texts too dangerous for even the Forbidden Library, and secret rooms prepared for the Masters to retreat to in the event the Temple is overrun by some enemy. Only the Sanctified Elder (and perhaps the Masters) knows for certain which, if any, of the rumors are true.



2. THE PATH OF BUDDHA'S WISDOM

From the double doors a pathway leads directly to the steps at the front of the Temple proper, 16 feet (5 meters, or 2.5") away. The path is made from hundreds of small tiles of white stone, each inscribed with a quote from Buddhist texts. To either side of the central pathway a series of plain stone flagstones flank the central path. Visitors entering the Temple who recognize the importance of the central path (characters need to know Chinese to read the writing, and must make KS: Buddhism or some similar KS roll to understand their significance) should move to either side and walk on the unmarked flagstones out of respect; those who don't will find their reception somewhat cooler than they'd like. In addition to helping to screen visitors, the tiles serve another purpose: instruction. By walking the tiles in the proper order, a student discovers there are martial arts footwork patterns encoded there by means of the scriptures, with different scriptures, mantras, or koans revealing different patterns. The Monks know there are over fifty patterns encoded in the pathway, and there could easily be more awaiting someone with greater insight. Residents refer to this as "Walking In Buddha's Wisdom."

3. MAIN STAIRS

At the end of the path is a set of stairs leading up to the temple building. Raised pedestals with intricately carved statues of Chinese dragons stand to either side of the stairs. At the top of the stairs is a wide porch with a 3 foot (1 meter, or 0.5") tall rail that wraps around the temple, and a pair of bronze double doors.

4-5. STATUE OF THE BUDDHA; WALKWAYS

Inside the temple building is a large carved stone Buddha, with space for the residents to pray in front of it. Behind the statue is another set of bronze doors opening out on to the porch at the rear of the temple. To the north and south, a walkway that crosses the courtyard connects to the temple's porch; arched underpasses allow individuals in the courtyard to move under the walkways.

6. RECEPTION HALL

Behind the temple proper, connected to the porch by another walkway, is the Reception Hall where the Sanctified Elder conducts meetings and interviews with guests and residents. Inside it there's a raised dais with a seat for the Sanctified Elder and a kneeling pad for the individual he's meeting. Any Masters attending the meeting stand to either side of the Elder on the dais. At the rear (east) side of the Hall, a set of stairs lead down from the porch into the courtyard; another walkway extends from the porch to the south.

7. SMALL NORTH DOOR

To the north, there's a small door in the Temple wall that lets out onto the northern portion of the ledge so residents can work in the gardens located there. Set into the cliff wall at the halfway point to the end of the ledge are

three doors with statues of the Buddha separating them; they lead to the cavern containing the Temple's Training Maze (see below).

8. DORMITORY

This is the Dormitory where the Novices and Monks sleep on padded mats and store their few belongings in small wooden chests. No chest has a lock; thievery is grounds for expulsion. Residents can have little more than a few changes of clothing and a few small personal items. The Sanctified Elder does not permit characters to own personal weapons of any type, though if he favors a student he may offer to store his weapons for him until he leaves the Temple. Monks have the positions nearest the doors; the newest Novices sleep in the center of the rows, with increasingly more experienced Novices spreading out on either side of them. In inclement weather the Masters conduct training in the Dormitory when feasible.

9-10. DINING HALL; KITCHENS

The walkway from the temple connects to a large porch that runs the length of the Dormitory and wraps around the eastern end to form a short walkway linking the Dormitory to the Dining Hall and Kitchens. Stairs (#11 and #12 on the map) lead down to the courtyard from the walkway; beneath them are a bathroom and the temple's baths, respectively.

13. ROCK GARDEN

The courtyard to the rear of the Temple is occupied by a rock garden the Masters tend, raking the pebbles within it into soothing patterns that are sometimes complex and sometimes surprisingly simple. The students consider it an honor to be asked to assist one of the Masters in raking the garden, as those moments are frequently used to impart wisdom and private instruction. The students can put wooden covers over the rock garden if the courtyard is needed for training.

14. SMALL SOUTH DOOR

To the south a door opens onto the southern portion of the ledge and the gardens there (and, via a ladder inset into a cut stone channel, to the lower gardens mentioned above). A pathway leads back to the cliff wall and the door to the cave containing the tombs of past Masters (there's no tomb marked for any previous Sanctified Elders).

15. MASTERS' CELLS

In the western section of the structure along the Temple's southern wall are the Masters' cells. Each Master has his own cell complete with a door that opens out onto a porch facing the temple building; the walkway from the temple porch connects to the porch outside the Masters' Cells. The newest Master occupies the cell furthest to the west, with the others taking cells in order of seniority moving to the east. The easternmost, next to the Library, is reserved for the Sanctified Elder. The porch narrows and continues to the east where the Library sits, opposite the walkway to the Reception Hall.

16. LIBRARY

Shelves holding hundreds of scrolls and books on philosophy, history, herbalism, and the techniques of numerous martial arts styles (some no longer taught at the Temple due to lack of a master who knows them) line the library shelves. It is customary for a Novice to bring at least one text with when he's accepted into the Temple, leading to a very eclectic collection. There are three tables with benches and stools for use by readers.

17. THE FORBIDDEN LIBRARY

The Forbidden Library is where the Sanctified Elder keeps the Temple's most secret and dangerous texts. One of the Monks is always present in the Library when Novices study there to ensure that they're studying the proper texts and not looking at ones too advanced for them.

Only the Masters and the Sanctified Elder know the secret of opening the Forbidden Library's door (DEF 10, BODY 10; -8 to Lockpicking rolls). It involves turning several prayer wheels inset into the wall in a set pattern and then pressing a series of tiles in the correct order within a short period of time. No Novice or Monk can be there when the Forbidden Library is being opened.

18. STORAGE ROOM

Past the Library the porch continues by another set of stairs to a Storage Room where the Temple's supply of weapons is kept. The doors are locked when weapons aren't in use (DEF 7, BODY 7, -2 to Lockpicking). All of the Masters have keys to the door; one of them checks the contents daily to ensure nothing is missing. If something is missing, an immediate search is made; possession of a weapon stolen from the arsenal is considered grounds for expulsion if a good explanation cannot be offered.

19. MASTERS' PRACTICE ROOM

The easternmost room on the southern side is the Master's Practice Room where they spar with one another and receive instruction from the Sanctified Elder. The Masters sometimes summon exemplary Monks here to show them a specific technique or maneuver for which they (or the Sanctified Elder) feel the student's ready for. A set of stairs leads from the porch outside down to the courtyard.

INHABITANTS

The individuals dwelling in the Temple of the Dragon are all human, and while they primarily come from one of China's many provinces, some come from as far away as Korea, Tibet, and Mongolia. Conflicts based on national origin, not to mention other points of incompatibility, sometimes arise; students who can't resolve such differences reasonably and maturely are expelled.

The normal population at the Temple consists of the Sanctified Elder, five Masters, eight Monks, and fifteen Novices. Currently, thanks to the unrest throughout China caused by the activities of local warlords and the Japanese there are only four Masters, six Monks, and eight Novices in residence at the Temple.

THE SANCTIFIED ELDER

The unquestioned leader of the Temple residents — and, if the stories are true, the actual founder of the Temple itself — is the Sanctified Elder. He looks like an old Chinese man of inexact age, perhaps in his 60s (although Master Wong swears this is the same man who was the Sanctified Elder when he came to the Temple as a young boy, which would make the Sanctified Master over 150 years old at the youngest... if the Master's memory and eyesight are trustworthy). His gentle eyes seem to look into the depths of an individual and see the truths that person hides even from himself. He shaves his head and dresses, as do all the Masters at the Temple, in the robes of a Buddhist monk; occasionally he walks with a staff, although he does not need one. He's always polite and respectful no matter who he's speaking to or what the topic is, but when he faces someone who's truly and unrepentantly evil his eyes grow sad as if in contemplation of the terrible waste they've made of their lives.

Whether he's the same Sanctified Elder who founded the Temple of the Dragon ages ago, the current Sanctified Elder is unquestioningly the most skilled and knowledgeable martial artist there. He possesses an encyclopedic mastery of every martial art or weapon technique ever developed within the borders of China, no matter how obscure or how long thought lost. He does not engage in challenge matches or other bouts; he only teaches others. (In game terms he's primarily a plot device, a source from which the heroes can learn any Martial Arts, weapons element, or the like that they want.) Occasionally he takes a sabbatical for several months and returns with knowledge of any new advances or styles that may have been developed since his last such journey, even supposedly secret ones. (He, for instance, once demonstrated knowledge of *Shou Chih T'ien T'ang* Kung Fu to Dr. Fang's daughter Li Lian, a style which she knew no one outside the Legion Of Crime had been trained in.)

Based on his apparent longevity, and the breadth and depth of his martial skill, there are persistent rumors among the Novices that the Sanctified Elder is not human. (Such rumors have, in fact, been around for almost as long as the Temple

itself.) The most popular speculations are: he is one of China's legendary Eight Taoist Immortals (the discrepancy of the Sanctified Elder's practice of Buddhism notwithstanding); he is a *kioh-lung*, or dragon, who has chosen to impart wisdom on the worthy; or he is a celestial spirit of some sort, perhaps a *tulpa* (an idea given living form) or a ghost who cannot rest until he finds and trains a worthy successor. Less mystically-minded observers suggest that the position of Sanctified Elder has been passed down from father to son through the years, thus explaining the similarity in appearance between the current Sanctified Elder and his predecessors; they point to the Elder's infrequent sabbaticals as providing the opportunity for continuing the family line.

By Temple law, only the Sanctified Elder may instruct someone in Resplendent Dragon Kung Fu, although two of the Masters know enough of the style to teach the basic forms. He spends most of his time instructing individuals (usually Masters and Monks, but occasionally a gifted Novice) in specific special techniques drawn from one of the styles he knows, practicing his own techniques, and meditating. The occasions he addresses the Novices and Monks are noteworthy, and all activity stops when he does so.

MASTERS

Of the four Masters currently in residence, three are Chinese and one is Korean. All are skilled practitioners of the martial arts but retain their individual focus on specific paths; none possesses the breadth of skill the Sanctified Elder does. Each may be considered to know all the maneuvers for each of their specific styles (frequently more), all associated Weapon Elements and related Skills, three to five (or more) special abilities from each of their styles, and a broad range of associated Knowledge Skills. Each of them has many Combat Skill Levels. Typically age has reduced their Characteristics somewhat, but they compensate for this with Extra DCs and the like.

The Masters fall into distinct groups both socially, and when deciding Temple-related issues (such as a candidate's admission): Wong Kien and Jeon Hae Jin in one; Péng Juntao and Ximén Wei-quan the other, with the Sanctified Elder casting the deciding vote on all issues. Careful observers note that the division between the Masters falls directly along the lines of their martial specialties, with the internal stylists on one side and the external stylists on the other.

The Masters are in charge of training within their individual specialties and also supervise the day-to-day activities of the Temple. The number of students is small enough for this to cause no strain, though all four admit it would be easier with a fifth Master.

The eldest Master is Wong Kien, a small man who appears to have shrunk within his own skin as he aged. The physically weakest of the Masters, he is frail and his eyesight is weak; he walks with the aid of a staff and navigates as much by his memorized mental map of the Temple as by actual sight.

The other residents all know his routine and watch for him as he moves about the Temple so they're there to offer assistance when he approaches a set of stairs. He supervises the kitchens, producing surprisingly healthy and filling meals from the limited ingredients available to him. His focus is on internal styles; he teaches Hsing-I, Chin Na Kung Fu, and Pakua, and his philosophic approach to teaching means he serves as a general grandfather figure to most of the residents. He received instruction in Resplendent Dragon Kung Fu when younger, and recalls all he learned, but is not strong enough to use the style to good effect.

Péng Juntao is the next oldest Master, a wiry man with exactly three hairs on his balding head, but very thick and long eyebrows which are brushed to the side and hang to his chin. A staunch traditionalist, he always comes down on the conservative side of any debate or issue (one reason he spoke out against Hae Jin's elevation, and why he always gives non-Chinese students a hard time). His responsibilities include overseeing the Temple herb gardens and leading evening services, tasks he performs with considerable skill if little innovative technique. Brusque in manner, he's an effective teacher even though his technique is more one of learning by repetition than intuitive advance. Students may learn one of several styles from him, most notably Long Fist Kung Fu, Shaolin Dragon Kung Fu, and White Eyebrow Kung Fu. He knows Hae Jin received training from the Sanctified Elder and that knowledge gnaws at him; were she to openly flaunt her training, he might feel compelled to break Temple discipline and seek out knowledge in the Forbidden Library to put her in her place.

Ximén Wei-quan is the tallest of the four Masters and retains much of the strength of his youth despite a layer of fat that softens his frame and rounds his face. He's almost as conservative as Péng Juntao because he sincerely believes things were better in earlier, simpler times. He spends a great deal of time studying the histories in the Temple Library; no one at the Temple save the Sanctified Elder knows more about them than he. His responsibilities include the maintenance of the Temple's physical structure and supervising general house-keeping duties such as laundry and keeping supplies at sufficient levels. He teaches Shaolin Tiger Kung Fu, Shaolin Leopard Kung Fu, and Hung Gar Kung Fu and teaches the Novices weapons. He's the more popular of the two external stylists and prefers to teach physical skills and history lessons simultaneously.

The youngest, the only female Master, and the only Korean to study at the Temple in the last 250 years, Jeon Hae Jin is a figure of some controversy. She's extremely young to be a Master — only in her mid 30s — which makes her over 20 years younger than the next oldest Master. (A persistent rumor is that she was elevated because she is secretly the daughter or granddaughter of one of the other Masters, or even the Sanctified Elder himself.) Hae Jin typically assumes responsibility for maintaining the food gardens and serves as the Temple healer in case of sickness or

injury. She was admitted to the Temple based on her undeniable skills at the Chinese-influenced Korean styles of Hwarang Do and Yu-Sool (she does not teach them without permission from the Sanctified Elder), and elevated based on her rapidly-learned mastery of Tai Ch'i Chuan and Wing Chun. She's one of the two Masters who has received instruction in Resplendent Dragon Kung Fu from the Sanctified Elder, but does not advertise this to the other residents to avoid fostering jealousy. A quiet, gentle woman who teaches with soft-spoken words and a firm, guiding hand, she is in many ways a younger version of Master Wong.

MONKS

Currently, there are six monks residing at the Temple; four are Chinese (Qín Deng, Tóng Baio, Hsi Yin Xuan, and Zhì Hong), one Tibetan (Sang-gye Dorje), and one Mongolian (Demchigiin Batbayar). Five of the monks are male; the only female monk is Demchigiin Batbayar. (Although more properly called a “nun,” only Masters Ximén and Péng refer to her by this title, everyone else using either her name or the standard “monk.”) Their duties center on improving their own skills and conducting basic and intermediate training for the Novices; they rotate among the Masters, assisting them in their daily chores in addition to those tasks.

All of the Monks are skilled martial artists, but they lack the breadth and depth of knowledge that mark a true master. They know most of the Martial Maneuvers for the style or styles they study (those studying more than one style tend to have fewer maneuvers from each), some of the Weapon Elements, and at most one special ability associated with their styles (usually the easiest one to learn). While not as skilled as the Masters, they normally possess 3-4 Combat Skill Levels with their styles and possibly an additional Level or two with a favored weapon.

The Monks are a varied lot in their attitudes, prejudices, and behavior. None step outside the boundaries of Temple law to act on their personal beliefs (at least, none have been caught at it), but they occasionally can and do make things tough on the Novices within the boundaries set out by the Sanctified Elder. Most Monks achieve the level of mastery they desire and depart the Temple, since the waiting list for a position as one of the Masters is long.

Notable personalities in the current group of Monks include:

—Tóng Baio, a burly practitioner of Shao-lin Tiger Kung Fu. Easily the largest and strongest of the Monks (STR 20, 5'10", 216 pounds), he's something of a bully and likes to intimidate the Novices with menacing glances and casual feats of strength. He dislikes non-Chinese (especially Occidentals, and in particular Americans and Englishmen), anyone who appears to have more success with the local village girls (or attractive Novices and Monks) than he does, or anyone who bests

him in a sparring match. Normally he tries to make certain he has at least one crony in each batch of Novices who spies on the others for him and performs small favors in return for his “protection.” He's currently training with the tiger fork, having previously mastered the hook swords.

—Demchigiin Batbayar, a small woman and the least physically powerful of the Monks (STR 10, 5'2", 97 pounds). She compensates for her lack of strength with a precise skill in placing her blows (+2 Extra DCs). Surprisingly, she practices a pair of external styles: Wing Chun and Shaolin Leopard Kung Fu. A determined young woman, her drive to succeed keeps her on her feet when most fighters would surrender the field; she loses more bouts due to an inability to physically continue than by acquiescence. She gets along well with most of the other residents (except Tóng Baio). Away from practice she's a shy girl who likes to discuss philosophy and appears to have no comprehension of how attractive she is (COM 15). She's currently trying to master the jien (Chinese longsword).

—Zhì Hong, the oldest of the current Monks at 27, is a thin man of average height but surpassing quickness (DEX 20, 5'6", 144 pounds). He moves so gracefully he seems to suddenly snap from position to position as opposed to crossing the distance normally. A perpetually dour expression marks his face and he frequently reminds all around him of the worst

WHAT CAN CHARACTERS LEARN AT THE TEMPLE?

Essentially, characters can learn any martial arts-related ability the GM is willing to let them learn at the Temple of the Dragon. Given the time investment required to learn a complete style at the Temple (approximately a decade), the GM might want to restrict characters to learning a maneuver or two, or perhaps a single special ability or technique, per visit. (More extensive training would have to be part of a character's background.) See *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, *Ninja Hero*, *Pulp Hero*, and other *HERO System* books for suggestions about martial arts abilities, learning Martial Arts, and the like.

What characters generally cannot learn at the Temple of the Dragon is a martial arts style or weapons form originating anywhere outside China. Only one Master knows non-Chinese styles, and she won't teach them without permission from the Sanctified Elder even though those styles are derived from Chinese techniques. If a character desires to learn a Chinese style or weapon not listed as being known by a Master, then simply assume the Sanctified Elder knows it, add it to an appropriate Master's skills, or add a fifth Master who does know it.

Characters may not learn Resplendent Dragon King Fu or the use of the Dragon Staff from anyone other than the Sanctified Elder. He only trains persons who are truly brave, truly wise, deserving of this honor, and willing to agree to any restrictions he sets forth.



possible results they could expect from any situation — all the while putting forth every effort to prevent that eventuality from occurring. He's an internal stylist, studying Tai Ch'i Chuan and Pakua, and plans to begin the study of Hsing-I once he's mastered Pakua (he lacks only the Joint Lock and Escape maneuvers before doing so). He's the Monk most often chosen to assist Master Jeon when she acts as the Temple healer. He's currently alone among the Monks in seeking to master a ranged weapon; he stoically endures teasing comments from the others over his decision to learn the use of the iron mandarin duck.

NOVICES

Currently there are eight Novices at the Temple; none have been there for more than three years, and all are Chinese. The youngest is 7 years of age, and the oldest are a twin brother and sister at 16. Most are from families who have arrangements similar to Dr. Fang's with the Sanctified Elder. But the two oldest Novices sought out the temple alone, arriving in tattered clothing with only a small bundle apiece, and petitioned to speak to the Sanctified Elder in private. What transpired between them is unknown, but when they were introduced at the evening meal that night as the newest novices, it was noted neither possessed the bundle he had arrived with.

Typically, Novices stay at the Temple for five to seven years (Li Lian and Ming Wei stayed for eleven years due to their studies of Resplendent Dragon Kung Fu). Then most of them return to the outside world. Some stay and continue their training, advancing to become Monks, and, in turn, assisting newer Novices. Life as a Novice is rewarding but physically challenging, and more than a few decide it's not for them. It's not considered highly unusual to awake in the morning to discover that a fellow Novice has simply vanished, all his belongings gone and his sleeping mat put away as if he'd never been there.

Training is segregated by ability, not age, and the sight of a grown man training alongside a child is not impossible, given his lack of skill or the child's exceptional amount of it. Smaller children are exempted from duties that are obviously hazardous to them, although some try to accomplish them anyway as a way of testing themselves and proving they're ready to be treated as one of the older Novices.

THE TRAINING MAZE

The Temple of the Dragon has a training maze through which individuals must pass to graduate from Novices to Monks, and from Monks to Masters. It's constructed in two layers: the Path of Testing, which the Novice or Monk walks, and another that the testers follow, The Path of Instruction. (On the map the former is marked with a "brickwork" pattern; the latter is white.) The two paths parallel each other. Numerous peepholes allow those on the Path of Instruction to observe the individual on the Path of Testing without themselves being observed.

The Path of Testing has floors paved with bricks identical to those in the Temple courtyard and the walls are smooth-faced stone; the Path of Instruction is plainer.

To rise from Novice to Monk, the postulant must complete the Path of Testing not flawlessly, but to the Sanctified Elder's satisfaction. The passage from Monk to Master, however, requires that the postulant not only complete the maze without error, but that he do so within a set time. In the first case it's not uncommon for an individual to walk the Path of Testing several times before succeeding. In the second, the Sanctified Elder doesn't permit anyone to walk the maze if he deems him not ready spiritually as well as physically — many Monks with Master-level physical skills have been denied the opportunity to test for a position as a Master. In the case of repeat testers, some facets of the maze may be altered to prevent postulants from "learning" the maze.

Unless noted otherwise below, assume any trap in the maze can be perceived with a Security Systems roll at -2, and disarmed with another roll at -2. Very few students have this skill, however, and use of it may be held against characters if the Masters expect them to pass the tests through means other than "cleverness."

1) Entrances: The three entrances to the maze are all secured by stout doors (DEF 8, BODY 8) which are kept locked with a complex lock requiring all five Masters and the Sanctified Elder use their individual keys simultaneously (the Sanctified Elder has the currently unassigned key) to open it (-10 to Lockpicking; remove -2 from penalty for each key in the picker's possession).

2) Rice Paper Covered Pit: This short, dead-end corridor has what appears to be a small pedestal at the end, there's a glass bottle with a colorful liquid inside on the pedestal. Usually the bottle contains the antidote for the drugs used later in the maze, but during a repeat testing it might contain anything from colored water to a gaseous sleeping potion released when the bottle shatters or is opened. Before the pedestal there's a pit covered with rice paper. The pit collapses as soon as the postulant puts his weight on it; as it collapses, the pedestal tips forward and the bottle falls to shatter on the stone floor 35 feet (5") below. A DEX Roll at -2 (other penalties, such as those from injuries or the drugs a postulant might be seeking relief from, also apply) allows the postulant to grab the rim of the pit and avoid the fall. If securing the antidote is an issue, options might include climbing along the walls to reach the pedestal and snatching the bottle, or deliberately leaping into the pit and trying to catch it as it falls (DEX Roll at -3 to catch).

3) Hall Of Pendulums: This stretch of hallway has a series of eight pendulums the Masters swing to strike and impede the postulant. The pendulums strike at OCV 9 and do 5d6 Normal Damage per hit. They're arranged so some move up and down and others move side-to-side; one cannot leap over the lot of them or dash through in one rush, but must instead move cautiously between them with perfect timing.

4) Hall Of Blowguns: There are nine concealed firing positions arranged down the length of this maze section; each position has several actual "firing ports" which vary in height and angle enough to ensure that actual positions remain a mystery. Typically, the blowguns use only standard darts (OCV 7, RKA 1 point), but the testers have drug-tipped darts available if the Sanctified Elder deems them necessary (usually only for repeat testers and Monks testing for Master) (OCV 7, RKA 1 point, Drain STR/DEX/Stun [pick one] 1d6, points return at the rate of 5 per hour or when victim drinks the antidote from #2).

5) Test Of Combat: When the postulant enters this room, he triggers a portcullis that falls behind him to seal off the doorway. Around the corner the postulant finds a waiting opponent chosen especially to test them. The Sanctified Elder often matches postulants against friends (or more than friends) or enemies to see how they react. The opponent has the key to the portcullis. Defeating him is all that's required to win the key; the method of victory isn't necessarily combat, although this is the most common way. Past postulants have won keys by riddle games, *xiangqi* (Chinese chess) matches, and once by the admission that the postulant loved his selected opponent and could not fight her.

6) Hot Coals: This part of the maze has a bed of hot coals 30 feet (4.5") long laid down on the floor and stoked up by bellows worked by the testers. The U-shaped crook in the hall prevents the postulant from simply leaping over the coals. Since they go barefoot or wear simple footwear when testing (heavy shoes aren't permitted), they can't just walk over the coals with impunity either. Walking over the coals in a slow, steady movement without kicking up any of them will allow a postulant to pass unharmed. (No more than 2" movement per Phase and must succeed with an EGO Roll at -2 each Phase; failure results in damage.) Postulants can climb along the walls to avoid the coals, but they're specially smoothed to make this more difficult (-2 to Climbing). Dashing through the coals gets the postulant through in a single round, but inflicts 1d6 Killing Damage with an 8- chance of inflicting a Disabling Effect to one foot.

7) Path Of Dexterity: This portion of the maze has a series of 16 bamboo rods set in sliding sockets. The testers move the rods back and forth to try to trip the postulant. (Rods attack at OCV 6, ignoring penalties for striking specifically at the feet.) A hit does 3d6 Normal Damage and forces the postulant to make a Breakfall or Acrobatics roll at -2 to remain on his feet. Any postulant who falls fails the test. Testers have been known to aim for the burned feet of postulants (particularly unpopular ones) who chose to dash through the coals.

8) Path Of Strength: This section is blocked off by a very heavy gate (800 kg) that the postulant must lift. Once past it, the gate lowers again and locks in place, forcing the postulant to continue on this path. Next is a huge wooden ball (400 kg) the postulant must push along the slightly upwardly



sloping, 78 foot long (12") corridor to reveal the way out. The ball can be rolled a maximum of 2" per Phase with a successful STR Roll. Failing a roll means the postulant must immediately roll again at -2 to prevent the ball from slipping backwards 2". If the Sanctified Elder feels the postulant needs a special lesson, the wooden ball may be replaced with a stone one weighing twice as much.

9) Pit Of Spikes: After the Test of Dexterity, postulants are faced with a 30 foot (4.5") section of the maze without a floor; instead it's a long open pit with a thicket of spikes at the bottom. Along the ceiling is a series of iron rings. As with the Hot Coals, the pit stretches around a 180-degree turn in the corridor, so it can't just be leaped over. Postulants may climb along the walls to the corner, round it, and continue to the other end (make five Climbing rolls at -1 each), or use the iron rings to swing along (five Acrobatics Rolls at -1 each), or they may try to find their own solution. Failure with a Climbing or Acrobatics roll means the postulant falls into the pit, taking 1d6 Killing Damage (and then having to get out without hurting himself further).

10) Arena: Once here, a postulant faces an open, sand-filled arena where he must battle an opponent. There are several opponents for him to choose from, and unlike the Test Of Combat the goal here is definitely to best the chosen opponent in combat. Normally the postulant has three choices in opponents: one who's somewhat superior; one who's an equal match; and one who's slightly inferior. Which opponent he chooses, and how he fights, determines which exit he gets the key to if he wins. Choosing the inferior opponent grants the key to the southern door, choosing the superior opponent grants the key to the northern door, and choosing the equal results in a random selection between the two keys. Once a postulant wins a key, he's told he has a set number of strikings of the gong (usually 9, struck in Segments 4, 8, and 12) in the southwest corner of this room to reach the room of the final test.

11) Hall Of Mirrors: Once through the northern door, the postulant confronts a large room filled with a narrow arrangement of constantly shifting walls covered in mirrors to form a maze within the maze. (The map shows the starting layout, but it's meaningless as soon as the mirrors start to move.) Postulants moving faster than 1" per Phase will

BREAKING DR. FANG'S PACT WITH THE TEMPLE

There are two obvious ways to sever the relationship Dr. Fang and his family has with the Temple of the Dragon. Neither is especially easy, but any hero worth his salt should be used to that!

The first method is to locate conclusive evidence proving Dr. Fang was the one who created the deadly fever from which he saved the Temple. Such evidence could be located in one of the Demon Doctor's laboratories, or in the records stored at one of his central bases (the most complete set of records would be at his Kuku Nor headquarters in China). Either of those locations would prove extremely difficult to locate. Even then, such evidence would be nearly impossible to acquire without extensive planning and considerable good luck (or inside help) — to say nothing of what the Doctor would do to prevent the characters and their evidence from reaching the Sanctified Elder.

The second method would require events to be arranged so that the Doctor or a member of his family somehow breaks the pact made with the Sanctified Elder. The most likely way would be to engineer a situation where someone is maneuvered into killing one of the red deer whose hunting is forbidden. (As with Emperor Chen, the Sanctified Elder would immediately know if the pact was broken.) The Doctor himself would be virtually impossible to trap this way,

Continued from last page

and since they're both aware of the terms of the pact Li Lian and Ming Wei are also wary of such tricks. (Ming Wei might be willing to go along with such a plan to strike at her sister — particularly if Li Lian just inherited leadership of the Legion Of Crime — although she would want to make arrangements to secure any necessary training for herself in another fashion first.) Lok Shing would be the easiest one to trap in this fashion.

run into mirror after mirror, taking 3d6 Normal Damage each time (possibly more, if they move very fast). If a postulant succeeds with a PER Roll at -2 made each Phase he can safely move 2" that Phase. A postulant who moves a total of 10" this way has finished the maze. (To make a more difficult maze, increase the number of inches a character must travel to solve it.)

12) Hall Of Uncertainty: Postulants who win their way through to the southern door find themselves in a 30' long (4.5"), poorly-lit corridor with several turns and a low ceiling (5'). The floor of the corridor has been greased, and there are patches of transparent glass marbles scattered along its length. Moving down the greased corridor no faster than 1" per Phase eliminate the possibility of falling. Moving faster (a maximum of 3" is allowed) means the postulant falls unless he succeeds with a Breakfall roll at -2 per 1" moved above 1". If the character steps on a patch of marbles (encountered on an 11-each Phase; must make a PER Roll at -2 to notice them) double the Breakfall roll penalty.

13) Hall Of The Brazier: This room houses the final test in the training maze. There's a brazier full of hot coals and a door; the postulant must move the brazier to trigger a pressure plate that opens the door. Postulants who lift the brazier (which weighs 400 kg) are branded with dragon symbols on each arm (giving them a Distinctive Feature). Characters who fell in the Hall Of Uncertainty and do not specifically state they're wiping all the grease off themselves must succeed with a STR Roll at -2 before they can lift the brazier no matter how high their STR is. Postulants not wishing to brand themselves will find that any method that shifts or moves the brazier triggers the pressure plate. A postulant who thinks to search and succeeds with a Concealment roll at -3 finds a concealed keyhole that fits the key he got in the Arena (if he kept it); turning the key causes the brazier to swivel off the pressure plate, thus opening the door.

14) Hall Of Judgment: Here the Sanctified Elder awaits postulants to discuss their performance and inform them if they've passed the test or must try again later.

15) Storage Cave: Here are stored replacement poles, spikes, rice paper, and other materials used in the maze. The stone ball for the Path of Strength is also here; it and the wooden ball are made in sections which fit together like a puzzle to form the ball.

PLOT SEEDS

One of Dr. Fang's daughters, finding herself in debt to a PC, sets up a personal meeting with him (Li Lian contacts the character and proposes a meeting on neutral ground; Ming Wei is more likely to slip into the character's booth at a swanky club or await him in the back of his car). If the character acts civilly and meets peacefully, he receives an offer to discharge that debt by arranging an introduction for him at a remote monastery where he may seek out advanced training in the martial arts — the catch being that he can tell no one, not even his closest friends and allies, where he's going or why. Why would Li Lian or Ming Wei do this, since it will make the character a more dangerous opponent? Is it a trap, or is she telling the truth? Or both?

The characters are going about a normal day of training when a message arrives from the village. A nearby warlord, General Jiang Chao-hui, has heard stories that the Temple conceals great wealth and has arrived with a company of soldiers to look into the matter. The Masters quickly call a meeting to explain the situation to the assembled residents, emphasizing that they must show the utmost decorum and humility to the General and his men. This will demonstrate that the Temple has no such material wealth. Of course, this may be difficult when the soldiers prove to be brutal, arrogant, and inquisitive — particularly when the characters and the other residents realize they could easily defeat these rude interlopers. The characters may have to restrain not only their own tempers, but those of the Monks and Novices.

While the Sanctified Elder is on one of his occasional trips outside the Temple, a villager arrives at the gate with a challenge from Quán Haifeng, a disgraced former Monk ejected from the Temple by the Sanctified Elder after Master Wong caught him trying to break into the Forbidden Library. Quán's boastful ultimatum states that he will kill the village children he holds hostage unless Master Wong and his ten best students come down to fight. The villager says there are six well-armed bandits guarding the children. Quán boasts that he found better teachers after he left, and that his training in Golden Demon Kung Fu (see *The Ultimate Martial Artist*, page 67) enables him to easily defeat the Master. Master Wong, however, is physically incapable of meeting this challenge. There is dissension among the Masters concerning who should take his place. Master Péng believes he, as Senior Master, should go; Master Ximén feels he's in the best physical condition and should be the one; and Master Jeon urges that she go, since she's the least experienced and if she fails to defeat Quán the others will know more about the threat. The characters may have a chance to influence the choice by respectfully advancing a well-reasoned argument. With only six Monks at the Temple and the Novices so young, the heroes have a chance to show what they've learned. Of course, those porters Quán brought along may also be his students, giving them a fifteen to ten numerical advantage.



THE TOMB OF KEM-TEHENRAAU-KHANU

Ancient texts and inscriptions on the walls of lost tombs tell the tale of an ancient sorcerer-priest and his wife, followers of the falcon-headed god Montu and the cat-goddess Bast, who were so faithful to their vows that they continued in death to protect the pharaoh and Egypt from the same dangers they guarded them against in life. Lost in the trackless sands, the tomb and its sacred guardians await the day when the last of their masters' vows are complete and they can finally all rest.

HISTORY

When he united a divided Egypt and ushered in the Middle Kingdom, the mighty Pharaoh Mentuhotep I ("The God Montu Is Content") brought with him to the throne the worship of the falcon-headed god for whom he was named. Originally a local god with solar and warrior aspects from the city of Hermonthis in southern Egypt, Montu became the guardian deity of the pharaoh's family, losing his solar emphasis to Amun, the preeminent solar deity in the Egyptian pantheon and becoming focused on his martial aspect. The most prominent servant of Montu in those turbulent days was Kemtehenraau-Khanu ("The Thousandth Bolt Of Distant Black Lightning"), a skilled warrior and sorcerer and a dedicated priest who strove to safeguard Mentuhotep and his family during the 20 years of warfare that led to the reunification of the country. During that time, Kemtehenraau-Khanu met and married a woman who was his equal in every way, Mauabu ("Cat Dancer"), a priestess of Bast, and the two of them battled the mundane and magical enemies of Mentuhotep I side by side.

As they grew older and sensed their time in this world was nearing an end, the couple approached Mentuhotep with a plan. In their decades of service to the pharaoh they had seized from his enemies many objects of dark and evil power, objects which they had not found a way to destroy and which were too dangerous to leave behind when they moved on to the next life. Kemtehenraau-Khanu proposed to have these items of dark power buried with them in their tomb so they would be carried over into the afterlife with the couple, where they could petition the gods to destroy them. Mentuhotep willingly agreed.

Having secured the pharaoh's permission, the pair selected a remote location and had workers carve out the passages and chambers that would become the tomb. Artisans from the temples of Montu and Bast completed the work by decorating the tomb appropriately, and Kemtehenraau-Khanu personally

supervised the design and installation of the traps that would form the second line of defense for the tomb (the first being the remote location). When the tomb was ready the dying couple gathered their most trusted retainers, their children and their children's children around them. The united family swore an oath to protect the tomb and its contents until such time as the last of the items of darkness was destroyed.

The oath sworn, the couple allowed their lives to slip away and were mummified in secret by the pharaoh's own embalmers. Their children and retainers spirited them away in the night, and the pharaoh explained the absence of his most loyal servant and his wife by saying that Kemtehenraau-Khanu had undertaken a mission that took him far from Thebes. In time, the mighty sorcerer-priest and his loyal wife were forgotten, and the tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu slipped silently into the misty ages, remembered only by those that guarded it — and those from whom it needed to be guarded.

TERRAIN

The Tomb is located in a desolate and starkly barren stretch of sun-scorched desert a hundred miles west-southwest of the Valley of the Kings, between it and the Kharga Oasis. There, in a maze of canyons and gorges carved from the rock by wind-blown sand, Kemtehenraau-Khanu selected a remote dead-end canyon and built the tomb where he and his wife would cross over into eternity to complete the tasks they were unable to finish in life. He chose such a remote location primarily so no negative influences from the items buried with the couple could possibly reach the royalty buried in the Valley of the Kings and contaminate them in the afterlife. Additionally, the location made finding and looting the tomb as difficult as possible for despoilers — and meant that the Ushabti (the tomb's protectors) would have time to track and destroy anyone who penetrated the tomb.

There's no naturally-occurring surface water for over 100 miles in any direction, no vegetation or animal life aside from a few scrawny jackals on the region's outer fringes and some small desert rodents, and few landmarks with which to take one's bearings. Even the nomadic desert tribes rarely choose to venture into this region, regarding it as a scorched wasteland lacking even the harsh beauty the desert possesses. The Ushabti have carefully hidden caches of water, food, and other supplies throughout the region, but finding one of them without knowing its location beforehand would be akin to a miracle.

LIGHT/VISIBILITY

In the desert, the sun is brutally bright and harsh, requiring explorers to wear some form of protection for comfort. But there's absolutely no light in the upper level of the tomb once characters are a short distance down the entrance corridor — they must bring a light source or fumble blindly down the halls. The lower level of the tomb is always lit by torches powered by an ancient enchantment placed on them by Kemtehenraau-Khanu himself which allows them to burn eternally without being consumed or producing smoke to mar the ceilings and walls of the tomb. These torches stop functioning if removed from the tomb.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The Tomb is located in a desolate section of desert, so individuals approaching it have to endure extreme heat. In summer the sun reflecting off the sands and cliffs makes the air feel like it's blowing out of a furnace during the day, cooling only slightly at night; travelers can expect temperatures of 46° Celsius (115° F) during the day and 25° C (77° F) at night. Winter weather is not exceptionally cooler, with daytime temperatures of 26° C (79° F) and nighttime temperatures of 0° C (32° F). See pages 439-442 of the *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* for details on handling extreme heat.

This far from the Nile, the weather is unrelentingly dry and rainfall is an unusual occurrence. The most common weather-related threat is a desert sandstorm, which you can simulate by combining the Wind and Rain/Snow effects from pages 440-441 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised* with an Energy Blast ½d6 NND (Self-Contained Breathing or appropriate face coverings) that attacks with SPD 6. Sandstorms have been known to literally move tens of thousands of tons of sand in a single night, burying entire cities and later uncovering them.

LOCATING THE TOMB

Versions of the story of Kemtehenraau-Khanu are written on the walls of temples and shrines of Montu in Hermonthis, Karnak, Djerty, and Thebes, although the complete story is in none of those places. The only places where a complete account may be found are: (a) on the walls of Mentuhotep I's tomb, on a few scrolls penned by scribes of Montu's temple (the Ushabti have recovered all such scrolls of which they're aware; any new scroll coming to light will be the object of intense efforts to acquire it); and (b) on the tomb walls of one of Kemtehenraau-Khanu's greatest enemies. None of these places, however, contain the location of the tomb, merely the fact of its existence.

Hints that will guide searchers to the general location of the tomb may be found on the sarcophagi of early Ushabti stored in the vaults of the Cairo Museum, in the writings stored at the Monastery of St. Catherine in the Nubian Mountains southeast of the Nile (see page 145),

or in the private collections of archaeologists and wealthy dilettantes scattered around the globe. No written record describing the precise location of the Tomb exists; the best information available only pins it down to an area and possibly warns about the Ushabti (which is likely to be misinterpreted as a warning related to the small figurines left in Egyptian tombs, not an organization of living men and women with the same name).

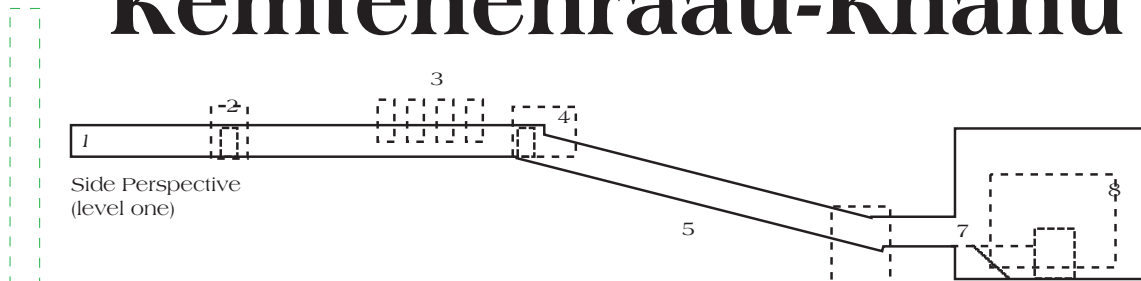
TOMB LAYOUT

The actual tomb is cut deep into the rock wall of the canyon Kemtehenraau-Khanu selected for his final resting place. The entrance is concealed by an artificially-constructed rock formation that makes the cliff face appear solid and unbroken when viewed from straight on (-8 to Concealment rolls to find), but if approached from the north at an angle of less than 45° reveals that there's a natural-appearing opening in the canyon wall behind it. The Ushabti carefully maintain the artificial formation and have replaced it several times in the past with a new one crafted according to the exacting instructions left them by Kemtehenraau-Khanu when the old one became too worn to hide the entrance any longer.

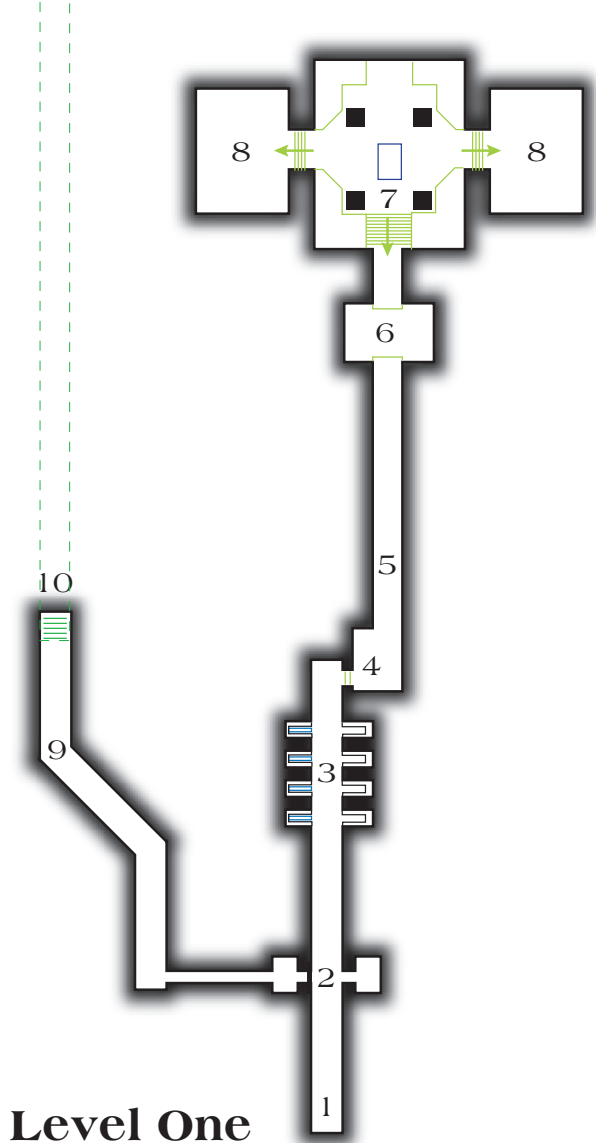
Within the upper level of the tomb, all of the walls are covered in colorful scenes depicting the deeds of Kemtehenraau-Khanu and Mauabu. The pigments have faded over centuries but the hieroglyphs and colors remain clear and understandable. The floors are paved with the same stone that lines the walls and ceiling, and, based on the layer of dust, appear to have never been walked upon (the Ushabti place new dust down as needed to cover their tracks on this level). The ceiling bears no signs of sooty accumulation from torches or lanterns (the Ushabti use the enchanted torches from the lower level to prevent this). The Ushabti remove tell-tale traces left by traps (bodies, blood, and so forth) to prevent their revealing the nature of the tomb's defenses to later invaders, and reset and repair the traps as needed.

On the lower levels the tomb takes on the appearance of having just been constructed. The walls are brilliant and vivid, the pigments so perfectly preserved they appear to have been placed on the walls only weeks before. (Since the Ushabti retouch the walls as needed, this might be an accurate assessment!) The floors are obviously and spotlessly swept clean, and the resulting dust has been taken away. The halls are lit with the magical torches provided by Kemtehenraau-Khanu, making this level appear to have literally been transported from Egypt's past to the present. As with the upper level, the Ushabti always check, clean up after, and reset the traps, although only twice in the history of the Ushabti's watch over the tomb has that been necessary (neither group made it past the Domain Of Mut).

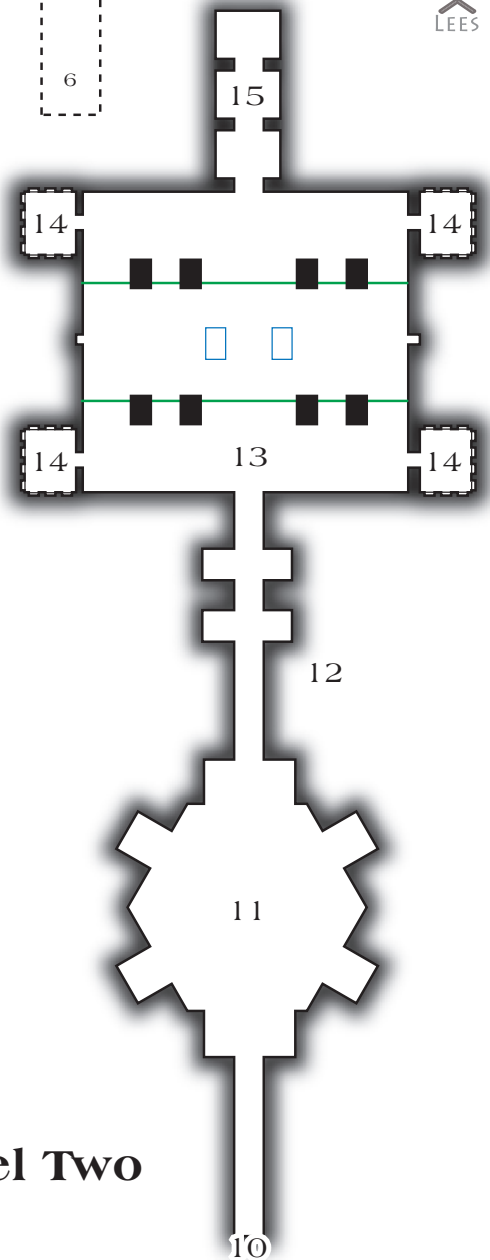
The Tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu



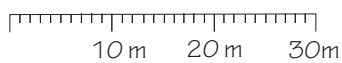
Side Perspective
(level one)



Level One



Level Two



UPPER LEVEL

1) Entrance: A massive stone slab (DEF 10, BODY 15) covered in hieroglyphs warning intruders away and promising any number of hideous and inventive deaths to those who seek to pass seals the passageway off completely — without mentioning who or what lies beyond the slab. The concealed counterweight trigger that rolls the slab back is located 10 feet past the door behind a small protrusion of rock that hinges open to reveal the triggering lever (-6 to Concealment rolls to find, -3 to Lockpicking rolls to open). The slab remains open for 10 minutes and then rolls back into place and the trigger resets; there's another trigger on the other side of the door hidden behind a section of wall depicting Kemtehenraau-Khanu's early days at the Temple of Montu (-6 to Concealment rolls to find, -3 to Lockpicking rolls to open).

2) Warning Statue Niches: These two niches set to either side of the passage contain statues of Montu and Bast that bear powerful warnings against proceeding further. The statue of Montu in the south niche is a dramatic figure with a spear poised to throw in its left hand and a mace in its right; there's a pressure-plate trap in the mouth of the niche (-4 to Security Systems rolls to find, -4 to Security Systems rolls to disarm) that triggers a mechanism that brings the statue's right arm with its stone mace down to strike the character on the head (OCV 9, 1½d6 Killing Damage). The statue of Bast in the northern niche is posed with a clawed hand poised to strike (characters may make an SS: Archaeology or other appropriate Skill roll at -3 to realize this is a very ancient and nontraditional pose for the goddess, whose warrior aspect was emphasized less in later worship). Anyone attempting to enter her niche steps on another pressure plate (-4 to Security Systems rolls to find, -4 to Security Systems rolls to bypass/avoid) that triggers a set of scything blades (OCV 9, 3d6 Killing Damage). Concealed within the niche is a switch (-8 to Concealment rolls to find, -5 to Lockpicking rolls to open) that causes the entire statue to slide to the side and reveal a passage leading off to the north.

3) Ma'at's Wheels: The corridor here has a series of six one-foot wide side passages in the walls to either side; the floors of the side passages slope upwards on both sides. A pair of pressure plates that stretch across the entire floor between the first and second and third and fourth side passages triggers the trap (-5 to Security Systems rolls to find, -5 to Security Systems rolls to bypass/avoid). When triggered, foot-wide large stone wheels (DEF 5, BODY 15) are set free to roll down the slopes, through the passage, and up the slope across the corridor — only to be pulled back by gravity to repeat the process again and again until they lose momentum and stop, blocking the passage. Characters run over by a wheel are crushed horribly (OCV 9, 6d6 Killing Damage). Since the wheels roll in an alternating pattern it's possible to time jumps between them; to do this characters must succeed with an Acrobatics roll at -3 (or a DEX Roll at -5). The wheels remain in place for two hours as a water

weight slowly fills and creates a counterbalance that tips the floor and rolls the wheels back in to place to lock and await the next victim; characters without the patience to wait for that may lift a wheel (each weighs approximately 3,000 kg) back into place so it locks into position.

4) Room Of Restful Repose: This room has an array of food and drink items that appear to have been left here for the use of the tomb's occupants in the next life. The solid food has long since dried to desiccated remnants, but some of the stone jars of water are still sealed and appear potable; they are actually poisoned (Use the write-up for Strychnine on page 487 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*).

5) Hall Of Locusts: This 15" (90 foot) long hallway slopes downward gently to the east. There are numerous pressure plates set into the floor (-4 to Security Systems rolls to find, -4 to Security Systems rolls to bypass/avoid) that trigger dart projectors built into both sides of the passage. Characters have an 8- to step on a pressure plate for every 1" traveled; the trap attacks with OCV 7 and does ½d6 Killing Damage).

6) Well Of Ammit: A 3" (20 foot) wide open pit blocks the entire corridor at this point (characters who elected to run through the Hall Of Locusts should make an Acrobatics roll, or a DEX Roll at -2, or fail to stop in time and plunge into the pit). The pit is 10" (65 feet) deep; characters falling in take 10d6 Normal Damage. The safest way for characters to cross is to make crude bridge of boards from material in the Room Of Restful Repose.

7) False Tomb: This room is laid out as if it were an undisturbed tomb complete with elaborate grave goods and a stone sarcophagus on a raised dais. The artifacts are all fake (in the sense that they were manufactured to be stolen in lieu of the real treasures in the lower level) although authentic in age. The sarcophagus holds the body of one of Kemtehenraau-Khanu's most loyal servants who agreed to risk his body's destruction at the hands of despoilers to protect his master. The treasures here are worth a small fortune on the art market, but anyone selling them will bring the wrath of the Ushabti down on himself when the loyal servants of Kemtehenraau-Khanu track them down through the sales.

8) Sands Of Destiny: These two side rooms contain statues of the gods and more grave goods, all balanced on a trigger for the upper level's final trap. Putting more than 150 pound of extra weight on the pressure plates past the midpoint of the room triggers the trap. Stone walls slide down to seal the entrances and sand begins to fall into the room from concealed ceiling vents, filling it in six Segments and suffocating characters trapped inside (use the Drowning rules on page 424 of *The HERO System 5th Edition, Revised*). Allies of trapped characters can try to find the levers that deactivate the traps, drains the sand out (also taking six Segments), and opens the doors — they're located in the southeastern pillar (-4 to Concealment rolls to find, -2 to Lockpicking rolls to open) for the southern room and the northwestern pillar for the northern one.

9) Stairs To The Lower Level: The passageway behind the Bast niche leads to another corridor that leads to a set of stairs descending into the darkness. The statue resets and slides back out into the niche in 20 minutes, closing the passageway. The release to move it back is obvious from this side.

LOWER LEVEL

10) Lower Level Landing: The long (300 stair) journey down the stairs from the upper level ends on this 3" (20 foot) long landing. From this point forward, the tomb is lit and appears as pristine as the day it was completed.

11) Domain Of Mut: This large high-ceilinged (4.5", or 30 feet) chamber holds a set of guardians that most intruders won't expect: the mummified remains of animals sacred to both Montu and Bast. (See below for character sheet information.) The temple of Montu contributed the specially-prepared mummies of 5 falcons and a sacred bull, and the temple of Bast contributed 50 of the sacred temple cats of Bast, and a pair of royal cheetahs. The mummies animate to attack and defend their master's tomb from anyone not bearing the sacred tattoos of an Ushabti (or accompanied by one who does). The guardians are concealed in a large collection of mundanely mummified animals that include crocodiles, jackals, baboons, ibises, and one extremely large mummified hippopotamus. When the guardians animate, heavy metal bars (DEF 9, BODY 9, weighs 3,000 kg) slide into place at each end of the room, sealing it off so none may escape.

12) The Fourteen States: The walls of this section of corridor portray the journey of Kemtehenraau-Khanu and Mauabu through Tuat (the underworld) to be judged in front of the gods and granted permission to enter the afterlife; in the center of the section is a roaring wall of flame that completely fills the corridor, blocking the way. Spells placed on the walls likewise judge those that pass through the area, weighing their souls to determine if they're good men or selfish, evil ones. When they pass through the flames, those who fail the test are burned with the sacred fire (6d6 Killing Damage), while those who are good of heart and seek the tomb for purer motives may pass unharmed.

Typically any *Pulp Hero* PC should be able to walk right through this trap, though they may not realize that at first. They may have to succeed with an appropriate Skill Roll (such as KS: Arcane And Occult Lore, KS: Egyptian Mythology, KS: Egyptian Myth And Religion, or maybe even SS: Archaeology as a default) to figure out the nature of the trap. A character who succeeds with a roll by 3 or more realizes he can call on Anubis with a certain prayer for protection as well, regardless of whether he's good or evil.

13) Tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu: The actual tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu and his wife, Mauabu, is surprisingly sparse compared to the riches tomb

robbers might be led to expect by the nature of the defenses that guard it. There are grave goods and objects the couple would want to carry into the next life, but the opulence and wealth demonstrated by the pharaohs in their tombs are not here: Kemtehenraau-Khanu and his wife did not go to the next life to enjoy an eternity of ease and plenty, they went there with tasks left undone in this life they knew would continue to the next, and the goods here reflect that. The items in the tomb were made by masters, and are of exquisite craftsmanship, but they're tools not only designed to be used, but bearing the signs that they *were* used and are no mere symbols: the swords, spears, and maces are real weapons; the chairs and tables are designed for utility as well as beauty; even the *senet* set, the couple's final game still in progress, was obviously an item they used in life.

The sarcophagi lie side by side, their heads facing east, at the center of the raised platform that dominates the room. The canopic chests that hold the jars containing their preserved organs are concealed within compartments in the bottom of the sarcophagi (-6 to Concealment rolls to find). As they guarded each other in life in their battles, they guard each other in death as well: Kemtehenraau-Khanu's sarcophagus holds his wife's canopic chest, and hers holds his in return.

The images on the walls tell of the items contained in the four Artifact Niches, listing them by name and telling the names of the wicked men the couple defeated to gain them. Several items of the most powerful and dark nature are deliberately misidentified and the locations given for them are empty, or hold replicas as a final protection against theft.

14) Artifact Niches: These four rooms are filled with niche after niche set into the stone in rows. Most of the niches are empty, bare of even accumulated dust, but there are still over six dozen objects of all descriptions intact within the niches, including amulets, wands, scepters, daggers, small statuettes, a pair of sandals, a still-living scorpion within a sealed glass box, and a blue lotus flower as fresh and supple as if it had been plucked only moments ago. These are the remaining items the Ushabti await the destruction of for their vows to be complete, and the reason for the Tomb's very existence. The Ushabti regularly check the niches and rejoice when one of the items is discovered to have collapsed into dust, seeing this as proof that Kemtehenraau-Khanu and Mauabu still strive to fulfill their vows in the next world and are one step closer to the reward — and rest — they and the Ushabti have striven for since the tomb was built. On such occasions, the Ushabti gather the remaining dust and scatter it widely across the sands of the wasteland outside with prayers of thanksgiving.

15) Hall Of The Gods: Statues of the gods line the walls of these rooms, many of them early versions of the gods not familiar to any but the most dedi-

cated student of ancient Egypt. Some are of local gods who were prominent in Kemtehenraau-Khanu's day but have been forgotten by the world and live on only here. There are two empty places side-by-side on the east wall at the very rear of the Hall — it's there that the Ushabti believe that statues of Kemtehenraau-Khanu and Mauabu will manifest when the last of the items they pledged to destroy in this life or the next have gone down to dust, and the gods reward their last and most loyal servants by elevating them to godhood themselves.

THE ORDER OF THE USHABTI

The children of Kemtehenraau-Khanu and Mauabu together with their most trusted servants and retainers formed the nucleus of the group that chose the name "Ushabti" for itself after the small figurines of servants traditionally placed in tombs to serve the tomb's owner in the afterlife. Over the many centuries since then the group has loyally and faithfully served as guardians and caretakers for the Tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu, choosing only wives and husbands worthy of the task the group had undertaken and raising their children to follow faithfully in their footsteps; a process that continues even today.

CULTURE

The Order of the Ushabti has a single task — the protection of the Tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu — and focuses all of its energies on that goal. Members and their families swear oaths of terrible potency that bind them to the service of the long-dead sorcerer-priest and his wife, oaths which have never been broken in all the centuries since they were first spoken. Those within the Order may only marry individuals deemed trustworthy and honorable enough to become members themselves; if even the slightest doubt exists as to someone's worthiness; the member cannot marry them and has to break off the relationship. In the regrettable event that an unsuitable paramour has been told secrets by a besotted member, the Order has no choice but to kill both individuals to ensure the safety of the Order and their sacred charge. Likewise, when individuals learn too much and come too close to the truth, if the individual is trustworthy the Order absorbs him into its ranks — and if not it eliminates him.

By design, there have never been more than a few hundred members of the Order lest it become so large that it attracts attention to itself and thus defeats its purpose. Since both men and women are equal participants in the Order, its fighting strength is close to 70% of the total membership, giving it a martial strength out of proportion to its size. All members are trained to fight, and while only a small number of the Ushabti are actually under arms at any given moment, the entire fighting force of the Order can be gathered and ready in less than 48 hours.

Many members have occupations that allow them to watch for expeditions (public and otherwise) that might uncover the Tomb. They use their mundane influence to deflect inquiries, obscure information, and even deliberately sabotage such enterprises. Subtlety and guile are the preferred tools in such situations, particularly when dealing with those the Ushabti judge to be of good nature but unfortunate intent, since nonviolent actions are less likely to be traced back to the Order. *In extremis* the Order knows the location of several unspoiled minor tombs located elsewhere in the deserts of Egypt and is not above placing clues to divert expeditions to one of them. On one recent occasion this tactic led the Order into a short conflict with another equally secretive, but smaller, group of tomb guardians out for revenge after the tomb they protected was uncovered and excavated by Dr. Valentine Keene acting on diversionary information the Ushabti placed in his path.

SPEAKING WITH THE USHABTI

The members of the Ushabti are all intelligent men and women, several of whom attended college before accepting the tattoos of membership and who continue to study. The primary languages of the Ushabti are Arabic, English, and Ancient Egyptian, although individual members might speak other languages (particularly French) depending on their interests and education. Ancient Egyptian, the language used for all Order communications and meetings, has no linguistic roots in common with any language other than its direct descendant, Coptic (which is also effectively extinct in the modern world); the two have 3 points of similarity.

RELIGION

The central tenet of the Order is the belief that Kemtehenraau-Khanu and his wife not only still live, but that they're performing tasks set for them by the gods of Egypt in the afterlife. The successful completion of each task is rewarded by the destruction of another of the artifacts interred with the couple. When the last task is performed and the final artifact collapses into dust the pair will be elevated to the ranks of the gods for their faithfulness and piety, and the Order of the Ushabti will be freed from their vows and allowed to find their own destiny. The Ushabti believe they're assisting Kemtehenraau-Khanu in quite literally protecting not only Egypt, but all of mankind, from these dark and evil artifacts until that day.

While they may present themselves as being Christian or Muslim, the Ushabti are all actually devout followers of Montu and Bast, and follow the sacred tenets of those faiths when out of the public eye. No Ushabti knowingly harms a cat (of any type) or a falcon, the sacred animals of their faiths. The facial tattoos each Ushabti wears are stylized hieroglyphs that simultaneously proclaim their faith in the twin gods and act as the focal point of a spell that allows Kemtehenraau-Khanu and Mauabu to look out from their eyes from the afterlife and ensure that their

Ushabti still loyally serve them. They practice the rituals to Montu and Bast in small temples and shrines in their homes, or in existing temples and shrines to their gods in places like Karnak or Bubastis when they can gain access to them with a guarantee of privacy. Those Ushabti who can do so without attracting attention to the group still practice the ancient mummification rituals so that they may join Kemtehenraau-Khanu and Mauabu in the afterlife and assist them in hastening the day when their vows are fulfilled and the Ushabti may, at last, rest.

COMBAT

Whatever their public vocations, all Ushabti are trained warriors prepared to lay down their lives at a moment's notice to protect the Tomb of Kemtehenraau-Khanu, the artifacts that lie within it, and the very secret of the tomb's existence. They train from childhood, as they have for thousands of years, with the traditional Egyptian *kopesh*, a sickle-bladed sword (HKA 1d6+1, STR Min 12); Montu's sacred weapon, the spear (HKA 1d6+1, STR Min 10, +1" Reach, Can Be Thrown); and leaf-bladed daggers (HKA 1d6-1, STR Min 8, Can Be Thrown). As technology has advanced, they've added firearms to their arsenal and are all proficient with the use of many varieties. The standard firearms of the Ushabti are the Webley No. 1 Mk IV revolver (page 302, *Pulp Hero*) and Lee-Enfield SMLE Mk III rifle (page 304, *Pulp Hero*); the group bought many of those weapons and the ammunition for them from a black market British arms dealer named Forsythe several years ago.

INDIVIDUALS

SIAMONTU

13 STR	18 DEX	15 CON	13 BODY
18 INT	15 EGO	16 PRE	14 COM
6 PD	4 ED	4 SPD	6 REC
30 END	30 STUN		

Abilities: Acting 13-; Breakfall 13-; Climbing 13-; Disguise 13-; Language: English (basic conversation; Arabic is Native); Language: French (basic conversation); Language: Ancient Egyptian; Navigation 13-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Dancer 11-; Riding 13-; Shadowing 13-; Stealth 13-; Survival (Desert) 13-; Tracking 13-; WF: Common Melee Weapons and Small Arms

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Feature: Facial Tattoos; Hunted: Enemies Of Kemtehenraau-Khanu; Psychological Limitation: Fanatic Follower Of Kemtehenraau-Khanu; Social Limitation: Burdens Of Leadership; Social Limitation: Woman

Notes: Her father hoped Safiye bint Kemal would never need to be anything more than a loyal and loving wife and mother, but she had other dreams, dreams of becoming a warrior, an Ushabti, one of the servants of Kemtehenraau-Khanu. As did all the children of the Ushabti, she learned early to wield the spear and kopesh of the ancient Egyptians as well as the firearms of the modern. Wearing the traditional mask of the Ushabti, she rode alongside her brethren when they crept into the night to seek out the tomb of their master. Alongside them she fought when they surprised a crew of would-be tomb robbers led by Dr. Emil Locke; after Dr. Locke fled in defeat, she held her brother as his life bled out into the desert sands. Their father having died years before, someone from her lineage had to become the group's leader, and except for her three older — and married and quite pregnant — sisters she was the last surviving child of Kemal bin Mustafa. Safiye, therefore, put aside any chance for marriage and children to become the next in a line unbroken back to the original servants of the sorcerer-priest: Siamontu, honorary child of the god Menthu, chief of the Ushabti.

When not acting as Siamontu, Safiye wears traditional feminine Arabic garb (including the veil, which hides her facial tattoos). She moves gracefully and puts forth a quiet, serene, and subservient front. As Siamontu, she wears garb similar to that of the other Ushabti, including the turban and veil, and carries a short spear, steel kopesh, and Broom-handle Mauser C96 (page 303, *Pulp Hero*) she took off a would-be tomb robber. Her speech is crisper, her movements more decisive, and her demeanor more forceful.

Safiye would like to marry, or at least have some sort of relationship, but any husband she accepts will have to take second place to her duties as Siamontu.

NASIR BIN IBRAHIM

8 STR	13 DEX	10 CON	10 BODY
18 INT	15 EGO	18 PRE	10 COM
3 PD	2 ED	2 SPD	4 REC
20 END	20 STUN		

Abilities: Running -4" (2" total); Acting 13-; Bribery 13-; Bureaucratics 13-; Concealment 13-; Conversation 13-; Cryptography 13-; Deduction 13-; Forgery 13- (Art Objects); Forgery 13- (Manuscripts); KS: Egyptology 18-; KS: Artifacts 15-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Museum Curator 13-; PS: Ushabti 13-; SS: Archaeology 13-; Security Systems 13- Streetwise 13-; Survival (Desert) 13-; WF: Small Arms; Linguist: 1) English (fluent conversation); 2) German (fluent conversation); 3) French (fluent conversation); 4) Ancient Egyptian (fluent conversation); 5) Coptic (fluent conversation); 6) Hebrew (written only); 7) Hieroglyphics; Contacts (30 points' worth around Cairo and in the Archaeological World)

75+ Disadvantages: Age (40+); Hunted: The Ushabti (watched only); Physical Limitation: Bad Leg; Psychological Limitation: Fanatic Follower Of Kemtehenraau-Khanu; Social Limitation: Subject to Orders

Notes: Nasir bin Ibrahim was raised from infancy to be one of the warriors of the Ushabti, but a fall at the age of twelve changed that. His leg was shattered and never healed correctly, leaving him with a severe limp (he has only 2" Running). Nasir, however, was highly intelligent with a quick ear for languages. After graduating from the local secondary school, went on to attend Oxford University on scholarship, receiving his degree in Egyptology.

PLOT SEEDS

Randall Irons approaches the characters for their assistance. It seems that "Colonel" Bruce Forsythe has stolen yet another shipment of arms from a British armory, this time in Damascus, and rumor is he plans to sell it to the same group who bought another shipment several years earlier. Can the PCs find the buyers, stop the sale, and perhaps catch Forsythe?

The characters have learned that they only way to foil the latest plot of the Cult of Ehbek-reme (*Hero Plus Adventure 13: Curse Of The Vulture-God*) is to use an Egyptian magic item, lost since the days of the founding of the Middle Kingdom. Vague rumors have led the characters to the temples of Montu at Karnak. In Thebes, they're attacked by a gang of thugs, and an oddly familiar Egyptian man steps in to help them. Wounded in the battle, he tells the characters he knows someone who can help them, and with his dying breath gasps out, "Siamentu."

Achmed "Benny" ben Ali approaches the characters asking for their help. A strange — but beautiful — Egyptian lady has hired him to recover an artifact stolen from her family. The lady is actually Siamentu, and the artifact is one taken from Kemtehenraau-Khanu's tomb by a renegade Ushabti who has since paid the ultimate penalty.

Since then he's acquired a position with the Cairo Museum and moved up through the ranks to his present position of Assistant to the Director. In that position he has many contacts in the Department of Antiquities who pass on to him information about proposed archaeological expeditions. He also has contacts in the Cairo underworld, which he mines for information about artifacts coming onto the market.

Bin Ibrahim does not have the distinctive facial tattoos borne by most of the Ushabti because they'd interfere with his ability to move about in society. He does, however, have tattoos hidden under the (now thinning) hair over his ears, which proclaim his faith in the twin gods and act as the focal point for a variation of Kemtehenraau-Khanu's spell.

TYPICAL USHABTI

14 STR	14 DEX	13 CON	12 BODY
10 INT	10 EGO	13 PRE	10 COM
4 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	6 REC
26 END	26 STUN		

Abilities: Climbing 12-; Stealth 13-; Streetwise 12-; Survival (Desert) 11-; Fringe Benefit: Member of Ushabti Legion

75+ Disadvantages: Distinctive Feature: Facial Tattoos; Hunted: Leader of Ushabtis (Watched); Psychological Limitation: Fanatic Follower Of Kemtehenraau-Khanu; Social Limitation: Subject To Orders

Notes: The present day Ushabti are the descendants of the original followers and servants of Kemtehenraau-Khanu. They're fanatically loyal to the cause of the Ushabtis and willingly sacrifice their lives to serve Kemtehenraau-Khanu and his purposes.

MUMMIFIED ANIMALS

You can create character sheets for the mummified animals found in the Domain of Mut can by taking the normal character sheets for the animal from *The HERO System Bestiary* — the Falcon is on page 137, the Bull (use the Cattle sheet) is on page 141, the Temple Cat (use the Domestic Cat) is on page 143, and the Cheeta is on page 144 — and adding the Corporeal Undead Template from page 28 of *The HERO System Bestiary* plus the following powers:

- 30 *Undead Body*: Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%; Does Not Work Against Magic Or Fire (-1)
- 20 *Undead Body*: Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%; Does Not Work Versus Magic (-½)

For GMs wishing to present more of a challenge to characters, simply add to the mummified animals that can animate from the listed stock available. In *The HERO System Bestiary* the Hippopotamus is on page 166, the Crocodile is on page 149, and the Baboon (use the Chimpanzee sheet but add a ½d6 HKA bite) is on page 148.

XINCA-HOL



Lost in the mountains looming along Guatemala's Pacific Coast is a remote valley where ancient Mayan kings stored their treasures under the protection of the pygmy worshippers of Camazotz, the dreaded bat-god. The forgotten descendants of those priests still guard the treasures left there, although they now release them into the care of the mighty god Huracan Thunderbolt's black-clad minions when they drop from the skies in their bird-chariots to collect tribute for the Lord of Lightning.

GEOGRAPHY

Xinca-Hol is located deep within the central spine of the mountains that run along the Pacific coast of Guatemala. Not itself volcanically active, or in an especially volcanically active area, the valley is geologically stable, having changed little in the time it has been occupied. It sits high up in the mountains, somewhere over 10,000 feet, and were it not for the recessed depths of the valley, breathing would be difficult for visitors and natives alike. The mountains surrounding Xinca-Hol are formed of dense stone and weather slowly, although they possess a number of fissures and cave formations which date back to the upheaval that formed the mountain chain.

Fresh water enters the valley through a waterfall that feeds out of the largest cavern opening in the cliff walls surrounding Xinca-Hol. It collects in a lake also formed by intermittent streams fed by rainfall both within the valley and in its immediate area. The lake drains out underground through seepage, rejoining the local aquifer. The soil is rich; the heavy vegetation covering the valley floor constantly replenishes it as plant matter dies and rots in the humid weather.

LIGHT/VISIBILITY

Because of the high peaks that surround it, Xinca-Hol receives a shorter period of direct sunlight during the day than is normal for the tropics, but still enough to keep the vegetation lush and green. Its nights are slightly darker because the moon remains below the viewing horizon many days out of the lunar cycle, but not enough to create an extra PER Roll penalty for non-residents (it's just that "dark night" penalties apply more often). The city itself is well-lit by torches and fires at night, the natives having nothing to fear from reflected lights or distant observers.

The House of Darkness, on the other hand, is a stygian pit that might well be, as the pygmies

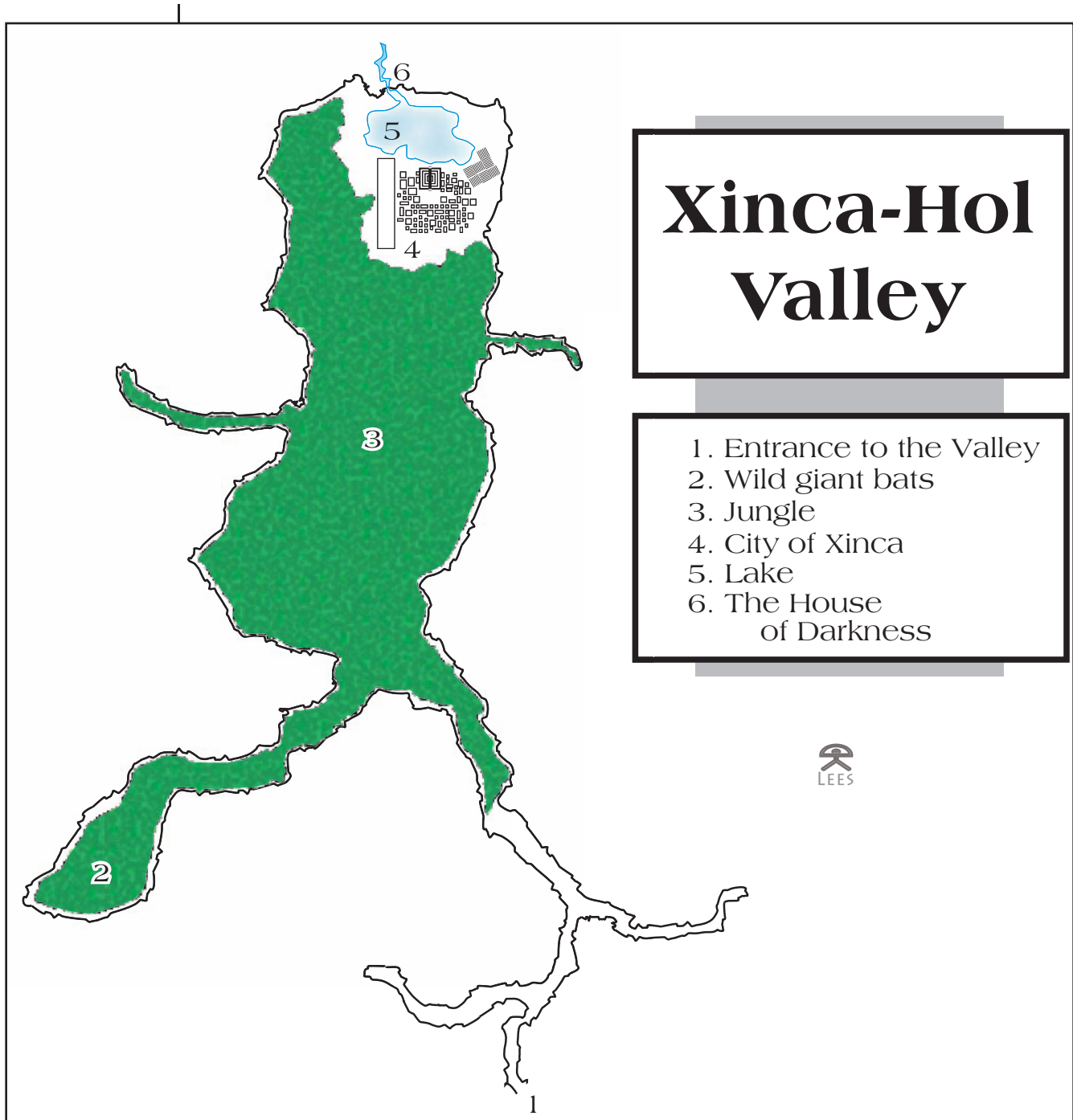
believe, the gateway down to Xibalba, the Mayan underworld. The towering mouth of the cavern opening lets in a considerable amount of light — but a short distance inside the light fades, leaving nothing but a blackness that seems to stretch on forever. Nightvision helps normally for a distance past the circle of light that makes it into the caverns, but beyond that dim arc, the caves are so pitch-black that characters without a light source are effectively blind. Even the bat-riders don't venture further without good reason; they fear the demons that live there in the darkness between this world and the next.

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The weather in Xinca-Hol is hot and humid during the day; the city's altitude provides only slight relief from the temperatures found in the carpet of jungle that spills out below the remote valley. Daytime highs average about 32° Celsius (90° F) with occasionally oppressive humidity. Nighttime lows are often scarcely more than ten degrees cooler. Seasonal precipitation fluctuations occur, but because of the valley's Pacific Coastal location there's no dry season — rain is an almost daily occurrence. The rainy season lasts for several months, and during those months it frequently rains day and night for several days at a time. (The bat-riders are essentially grounded during these times.) Frozen precipitation of any kind is unheard of; there aren't even any legends of its existence among the natives.

VALLEY LAYOUT

Xinca-Hol is located within a high-walled valley deep in the mountains of Guatemala, far from any human habitation. It appears on no map and is located most easily from the air, although one needs to know in general where to look (or possess an incredible amount of blind luck) to find it even then without an arduous undertaking. The valley's only land-based access to the outside world is through a long, narrow, steeply winding canyon many miles long — long enough that the natives have fashioned a series of shelters cut out of the living rock halfway through because the journey takes two days. Several other canyons let into the valley in places above the valley floor, but none allow passage for foot traffic; only birds — and the Sacred Bats — can pass through them. Climbing the cliffs is easy for the first few hundred feet, and becomes increasingly more difficult at higher elevations as the rock walls become more and more



sheer and smooth as they increase in height. Even the Sacred Bats cannot find purchase on the rock face after a thousand feet in most locations.

The floor of the valley is almost a mile below the level of the surrounding peaks. Despite the mountains and cliffs surrounding it, it's surprisingly flat — the slopes that exist are, at best, gentle. A thick carpet of jungle covers the valley floor like a green sea, the tops of the trees moving in response to the winds that sweep through the valley like waves on the ocean.

THE HOUSE OF DARKNESS

At the far northern end of the valley is an immense vertical cavern mouth that looks as if a god slashed the stone of the mountain open in anger, splitting it asunder for almost half a mile. The pygmies refer to it as the House of Darkness, after the inner chambers of Camazotz's temples where no light reaches. A waterfall spills from the western side of the fissure, falling twelve hundred feet to the valley floor where it feeds a lake separating the cavern from the rest of the valley.

OTHER CAVES

There are a number of smaller caves in the cliff walls around the valley. Some contain the tombs of lesser Mayan kings and priests who came to Xinc-Hol to ensure their final rest would be undisturbed but who were not deemed worthy to be buried in the temple vaults. Others hold nothing more than dust and cobwebs. Most of the cave mouths accessible to the natives on the northern half of the valley have been walled closed by stones etched with protective spells and blessings to prevent the demons in the darkness from escaping through them. The southern caves and those too high for the pygmies to reach have been left alone as nesting places and lairs for the valley's birds, animals, and the few Sacred Bats that do not dwell inside the House of Darkness.

THE CITY

The city of Xinc-Hol is built on the shores of the lake opposite the cavern mouth so the priests in the Temple of Camazotz can look across the waters and keep watch on the House of Darkness. The rest of the city is arrayed in a semi-circular arc on the opposite side of the Temple from the lake. Crops are grown on the eastern side, and a few fishing boats move out onto the lake from that side, but most lake traffic is conducted by the priests and warriors of Camazotz who journey daily from the Temple to the House of Darkness to train with the Sacred Bats or to undertake missions for the High Priest. To the west of the Temple is an open stone-paved plaza that ends at the lake's edge. It's newer than the other structures in the city, and is where Huracan Thunderbolt's minions land their bird-chariots.

WILDLIFE

The valley of Xinc-Hol and its Sacred Bats were discovered by the Maya during what archaeologists classify as the "Pre-Classic" period of their history (the priests of Camazotz in the city have the date recorded as being the equivalent of 1800 BC). Members of the priesthood selected partly for their extreme shortness journeyed there as soon as it was discovered. Their goal was to build a city and temple there to honor their god and help his Sacred Bats guard the House of Darkness, the entrance to Xibalba. Otherwise the demons dwelling there might find their way into the light and devour the world. Over the course of the following centuries, the pygmy priests took wives and increased the population of Xinc-Hol to better serve their god. They learned to tame and ride the Sacred Bats to assist them in their work — work they carry out to this day.

FAUNA

Countless species of small animals, and more than a few large ones, live in the valley of Xinc-Hol including monkeys, deer, birds, and snakes. Most of them don't represent a danger to either the natives or to PCs. A variety of poisonous tree frog unknown to modern science lives near the House of Darkness; the locals hunt it for the poisonous secretions on its skin, which they use to envenom their blowgun darts. There are a few jaguars that occasionally prey on the natives' goat herds or a lone native, but they're also a sacred animal to the Maya and thus allowed to hunt as they please unless they claim a native's life. If such a thing happens, the man-killer is hunted down and slain in a ritualized ceremony.

The only truly unusual form of animal life within the valley is the great Sacred Bats of Camazotz that dwell in the House of Darkness. Far larger than any bat known to the modern world, the Sacred Bats are the apex predators of the valley and the surrounding mountains, having killed or driven off all other animals that sought to challenge their rule. Travelers occasionally hear their hunting screams, but attribute them to the winds higher in the mountains — or the demons their mothers whispered about to them when they were children.

FLORA

The plant life in the valley is lush, green, and utterly ordinary for the jungles of Guatemala. Dense trees and undergrowth fill the basin of the valley, with hanging vines and creepers dangling down to the ground as if the jungle were a web woven by some mythic spider to keep trespassers away. Flowers abound in season, giving the jungle a thick perfume that clings to garments and skin like the finest scents sold in Europe and America. Many of the plants have medicinal values long forgotten by the lowlanders but still carefully preserved in the codices of lore and oral traditions of the pygmies of Xinc-Hol. The priests of Camazotz can perform remarkable feats of healing thanks to this knowledge, which they guard jealously.

PEOPLE

The only human inhabitants of the valley are pygmies of Mayan extraction — the entire gene pool of Mayan pygmies, in fact. Their ancestors, all priests due to their short stature, moved here thousands of years ago. They're the only evidence there ever were Mayan pygmies. Occasional outsiders have found Xınca-Hol, or simply traveled too close to it, and been made prisoners, but none have remained prisoners for long before being sacrificed to the god Camazotz, leaving the city completely unknown to the outside world...

...unknown, that is, until a thunderbolt fell from the skies to crash near the Temple during a storm so powerful the High Priest feared he had failed in his duties and some of the demons had escaped to do battle with the Lightning Lords who dwell in the four corners of the heavens. When the priests rushed to the scene, they found it had not been a thunderbolt that fell to earth but a bird-chariot like the ones the gods rode in the skies. As they watched, a man-shaped figure stepped out of the burning bird-chariot that still had bolts of lightning playing across it and stood before them with the lordly air of a god accustomed to obedience. Garbed all in black and marked with sacred lightning bolts at the shoulders, wrists, waist and legs, and with the image of another lightning bolt wrapped around his head and eyes like a crown, it was clear who it was they beheld: Huracan Thunderbolt, the oldest and most powerful of the Mayan lightning gods.

The Skymaster, for his part, considered himself extremely lucky just to find a valley in the mountains large enough for him to attempt a landing after the prototype Static Discharge Lightning Cannon installed on his private plane malfunctioned and started to draw lightning strikes to it instead of emitting them. The idea that there'd be natives living there never occurred to him in the frantic moments of the crash. Even if it had, never would he have envisioned a valley full of Mayan pygmies still living in the manner of their ancestors — or those gigantic bats he now saw swooping overhead, bearing riders. Better still, from their attitudes of deference, the pygmies believed him to be a god fallen from the heavens. No, not even in his wildest dreams would he have envisioned such a thing... but now that his destiny had brought him here, he knew exactly what he should do. If it were a god they thought him to be, well then, it was not so large a step for the Master Of The Air to take.

A decade after that fateful night, the pygmies of Xınca-Hol still serve Camazotz as they always have — but they also now assist the god Huracan Thunderbolt in his war against the demons that have escaped into the skies from other locations (Huracan has assured them they, and they alone, have kept their faith and prevented any such escapes through the House of Darkness). They do this by making offerings of gold from the extensive Temple treasure vaults, gold that Huracan forms into bolts of sacred lightning with which to destroy the demons they both oppose.

In return for their offerings (but not worship, lest they weaken their ties to Camazotz and thus the bindings on the House of Darkness) Huracan promises to come to their aid if the city's threatened or the demons break free of the House of Darkness. He has given them a special altar with which they can summon him (a cleverly-disguised radio powered by a hand crank that makes sparks as it sends out a pre-set signal to the Skymaster). The pygmies built a new plaza to make it easier for the bird-chariots to land when Huracan's servants (or the god himself) came to collect their offerings. Twice in the past decade, both in the last four years, Huracan has even brought his great black cloud-chariot down into the valley on Camazotz's holy day to do honor to the bat-god and his most loyal servants.

APPEARANCE

The pygmies of Xınca-Hol stand an average of 3'10" tall and weigh an average of 30 kg (65 pounds), usually with a fairly balanced and toned build for their size. No native has ever stood taller than 4'6" tall, and it's been several generations since such a giant existed in the population. They universally have black hair and brown or black eyes, and their skin is a naturally dark tan in color. Men wear their hair short in a style reminiscent of a "bowl cut"; women wear theirs longer and hold it up with combs or pins while working. Everyday dress for men is a belted loincloth and a sleeveless vest; for women it's a one-piece wrap held in place with a pin. Neither gender wears shoes. On ceremonial occasions clothing is more elaborate, and frequently can weigh a third as much as the wearer and make him look like a creature out of Mayan myth.

CULTURE

The pygmies of Xınca-Hol live in virtually the same manner as their forefathers did thousands of years ago. They raise maize and other crops, herd goats, catch fish, and trap animals and birds in the traditional manner. Family units tend to live in clusters, with several generations all dwelling adjacent to one another and sharing in the inter-family workload of child-rearing, cooking, and so forth. There are craftsmen, farmers, goatherds, fishermen, and more — in short, all the occupations that would be found in a thriving Mayan temple city. The population works to support and maintain the temple and the cadre of warriors who serve there, seeing their labors as a sacred duty and not a burden.

Xınca-Hol's civic leadership and the religious hierarchy are one and the same. The High Priest leads the community, with lower-ranking members of the priesthood fulfilling other administrative functions. Thanks to the city's religious focus, the inhabitants frequently hold (often-elaborate) festivals to honor Camazotz and the other gods. Huracan has recently enjoyed a renewed popularity — one recent festival featured a mock-up of his "sacred cloud-chariot" large enough that it took three celebrants to carry in the procession, with several children wearing copies of his "sacred rega-

lia” cavorting around and throwing yellow reeds at other marchers in imitation of Huracan’s sacred lightning bolts.

SPEAKING WITH THE NATIVES

The average inhabitant of Xinca-Hol speaks a version of Mayan similar to the Quiche dialect without loan words from Spanish or English. It has three points of similarity with Quiche and many other Mayan dialects.

Several priests know English as the “basic conversation” level thanks to their contact with Skymaster and his minions. The High Priest and three of his underpriests also speak Skymaster’s Code Talk. They believe it’s the language used by Huracan to speak to the lesser sky and air gods under his control and consider themselves highly honored to have been taught it.

XINCA-HOL POISONS

Bite Of Camazotz: RKA 1 point (5 Active Points); OAF (-1), Limited Range (10”; -¼) (total cost: 2 points) **plus** Drain CON 2d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1), NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Limited Range (10”; +¼) (65 Active Points); OAF (-1), RKA Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 1 Segment after successful attack; -½), Gradual Effect (2 Segments; 1d6/1 Segment; -¼), Linked (to RKA NND; -½), 10 Charges (-¼) (total cost: 16 points) **plus** RKA 2d6, NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Does BODY (+1) (90 Active Points); OAF (-1), Initial RKA Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 1 segment after victim is shot; -½), Gradual Effect (2 segments; 1d6/1 segment; -¼), Limited Range (10”; -¼), 10 Charges (-¼) (total cost: 24 points). Total cost: 42 points.

Breath Of Camazotz: RKA 1 point (5 Active Points); OAF (-1), Limited Range (10”; -¼) (total cost: 2 points) **plus** Drain CON 2d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1), NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Limited Range (10”; +¼) (65 Active Points); OAF (-1), RKA Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 1 Segment after successful attack; -½), Gradual Effect (2 Segments; 1d6/1 Segment; -¼), Linked (to Drain STUN; -½), 10 Charges (-¼) (total cost: 16 points) **plus** Drain STUN 3d6, Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Hour; +1), NND (defense is Life Support [appropriate Immunity]; +1), Ranged (+½) (97 Active Points); OAF (-1), Initial RKA Must Do BODY (-½), Extra Time (onset time begins 1 Segment after victim is shot; -½), Gradual Effect (3 Segments; 1d6/1 Segment; -¼), 10 Charges (-¼) (total cost: 30 points). Total cost: 56 points.

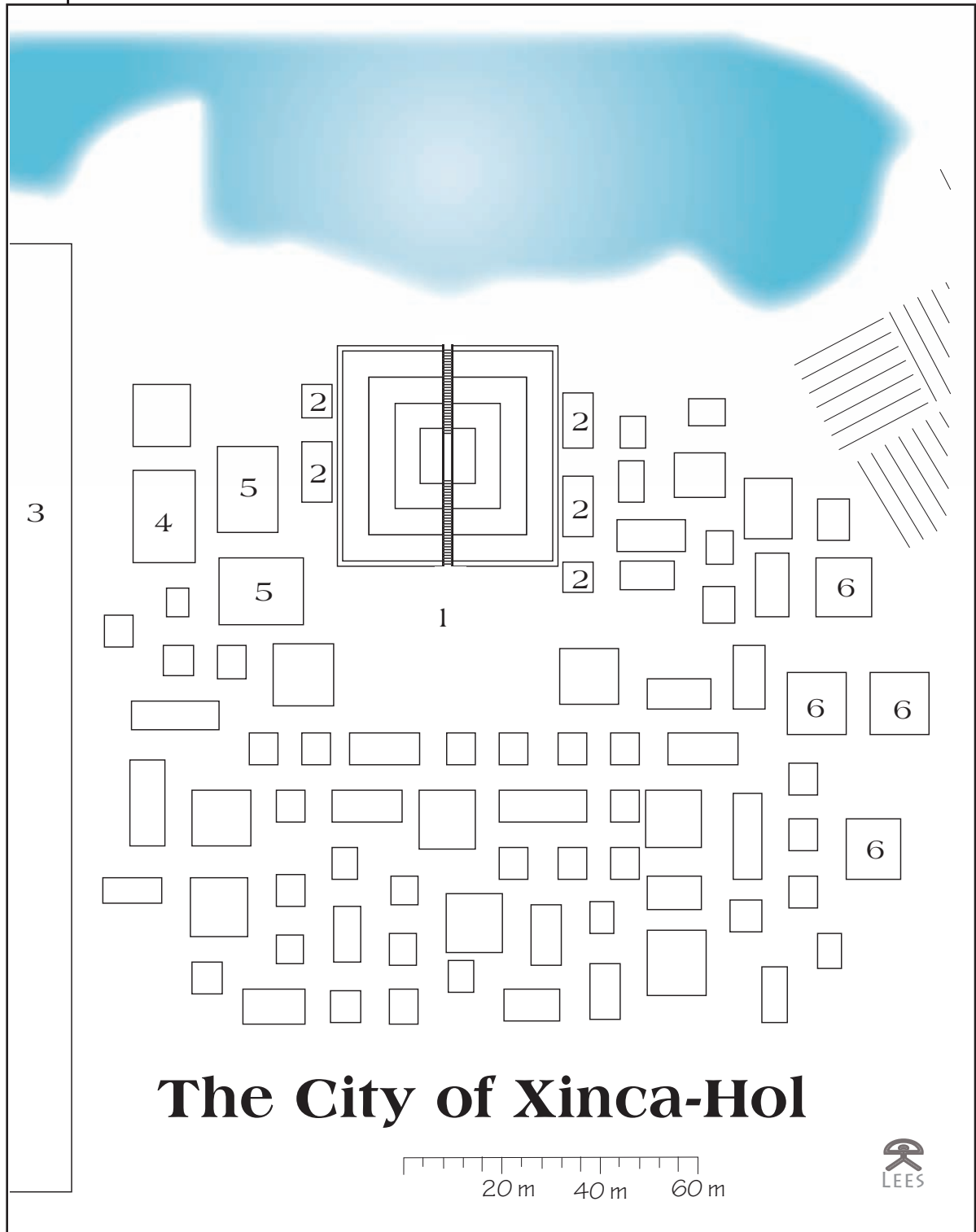
RELIGION

While all of the Mayan gods have shrines and ceremonies within Xinca-Hol, the bat-god Camazotz is the focus of the city’s existence. The Temple of Camazotz, the largest man-made structure in the valley, is a step-pyramid reaching 15” (100 feet) high, with stairs on the north and south faces leading to the temple atop it. The temple buildings around the pyramid (#2 on the city map) have over 200 rooms spread across three irregular stories; all built around a dozen courtyards. Beneath the temple are the treasure vaults of Xinca-Hol — chambers holding riches sent by generations of Mayan kings as tribute to Camazotz in return for safeguarding the House of Darkness.

The worship of Camazotz is conducted in the same manner as that of most other Mayan gods, with small sacrifices, prayer, and ceremony. Camazotz does not demand human sacrifice from his followers, but happily accepts the sacrifice of enemy warriors if they’re available. (Captured trespassers into the valley or its surroundings have filled this role for many centuries.) The priests make small sacrifices of their own blood, spilling it onto paper that’s then burned as a sign of devotion. Festivals feature natives in costume reenacting scenes from Mayan myths and legends, though Camazotz’s role is both more prevalent and less malevolent than traditionally presented in surviving versions of the stories.

And of course, religious officials have special functions. The priests perform special ceremonies to reinforce the barriers Camazotz erected within the House of Darkness to bar the demons that dwell in the darkness between this world and the Underworld from escaping. Temple warriors train daily to be ready in case the demons find a way to escape those barriers and make their way to the surface. To both classes, practice with the blowgun or training the Sacred Bats and learning to ride them is as much a religious duty as a military one; both priests and warriors dedicate themselves to it with the same drive.

Priests normally dress in regalia reminiscent of a bat, complete with a helmet that makes their head appear to be that of a stylized bat, and fabric “wings” extending from wrist to ankle on both sides, attaching to bracelets, anklets, and a belt to present an image of bat’s wings. Ceremonial versions are more elaborate. Warriors wear a slimmer version of the helm and a special harness links them to their bat-mount and a mottled poncho that serves as camouflage on the ground.



WARFARE

Because of their shortness (and thus relative weakness), the pygmies of Xınca-Hol have become masters of ambush and nighttime warfare using their trademark blowguns. During the day their tactics are always the same: they hide in trees or the undergrowth to camouflage themselves, then fire volleys of blowgun darts at their opponents, trusting to their poisoned darts to bring down the target. At night they use the same system with the addition of an aerial assault by one or more Sacred Bats and their riders if they're available. If they think they have sufficient numbers (usually two to three pygmies per opponent), they'll ambush entire groups of normal-sized men at once, otherwise they try to isolate individuals and pick them off one by one for as long as possible. They never stand and fight when they can flee to ambush again unless ordered to do so by the priests, something that would only happen if the city or Temple were directly threatened or the demons they stand guard against escaped into the valley.

They pygmies have two different venoms for their blowgun darts, referred to as the *Bite Of Camazotz* and the *Breath Of Camazotz*. The *Bite Of Camazotz* is a deadly extract made from the poisonous skin secretions of the species of frogs living in and near the House of Darkness. They use this version only in direct defense of their city and the House of Darkness or on the instructions of the High Priest. The second version, the *Breath Of Camazotz*, also comes from the skin secretions of the frogs that dwell in and near the House of Darkness but has been diluted with extracts from several species of plants also found in the area so that merely renders the victim unconscious. The pygmies normally use this version when hunting both game and trespassers.

The average warrior carries a blowgun with at least 10 poisoned darts (see text box), an obsidian knife (HKA ½d6, STR Min 4), and either a camouflaged poncho (+2 to Concealment and Stealth rolls in appropriate situations) or the leather harness and helm of a bat-rider (+1 to Riding with the Sacred Bats; Armor (1 PD/1 ED) covering Hit Locations 3-5). All other adult male pygmies typically carry a knife; those working outside the city proper also carry a blowgun and 10 darts.

CITY MAP

The City of Xınca-Hol is built in the traditional Mayan style — buildings of large stone blocks fitted closely without mortar, lintels carved in deep reliefs, and murals with bright colors.

1. **Temple of Camazotz**
2. **Temple Administrative Buildings**
3. **Plaza of Huracan Thunderbolt**
4. **Guest housing** for Huracan Thunderbolt and his minions. These buildings are of relatively new construction, as they were built for guests approximately twice as tall as the usual residents of the city.
5. **Bat Rider Barracks**
6. **Food Storehouses**

All buildings not otherwise designated are houses.

INDIVIDUALS

HIGH PRIEST TITOMAJ

6 STR	13 DEX	13 CON	8 BODY
15 INT	15 EGO	15 PRE	8 COM
4 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	4 REC
30 END	20 STUN		

Abilities: +2 DCV; +3 OCV with Blowgun; Running -2" (4" total); Nightvision; Acrobatics 12-; Animal Handler (Sacred Bats)12-; Breakfall 12-; Climbing 12-; Concealment 14-; Fast Draw (Blowgun) 12-; AK: Xınca-Hol 12-; AK: Surrounding Mountains 11-; KS: Sacred Bat Behavior 12-; Language: English (basic conversation); Language: Skymaster Code Talk (basic conversation); PS: Administrator 12-; PS: Hunter/Warrior 11-; Riding (Sacred Bats) 13-; Stealth 14-; Survival (Mountains, Jungle) 12-; Tactics 12-; Tracking 12-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Blowgun; Fringe Benefit (High Priest of Camazotz)

75+ Disadvantages: Physical Limitation: Pygmy; Psychological Limitation: Devotion To Camazotz And His Purposes; Social Limitation: Burdens Of Leadership

Notes: Titomaj ascended to the position of High Priest on the death of his uncle some eight years ago. He's the second high priest to have the honor of assisting Huracan Thunderbolt. A kindly fellow by nature, he doesn't consider the sacrifice of intruders into the valley as in any way cruel or immoral — after all, their lives go to strengthen Camazotz and prevent the demons of Darkness from escaping and threatening the entire world. As a priest of Camazotz, he carries equipment identical to that of a warrior.

AVERAGE PYGMY WARRIOR

6 STR	13 DEX	13 CON	8 BODY
10 INT	10 EGO	10 PRE	8 COM
4 PD	3 ED	3 SPD	4 REC
30 END	20 STUN		

Abilities: +2 DCV; +3 with Blowgun; Running -2" (4" total); Nightvision; Acrobatics 12-; Animal Handler (Sacred Bats)12-; Breakfall 12-; Climbing 12-; Concealment 14-; Fast Draw (Blowgun) 12-; AK: Xınca-Hol 12-; AK: Surrounding Mountains 11-; KS: Sacred Bat Behavior 11-; PS: Hunter/Warrior 11-; Riding (Sacred Bats) 13-; Stealth 14-; Survival (Mountains, Jungle) 11-; Tactics 11-; Tracking 11-; WF: Common Melee Weapons, Blowgun

75+ Disadvantages: Physical Limitation: Pygmy; Psychological Limitation: Devotion To Camazotz And His Purposes

Notes: The average warrior will carry a blowgun with 10 darts, a knife, and either a camouflaged poncho or the harness and helm of a bat-rider (see *Combat*, above, for more information). The blowgun darts are poisoned with either the Bite or Breath Of Camazotz depending on the nature of the encounter.

SACRED BATS OF CAMAZOTZ

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [2]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
5	EGO	-10	10-	ECV: 2
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
5	PD	3		Total: 5 PD (0 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 5 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	2		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	2		
30	END	0		
25	STUN	2		Total Characteristics Cost: 35

Movement: Running: 1"/2"
Leaping 0"
Flight 10"/20"

Cost	Powers	END
8	<i>Rows Of Tiny Teeth:</i> HKA ½d6 (1d6+1 with STR); Reduced Penetration (-¼)	1
10	<i>Terror-Inducing Screech:</i> +20 PRE; Only For Fear-Based Presence Attacks (-1)	0
17	<i>Giant Bat Wings:</i> Flight 10"; Reduced Endurance (½ END; -¼); Restrained (-¼)	1
-10	<i>Can Hardly Walk:</i> Running -5" (1" total)	
15	<i>Giant Bat Sonar:</i> Active Sonar	0

Talents

3 Bump Of Direction

Skills

10	<i>Erratic Flyer:</i> +3 DCV	
5	<i>Erratic Flyer:</i> +2 DCV; Only While Using Flight (-½), Costs END (-½)	2
5	Climbing 14-	
5	Concealment 13-; Self Only (-½)	
2	Riding 14-; Complimentary To Rider's Skill Only (-1)	
7	Stealth 15-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 77

Total Cost: 112

75+ Disadvantages

15	Physical Limitation: Animal Intelligence (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
15	Physical Limitation: Poor Eyesight, suffers -4 to all sight PER Rolls (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
0	Physical Limitation: Human Sized
15	Physical Limitation: Very Limited Manipulation (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
5	Physical Limitation: Reduced Leap, cannot leap (Infrequent, Slightly Limiting)
20	Psychological Limitation: Aversion To Sunlight (Common, Total)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from light-based Sight Group Flash Attacks (Common)

Total Disadvantage Points: 165

Ecology: Like smaller bats, the Sacred Bats of Camazotz are carnivorous, but instead of insects they prey on birds, fish, and small mammals like monkeys. The bats raised in the sacred caves by the pygmies do not have to hunt (the priests supply them with food), but the few still living in the wild hunt continuously and actively throughout the night, eating on the fly as they search for their next meal. The pygmies feed their bats a thick gruel composed of meat, blood, and cornmeal poured into troughs, but when they're out flying the bats still scoop up the occasional bird on the wing out of instinct.

In almost every way the Sacred Bats act like their smaller cousins: they hang upside down to sleep, they navigate primarily by use of sonar, they come out only at night due to their aversion to the light, they're awkward and clumsy when walking, and they lair in crevasses and caverns during the day. They differ in that they're excellent climbers, capable of moving around on rock faces with surprising skill and grace, an adaptation arising due to their size and need to move around in some fashion that uses less energy than flying. Full-grown Sacred Bats can fly or climb even while carrying a pygmy on their backs; teams of them operating in groups of three or more can carry off normal-sized men and women in sling-like arrangements. The Sacred Bats also possess the ability to modulate their cry in such a way as to cause an involuntary fear reaction in most creatures, an adaptation that makes capturing their prey easier.

Personality/Motivation: Normal animal motivations.

Powers/Tactics: Left to their own devices, the Sacred Bats avoid creatures as large as a man unless threatened, although a small child might be in danger of an unprovoked attack. If they do attack, they start with a screech to try to immobilize their prey, followed by landing on the (hopefully immobile) target to bite him with their sharp teeth. Due to their size, no more than two Sacred Bats can attack a man-sized target at once.

Under the direction of their pygmy riders, a well-trained Sacred Bat swoops in on targets from the darkness, emits its Terrifying Screech, then banks to one side or the other so its rider can take a shot with his blowgun. Riders do not send their bats into melee combat. If a rider is disabled and/or falls off, the bats are trained to return to the House of Darkness at once. They also do this if wounded; in this case, the rider normally jumps off voluntarily to enable the bat to retreat (the riders are conditioned through long training to think of their bats as even more valuable than themselves).

Appearance: The Sacred Bats of Camazotz look much like normal bats: they have leathery wings instead of forelimbs, legs disproportionately short for their body size, large pointed ears, small eyes, and an upturned snout. Unlike normal bats their fur is jet black turning to a dark grey around the muzzle, the outside of the ears, and along the edges of their wings and legs. They're larger than any species of bat known to have existed since prehistoric times, standing an average of six feet tall and possessing a wingspan of 24 feet. When being ridden by one of the pygmies of Xinca-Hol, they have a distinctive hunchbacked appearance.

PLOT SEEDS

Doctor Harris Benton, noted zoologist, has reportedly returned from Central America in triumph with several specimens of a previously unknown bat of titanic size — including one that's still alive! He plans to show off his findings at a local museum several nights from now and silence the detractors who claim he's mad. A day before the unveiling, Dr. Benton's attractive daughter Alyssa comes to the characters and pleads for their help: her father's been kidnapped, and all his notes and specimens stolen! The only clue at the scene is an insignia torn from the flight suit of an Airmada pilot. Why is Skymaster involved? Could the answers lie in the jungles and mountains of Guatemala?

Archaeologist Dr. Michael McGehee contacts the characters to ask them to accompany him on an expedition into the Guatemalan highlands. It seems he's uncovered a stele at a Mayan site he's been excavating. It refers to a resting place for the Mayan rulers — something akin to the Valley of the Kings in Egypt, perhaps! — and hints at fabulous grave goods that may be interred with them. He's already hired the best guide in the country, Alejandro Fuentes. Now he just needs some stalwart adventurers to assist him and protect him from any danger.

A pilot character returns home from a late night on the town to find the unthinkable: Skymaster is waiting in the shadows of his den for him! Before violence erupts, Lothar von Hagen and several Airmada pilots make their presence known with drawn guns to ensure the character listens peacefully. Skymaster explains that he has a problem and wants the character to solve it for him. If the PC agrees to persuade their companions to allow themselves to be flown to an unknown destination, do battle with some kind of monsters — he refuses to call them demons — for him, and be returned, he'll reward the pilot handsomely, either in riches or by granting him a favor in return. Will the character accept? And what *are* the monsters coming up out of the House of Darkness that have forced the natives of Xinca-Hol to call the Lord of Lightning for assistance?

RIDING THE SACRED BATS

Any character who wants to ride a Sacred Bat must weigh no more than 45 kg (100 pounds) including carried or worn equipment and stand no taller than 5' 2" tall; the bats can't carry anyone larger on their backs. (Something the Skymaster found highly frustrating after watching the pygmies soar through the skies on their bat-mounts.) Riding a bat requires TF: Sacred Bats (which the pygmies get for free when they buy Riding).

MISCELLANEOUS LOCATIONS



To round out this collection of *Thrilling Places*, here are a few miscellaneous locales to spark the GM's imagination.

AYAHUASCA

Legend says that deep within the Amazon Jungle, far up one of the tributaries of the river, a god landed when he fell from the heavens. The local tribe rescued him, cared for his wounds, and when he had to leave gave him food and weaponry for his travels. In return, the god Ayahuasca blessed their water supply, changing it from a simple spring of water deep in a cave to a healing spring. The god warned them, however, that there was a limited amount of healing water in the spring, so he put certain restrictions on its use.

To prevent the natives — and anyone else who might learn about the spring — from abusing it, no one may obtain water from the spring for himself. Traditionally, a priest enters the cave and brings a serving of the water out to an injured or ill tribesman. If anyone from outside the tribe comes searching for the spring, his representative must make his way through the cave to the spring and bring out the water for his companion.

To reach the spring, one must travel up the Amazon to its intersection with the Purus, and then up the Purus for five days. At this point, the river cascades over a large waterfall. If one climbs up the side of the waterfall, he finds a trail leading off into the jungle. One day up the trail is the village of Ayahuasca and the nearby cave containing the healing spring. As long as the PCs do nothing to upset the villagers, the tribesmen will not interfere with them.

At the entrance to the cave stands a stele carved with the story of the god Ayahuasca and his visit to the village. The cave itself is approximately a quarter of a mile long and filled with traps and puzzles based on the phases of the moon, symbols (zigzags, serrated lines and geometric forms), and

various native plants. Placed on a small altar at the spring is ceremonial cup carved from stone and engraved with symbols. If more water than will fill the cup is taken from the spring by a single person, the water loses its efficacy.

The first trap is a dart trap, triggered by pressure plates in the floor. (Use the Arrow Trap on page 369 of *Pulp Hero*, changing the damage to 1d6). Stepping on one of the pressure plates (and there are more pressure plates than safe footing) causes twelve darts, spaced at six inch intervals and random heights, to fly from each side of the passage. The darts are approximately six inches long.

The second trap is actually a puzzle, a pit that must be bridged by pressing a series of stones in the correct order. The pit's 4" (25 feet) wide and 2" (13 feet) deep. When extended, the bridge is a foot wide. (Use the Pit Trap on page 370 of *Pulp Hero*.)

The third trap (also a puzzle) is a scything portcullis that can be locked off by pressing four stones at the same time. The stones are spaced so that one person cannot press them all at the same time (the priest uses a staff). The portcullis consists of a wooden grillwork of spears that slides from the left hand wall of the corridor to impale the victim. (Use the Scything Blade Trap on page 370 of *Pulp Hero*.)

The fourth and final trap is a deadfall triggered with a tripwire; avoiding the wire avoids the trap. (Use the Deadfall Trap on page 370 of *Pulp Hero*.) The boulder that falls doesn't fill the passageway completely; other characters can climb over or around the obstacle to reach the spring. But triggering this trap is one of the things that will cause the villagers to attack the characters upon leaving the cave.

The water is miraculous and automatically and instantly heal all damage and disease. It cannot, however, resurrect the dead.

The villagers are standard normal humans armed with short spears (HKA 1d6, STR Min 10) or blowguns (RKA 1 point + poison, 10 Charges).

LATIBULUM, CITY OF THE METAL SHIRT MEN

High in the Mitumba Mountains overlooking the northern edge of Lake Tanganyika lies a city like no other since the fall of Rome. After Antony's defeat at the hands of Augustus Caesar, a legion of Roman soldiers decided the chance of retribution was greater than they cared to accept. Gathering up their families and dependents they fled south... *far* south... from Alexandria following the Nile.

After a series of misadventures (floods, disease, starvation, hostile tribesmen...) they continued into the mountains. While scouting a possible route around a gorge, two of the soldiers spotted an eagle bearing nesting material. Following it, they discovered a mountain plateau that might suit their needs. Fresh water, a defensible access route, and plentiful game and natural resources made the decision an easy one. The commanders named their new home Latibulum.

They laid out the city on the lines of a typical Roman settlement, complete with paved streets, public baths, a forum, and even a small amphitheatre. A high wall and well-trained soldiers offer a solid defense. Local tribesmen learned that their new neighbors, with their superior weapons and organization, were not to be trifled with. They came to be known to the surrounding tribes as "the Metal Shirt Men" (*Akina Batikishati* in the local dialect).

The Latibulum have a military style of government handed down from their ancestors. Officers have taken over civic responsibilities as part of their duties. The city leader, the praetor, is chosen by popular vote, with all citizens, male and female, participating. The military leader, the tribune, is appointed by the former tribune upon his retirement, or by a vote of the soldiers if the tribune dies without naming a successor. The praetor and tribune share leadership of Latibulum though their responsibilities are separate.

Relations with the neighboring tribes, even today, remain primarily hostile, with little contact. Those trespassing over the city's border risk being captured and enslaved, if not killed outright. The Romans make occasional forays beyond their borders — usually to capture wild animals for their arena, or to gather some rare resource such as metal ores. On these journeys they prefer to avoid trouble with the local tribes and usually travel around their villages.

The population itself has remained nearly constant over the centuries, roughly some six thousand people. About one-third of these are soldiers, able to defend the city. The women are more liberated than in many modern societies — they may own property, vote, and even serve in the legion, although in a support capacity. In fact, the current praetor, Livia Sosibus, is a woman.



MONASTERY OF ST. CATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA

The Monastery of St. Catherine of Alexandria is reputed to hold, in one fashion or another, all — or almost all — the world's accumulated knowledge. Patron saint of archivists, librarians, and libraries, St. Catherine was martyred in the fourth century by the Emperor Maximus. If the legends hold true this group of her followers is perhaps the most important group of librarians in the world, for stories whispered in darkened halls say that in 391 AD they rescued from destruction and now maintain the contents of the Library at Alexandria.

According to legend, after Catherine was martyred, angels bore her body over the Red Sea and buried her on the summit of Mount Sinai. Supposedly this is why many sanctuaries to St. Catherine occupy high places, and the Monastery of St. Catherine of Alexandria is no exception. Located in the mountains of the Nubian Desert, it's about 175 miles southeast of the Nile on an almost direct line between modern-day Aswan and Port Sudan. It's built in a series of caves high up the side of a plateau. Reaching it requires traveling up the Nile past the first cataract, then up a *wadi* for approximately 100 miles, and then through the mountainous desert for approximately two days. There's only

one oasis on the land leg of the route, and it's dry during many months of the year, as is the wadi. The base of the mountains is also accessible by air.

The monastery itself is accessible to visitors only by a series of ropes and rope ladders (requiring visitors to succeed with a Climbing roll). Should an adventurer finally reach the Monastery, he must convince the brothers to allow him to search for a single sought-after piece of information, but only after the visitor has paid for the privilege with a piece of equivalent knowledge as yet unknown to the librarians.

There are only twenty brothers in the monastery. The patriarch is Brother Tetu, a wizened old man of indeterminate age, his skin wrinkled and tanned from exposure to the sun. He speaks Arabic, Hebrew, German, French and English fluently, but deliberately makes communication with the players as difficult as possible until they prove their worth to obtain a part of his "treasure" — the knowledge they seek.

The other brothers range in age from their late sixties to teenagers. None of them will discuss their lives before coming to the monastery; they reply to any questions with "When I came to the monastery, I was as one reborn; only then did my life begin."

The truth, however, is that the "monks" of the Monastery of St. Catherine are actually priests of the Egyptian ibis-headed god of writing — Djehuty, or Thoth — and descendants of a long line of such priests. Their antecedents maintained the *Alexandriana*. After hearing rumors of Theodosius's order to destroy all pagan temples (the library was housed in the city's Serapeum and the Mithreum) they spirited away a large section of the library's collection.

After many years of arduous travel, they settled in the caves that now house not only the "monks" (who serve as the "front men" for the rescued and expanded library) but also their families. Also hidden in the mountain is a passageway leading to the village where the priests' families live. Young men (at least those who become librarians and priests of Thoth) must make a pilgrimage to both Alexandria and Her-mopolis Magna (currently known as El Ashmunein), the seat of the ancient worship of Djehuty, prior to taking their vows. Some of them bring wives back with them (this practice is encouraged to replenish the gene pool). At other times, certain male visitors are deemed "worthy" and are given a drug that causes them to fall into a "waking sleep" during that time they're carnally visited by certain young women of the village.

The village (should the characters somehow find their way to it) is an amazing "living history" example of life in ancient Egypt, from customs to language to mode of dress.

PIRATE CAVE HARBOR

On a stretch of lonely Atlantic shoreline several hundred miles north of Hudson City lies a place many people have heard legends about but few have ever found: the Cave Harbor of Captain Miles Sydney. Accessible only at low tide of a calm sea and protected by large rocks, hazardous shoals, and breaking waves, Cave Harbor was Captain Sydney's refuge from those who objected to his acts of preemptive naval salvage. For Captain Sydney, you see, was a pirate.

Even at low tide, the mouth of the cave, at approximately 9" (60 feet) wide and 12" (85 feet) high, is barely large enough to admit a small three-masted frigate. The rocks surrounding the entrance mean a skipper must be skilled indeed to pick his way along the channel to the opening and along the 19" (125 foot) long passage. At high tide, the opening of the cave mouth shrinks by ten to twelve feet and the waves breaking on the rocks make it impossible to bring anything larger than a small sailboat into the cave. At the end of the passage the cave widens out into a snug harbor, with a roof sufficiently high, even at spring neap tide, to clear the ship's masts.

The harbor section of the cave is approximately 23" (150 feet) by 18" (120 feet). Any ship that enters has to be towed out through the passageway or cautiously warped around, either by men in small boats or a system of winches, since it's impossible to maneuver a ship of any size around in the harbor.

Ringing the harbor at a height of 1.25" (8 feet) above the high water mark is a rock shelf that varies from 15"-38" (100-250 feet) in width. A small pier juts out from the shelf to one side of the harbor. At one end of the shelf a small trickle of fresh water flows from the rock face and into the harbor. Ruins of carelessly thrown-together huts dot the stone shelf; the floor is treacherous with cracks and pits. The walls and ceiling of the cave over a number of fire pits on the shelf are darkened by smoke.

At several places around one side of the shelf iron hooks are set into the rock face; the ruins of a windlass stand at the end of the shelf. When Captain Sydney's ship was in the harbor, sailors fed a rope through the hooks and attached to the ship to warp it around to exit.

The roof of the cave covered filled with stalactites; water drips from them in a steady but irregular pattern. Some of the stalactites are unstable, and a very loud noise (explosion, gunshot, and so on) has an 8- chance of causing one to fall.

The GM can decide whether or not Captain Sydney hid any of his fabulous treasure inside the cave and, if so, what sort of traps he may have set to prevent anyone else from obtaining it.

PIRATES OF THE SARGASSO SEA

An area in the North Atlantic Ocean between approximately 20° to 35° North Latitude and 30° and 70° West Longitude, the Sargasso Sea takes its name from the large mats of sargassum seaweed that float on its surface. Its currents are largely static, yet are surrounded by some of the strongest currents in the Atlantic, including the Gulf Stream, Canary, Caribbean and North Equatorial currents. Because of the relationship between the currents inside and outside the Sea, anything that drifts into one of the surrounding currents eventually ends up in the Sargasso Sea, and it's unlikely that anything that drifts in will later drift out.

This mysterious seaweed forest in the middle of the area known as the Bermuda Triangle is the subject of legends of lost ships that predate the Triangle tales by centuries, although it's a history more of derelict vessels than actual disappearances. For example, in 1881 the schooner *Ellen Austin* reportedly found a derelict schooner in the Sea, put a prize crew aboard her, and sailed in tandem for port. Two days later, the second schooner was seen to be sailing erratically. When a second crew from the *Ellen Austin* boarded her, the ship was again deserted with no sign of the prize crew. Stories from the turn of the century implied that modern freighters lay becalmed next to weed-shrouded sailing ships, even Roman triremes and other ancient vessels — nothing ever changes in the Sargasso Sea.

While the weed and the Sea's deadly calms contribute primarily to the entrapment of sailing vessels, even smaller modern propeller-driven boats can become fouled by the seaweed mats. Adding to the hazards of the Sea itself is a more deadly danger that divers cannot clear away: the Pirates of the Sargasso Sea.

Based on a small island near Bermuda (that actually lies at almost the center of the Sargasso Sea), Red Mary Reade and her band of modern-day pirates prey on those unfortunate travelers whose ships — whether merchant ships or private yachts — become trapped either by the weed or the lack of winds. In their scarlet Consolidated Model 16-1 Commodore seaplane the pirates keep watch on the Sea, landing near becalmed vessels and looting them of any easily-carried valuables.

Red Mary and her cohorts have also been known to lure victims into the Sea, meeting them “by coincidence” in bars in Miami or Havana and convincing them of the joys of sailing to Bermuda. Once at sea, Mary (a very attractive redhead) takes control of the vessel, summons her pirates, and strips the ship of its valuables. They've also been known to engage in kidnapping for ransom, but generally prefer not to resort to violence. “Just give us the jewelry and we'll go away. Give us the money as well, and we'll even inform the authorities of your location.”

See page 47 of *The HERO System Vehicle Sourcebook* for the Consolidated Model 16-1 Commodore. Although the Sargasso Sea itself is a unique anomaly, Red Mary and her pirates can be moved to any warm ocean area.



THE TEMPLE OF ASHAVI

High in the Kuhi Dinar mountains of Arabistan, Persia is hidden a most miraculous city, one carved from the living rock and blessed by the living flame. Here, legend says, the worshippers of Ashavi remain young and beautiful forever — never aging, never dying, made immortal by the cleansing flame of Ashavi.

The city of Hishtan is small, with perhaps 300 inhabitants, and is carved in a series of steps on the southern exposure of a red sandstone cliff face. The buildings have no right angles, with floor meeting wall and wall meeting roof in a series of sinuous curves designed to make the buildings look like writhing flames. Through the centuries, the buildings have had small chips of quartz set into them so that when the sun strikes the walls, they sparkle like fire. Carefully polished quartz prisms hang in the window openings, causing rainbows to dance across the walls. The houses have little if any furnishings, with pads and cushions of various sizes serving as bedding and seating. When not in use, these pads are piled against the exterior walls lest the sunlight through the prisms set them ablaze.

The largest building in the city is the temple of Ashavi, and in the center of the one large room burns the Eternal Flame, a jet of natural gas that rises out of an altar from deep in the mountain. The inhabitants gather there each sunrise and sunset for a short ritual praising the goddess, and the priests perform several additional rituals during the day. Although these extra rituals include passing their hands through the sacred fire many times, none of the priests bear any burn scars.

The inhabitants of the city dress in flowing robes of lightweight wool dyed red, orange, and yellow. Both genders wear their dark hair long in intricate arrangements of braids with ribbons and crystals interwoven in them. Many of them, both men and women, have henna tattoos of dancing flames on their faces, and their dark eyes glow with the serenity of their goddess's blessing.

The truth of the inhabitants' longevity is that theirs is a serial immortality, passed from adult to child. When one of the inhabitants begins to age, when his beauty's no long remains unmarred, he chooses a young person of the same gender and begins to impart to that youngster all of his knowledge, skills, and memories. The youth takes the adult's name, altered slightly by a suffix, and remains with the adult constantly. After several years, when the adult is satisfied that his companion has absorbed his life, the two, accompanied by one of the priests, go into an interior room of the temple for a ritual. At the end, only the youth, the adult living inside him, leaves the room with the priest. He drops the suffix from his name and is, for all intents and purposes, the adult. The adult's empty husk is then cremated.

The GM can decide whether the priests' flawless skin is, indeed, a gift from the goddess or rather the result of an ointment, made from a local plant, that prevents burns from scarring. He can also decide whether the ritual actually passes the consciousness of the adult to the youth or if the ceremony includes the ritual slaying of the adult by the youth.