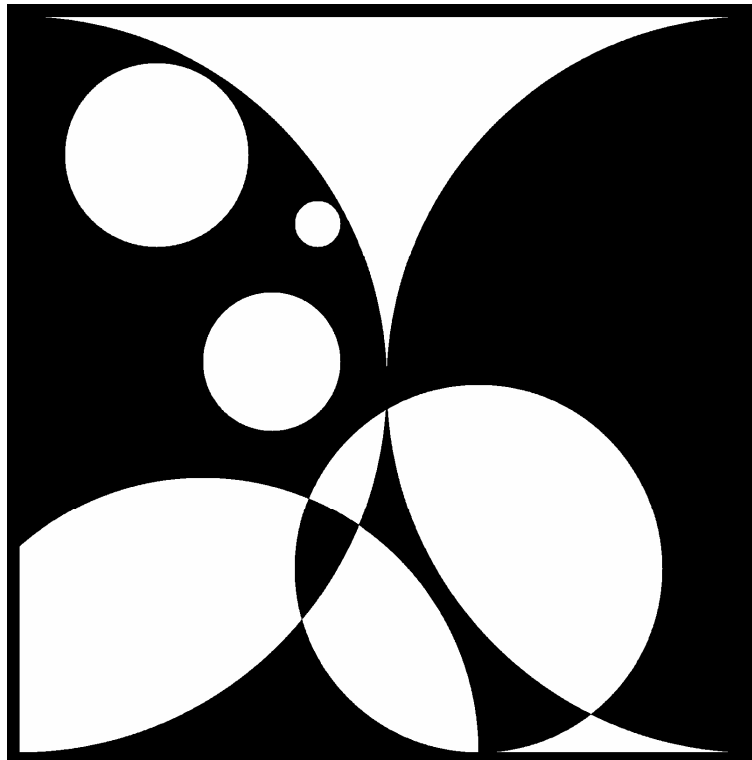


# **Towards Fomalhaut**

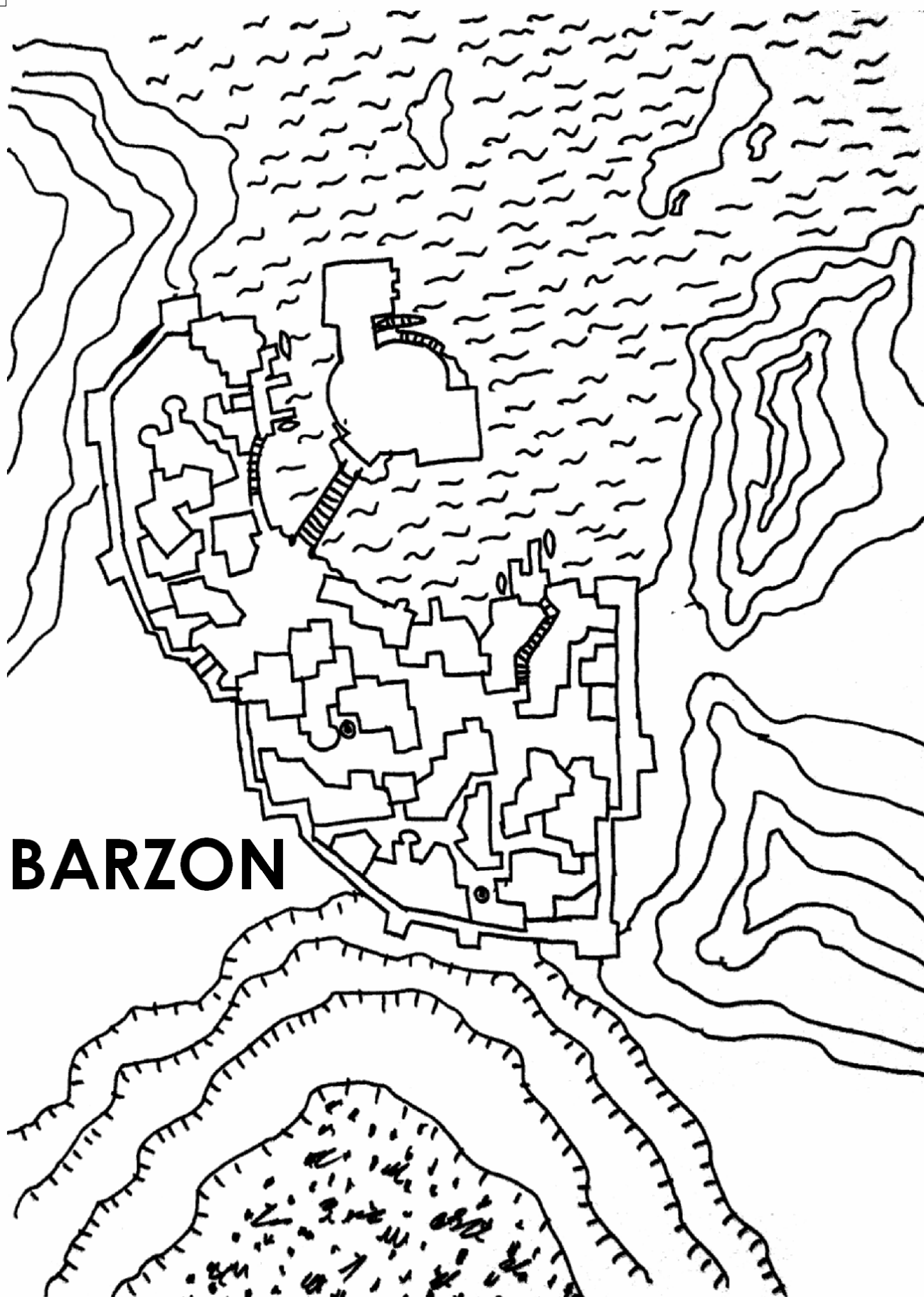
## **The Isle of Barzon, The Tower of Birds, Pentastadion**

*by Gabor Lux*



**Adventure scenarios for low- to mid-level characters**

**E.M.D.T. 16.–E**



# Towards Fomalhaut

## by Gabor Lux

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*Dedicated to Leigh Brackett and Jack Vance, whose stories of strangeness and adventure have inspired me over numerous campaigns and adventures*

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## I. The Isle of Barzon

### Background

Power on the world of Fomalhaut takes many forms, from pragmatic appeals to human self interest to naked coercion. The worship of divine beings can manifest in either of these sterile extremes, as well as a dozen varieties between the two: there are as many specific arrangements as there are gods. Yet the power of gods (who, like all of us, should themselves be entitled to the right to act in accordance with their own welfare) more often than not serves the weal of their direct subordinates before their worshippers – or, it is said, the gods themselves. So it was on the Isle of Barzon, a small island ruled by an empire not much larger...

The mountainous terrain of Barzon, a geography of jagged mountains and deep valleys, rises proudly above sea level; against the crushing waves, the dark rocks look as if they were unvanquishable battlements. It is not possible to moor ships safely anywhere except a protected bay to the north, right below the towers of Skei (which means Glory-in-the-Sky), and a lesser, hidden channel to the south that runs to the small fortress Modax (which means Immense Shield). The waters are patrolled by the island's war galley, the Mesk (Imperious), under command of Denna Swaura, harsh commander of Barzon's soldiers. The galley intercepts all ships within its range. The valleys of the island are blooming with strange flowers that bring uneasy dreams (-2 to saving throw when trying to avoid sleep while proceeding through), and are also populated by an

abundance of wild sheep. The Flying Gods hunt them according to their Purpose.

The city state Skei is haughty seat of this empire, massive brick and concrete structures interlinked by high bridges against the sky, colourless save for the yellow-black of woven curtains in the doors opening from the balconies, or the occasional house plant or flower one may see in a high window... there is an absence of activity on the streets, as life takes place within the network of interconnected towers, most the home to a large extended family. The total population of Skei is 600, of whom 90 are soldiers. Commander Denna Swaura, a plain, cold and efficient woman of green eyes and rust-coloured hair hinting at amazon descent, is their leader.

**Regular Soldiers (60):** Fighter 1; AC 15 (ring mail, large shield); Atk +1 spear 1d8+2; +2/+0/+0.

|    |   |    |   |
|----|---|----|---|
| Hp | 1 | 5  | 4 |
|    | 3 | 10 | 3 |
|    | 7 | 2  | 7 |
|    | 8 | 3  | 8 |
|    | 2 | 6  | 4 |
|    | 9 | 1  | 2 |
|    | 6 | 1  | 3 |
|    | 6 | 8  | 5 |
|    | 7 | 1  | 1 |
|    | 4 | 5  | 8 |
|    | 2 | 10 | 4 |
|    | 3 | 4  | 3 |
|    | 8 | 2  | 9 |
|    | 3 | 4  | 9 |
|    | 6 | 4  | 5 |

|   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
| 1 | 9 | 5  |
| 3 | 6 | 10 |
| 1 | 2 | 5  |
| 3 | 1 | 5  |
| 2 | 4 | 4  |

**Trained Soldiers (30):** Fighter 2+1; AC 16 (ring mail, large shield, Dex); Atk +3 spear 1d8+3 or +3 shortbow 1d6; +4/+1/+1.

|    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|
| Hp | 15 | 10 | 10 |
|    | 12 | 17 | 8  |
|    | 8  | 15 | 15 |
|    | 16 | 6  | 14 |
|    | 11 | 18 | 5  |
|    | 10 | 10 | 15 |
|    | 12 | 17 | 6  |
|    | 20 | 14 | 10 |
|    | 11 | 13 | 13 |
|    | 11 | 13 | 13 |

**Denna Swaura:** Fighter 4; AC 17 (chain shirt, large shield, Dex); Atk +6 bastard sword 1d10+4; +5/+2/+2; 15/13/14/12/13/10; LN.

Hp 31

The small tower-fortress of Modax on the southern periphery of the island is held by 30 additional soldiers, who are more loyal to Trademaster Svanth Dorl than the inhabitants of Skei, and also more skilled in combat.

**The Soliders of Modax (30):** Fighter 2+2; AC 17 (ring mail, large shield, Dex); Atk +4 spear 1d8+4 or +4 shortbow 1d6; +5/+2/+2.

|    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|
| Hp | 16 | 11 | 11 |
|    | 17 | 14 | 18 |
|    | 23 | 9  | 13 |
|    | 17 | 13 | 11 |
|    | 16 | 17 | 22 |
|    | 17 | 15 | 18 |
|    | 16 | 16 | 13 |
|    | 11 | 20 | 12 |
|    | 21 | 9  | 8  |
|    | 18 | 15 | 19 |

Barzon is a civilisation of diligent craftsmen who fashion woven mats and vivid tapestries from the legs, wings and chitin shell of the Flying Gods, giant wasps lairing in an abandoned wing of Trademaster Svanth Dorl's majestic palace in the middle of the bay. The Flying Gods attack all outlanders who are not in the company of soldiers; they also carry away sinners who, by action, thought or recalcitrance blaspheme against their inscrutable Purpose. On the Festival of Ascendance, they descend upon spies and heretics who are chained to a large concrete bloc in the middle of Skei's central square. Occasionally, one flies above the green waste at the foot of Skei, and falls lifeless amidst the rubble. The citizens then carry it back to the city in reverence, and use its hallowed Shell to create various goods.



## Skei

**1. Skybreak Palace:** The unfriendly, round fortress, although constructed much more recently than the concrete towers, already shows signs of decay. The entire northern wing is uninhabited and left to the giant wasps; the rest of the complex is likewise mostly empty, with vast dark hallways and cold gathering chambers. In addition to most soldiers and Denna Swaura, Trademaster Svanth Dorl also maintains his court at this location.

Clad in a voluminous fur cloak and holding a heavy metal staff, his ruddy face and squat stature are less prominent. Svanth Dorl possesses the Cube of Wasp Control, a technological device which allows him telepathic control over the Flying Gods. Presently, his major objective is to decimate Skei's elite on the upcoming Festival of Ascendance to further bolster his rule (the precise date will be T -1d4+1 days when the characters arrive). Svanth Dorl is fond of nothing more than yelling "Cut them into wasp food!"; he is also a tremendous xenophobe, although a company of dangerous heretics and spies abusing the island's hospitality may just come in handy in his present situation. Svanth Dorl shares his decorative although empty quarters with two wives, Ura and Issema. These sisters are dark-haired, dark-eyed, unsympathetic creatures whose mind has eroded due to the frequent consumption of scrape, a drug that turns users dull and impassive.

**Giant Wasps (36):** HD 5; AC 15; Atk +5 sting 2d4 + poison (Average, paralysis); +4/+1/+1; N.

|    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|
| Hp | 15 | 26 | 12 |
|    | 21 | 21 | 25 |
|    | 16 | 32 | 27 |
|    | 30 | 16 | 25 |
|    | 17 | 15 | 30 |
|    | 31 | 29 | 29 |
|    | 16 | 19 | 28 |
|    | 26 | 28 | 13 |
|    | 11 | 22 | 24 |
|    | 31 | 20 | 20 |
|    | 32 | 22 |    |
|    | 25 |    |    |
|    | 19 |    |    |
|    | 30 |    |    |
|    | 26 |    |    |

**Trademaster Svanth Dorl:** Thief 2+2; Init +6; AC 14 (Dex, thick fur cloak); Atk +3 staff 1d6+3 or +3 dagger 1d4+2 + poison (Average Fortitude, paralysis); +2/+5/+2; CE; *potion of invisibility*\*2.

Hp 13

Deep beneath Skybreak Palace is a damp crypt-hall almost as wide as the central part of the fortress. Here lie the sarcophagi of Barzon's old kings: four of the seven have been broken, and are now filled with dark waters. The others:

**a) Auska:** mummy-woman in rotted lace; pointed teeth and foul smell. She has the abilities of both mummy and vampire. Treasure: 300 gp diadem, 500 gp gem box, *candle of invocation* (evil), *periapt of foul rotting*.

**b) Barzon III:** this corpse has shrivelled into a foul leathery blackness, which is in turn covered by a fine layer of yellow mould. Attacks as zombie, melee hits and many spells just stir up the mould cloud. Treasure consists of 60 gp silver necklace, 500 gp dragon tooth dagger +1, oil of ESP, potion of cure disease.

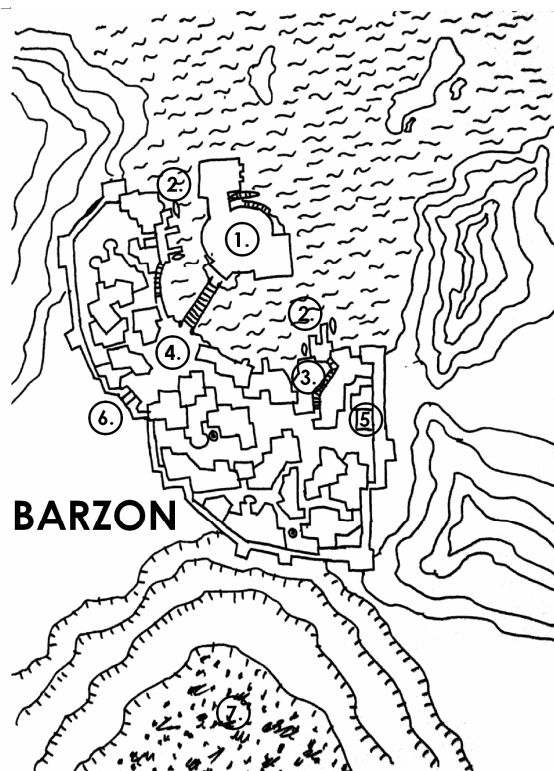
**c) Barzon IV:** all that remains is a dark glistening putrescence (black pudding).

**Auska, Mummy-Vampire:** HD 7+2\*\*\*; AC 18; Atk +9 claws 1d6+6 + 2d4 Con + rot (Average Fortitude, 1d6 Str, Con, Cha/week) or +9 bite 1d6+6 + 2d4 Con; Spec damage reduction 10/+2, immune to cold and mind-affecting, fire vulnerability (-2 save, +1 damage/dice), dominate (Hard Will, only used for feeding); +7/+4/+7; CE.

Hp 43

**Barzon III, zombie:** HD 2+1; AC 12; Atk +3 strangle 1d8+1 + mould; Spec always acts last, immune to cold and mind-affecting, Yellow Mould (15 Hp, Average Fortitude, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con); +4/+0/+1; N. Hp 5

**Barzon IV, black pudding:** HD 10; AC 13; Atk +10 pudding 4d6; Spec corrosion, impervious to cold and electricity, sharp weapons divide; +7/+3/+3; N. Hp 40



**2. Harbour:** Two mostly identical locations in the shadow of the city. Both are continuously guarded by a contingent of soldiers; three with spears and missiles and one with an alarm horn. The boats here are used for fishing in the bay and generally aren't fit for the open seas; Ullkmaran owns the only one large enough for long-distance travel.

**3. The house of Ullkmaran the Polyarch:** The long and narrow building functions as both dwelling and warehouse. One floor is on the plateau, four more are cut into the cliffside – the lowest two damp and out of use, the third a warehouse, the fourth and top living quarters. There are entrances both above and below. Ullkmaran the Polyarch, purple-skinned and complacent, is a man of the Empire and a typical follower of Mung's doctrines. Through an agreement with the Trademaster, he is Barzon's intermediary in the wasp trade, exporting tapestries, mats and occasionally poison, and in turn importing miscellaneous products for use by the locals. Since he has no power base in the city, he maintains a well-defensible household of 12 guards and 8 slaves (6 of whom are nubile girls barely come of age). Ullkmaran's primary interest lies in stability, and if given the opportunity, he will drug the characters, strip them of valuables and sell them to whomever is most convenient. In a warehouse cache, he has 600 sp, 600 gp and 10 doses of wasp poison. He carries a laser pistol on his person.

**Ullkmaran the Polyarch:** Thief 5; Init +7; AC 15 (leather, Dex); Atk +3 shortsword 1d6 + [3d6 sneak attack] + poison (Average Fortitude, paralysis) or +6 throwing dagger 1d4 + [snk] + poison or +6 laser pistol 2d10+ (10s rerolled and added, ignores shields and armour, 3 spare cartridges of 15 shots each); +3/+7/+1; 11/18/15/14/9/7; NE.

Hp 26

**Bodyguards (12):** Fighter 3; AC 16 (chain shirt, large shield); Atk +3 battleaxe 1d8; +3/+1/+1.

|    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|
| Hp | 22 | 14 | 19 |
|    | 22 | 17 | 5  |
|    | 21 | 25 |    |
|    | 15 | 21 |    |
|    | 17 | 25 |    |

**4. Central square:** A dusty, unfriendly and wind-swept plaza. In the middle, there is a square platform around an antique concrete bloc. On the four sides of the bloc, heavy chains are affixed to iron rings. This place is used to condemn sinners to the hunger of the Flying Gods.

**5. Guest house:** This is a dilapidated one-story hovel against the city walls; no furnishings except the earth floor. Outlanders to Barzon are only allowed to sleep here, and as always while staying on the island, they are under escort and open surveillance by a detail of soldiers, ostensibly so that the Flying Gods don't attack them. Although unhelpful and uncommunicative, the soldiers will explain local customs and warn characters in advance of possible infractions.

**6. Gates:** The narrow gate of Skei is always guarded by 10 regular and 5 trained soldiers. The portcullis is down, and two ballistas point outside. Beyond the gate, a winding road leads to the island's blooming valleys and, ultimately, to the fortress of Modax.

**7. Wasteland:** This desolation is an expanse of shifting rubble in a deep crater. Traces of metal

deposits in the debris lend the place a greenish hue. The wasps tend to avoid the periphery of the crater, since the metal and its vapours are deadly to them; however, a few dried-out husks may be present. On the bottom, there are bent metal wrecks half-covered by the stones. The purpose of these arti-

facts is a mystery; however, searching them yields 1d3 small, oblong metal boxes stamped with the letters ΔIA (DIA). They contain diambroid, a potent explosive (6d6 damage, but 1:6 chance an individual box is so fragile that it detonates on its own if handled).

## II. The Tower of Birds

### Background

Deep in the Desert of Regulator and half a day's march from the ancient road of great stone blocks that crosses it, stands the Tower of Birds, a bare stone finger overlooking broken lands. Whether it is a structure manmade or natural, the degraded surfaces do not tell: intermingled with rough cliffside are polished walls and buttresses, peering windows and a great cleft that cuts through the crown, high above the wide base.

The Tower of Birds is not sought by most travellers. Only those who are maddened by thirst will leave the regular road and, choosing a lesser path of jumbled and half-buried concrete, strike for the lifeless hills to follow the circling birds that ever fly in one direction. Theirs is often an unpleasant fate, because while there is water here, it is not easily given.

Near the immense tower (which itself stands on a low ridge), a small, narrowly twisting valley conceals wetlands alive with all kinds of birds. The birds do not fear strangers, contentedly swimming in the small pools, hunting fish in the reedy shallows, or sitting on large nests. The reason for this peacefulness becomes evident at nightfall, when denizens of the tower, atavistic and misshapen bird-men come out to slay those who disturb their lands. Do not subtract them from those encountered later. If, however, the characters use magical flight to enter the tower from above, they will be noticed and attacked by all inside.

**Bird-Monsters (6):** HD 2+1; AC 13; Atk 2\*+3 claws 1d6+1 and +3 beak 1d4+1; +3/+3/+1; CE.

|    |    |   |
|----|----|---|
| Hp | 12 | 5 |
|    | 8  |   |
|    | 15 |   |
|    | 5  |   |
|    | 11 |   |

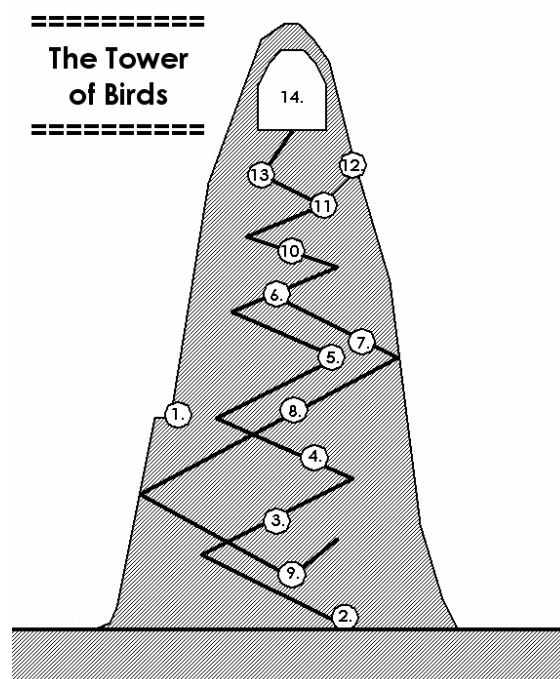
### The Tower

The Tower of Birds is largely built around two great spiral stairs going in the opposite direction. From area 2 on, entries in the tower are designated with directions (position relative to the tower's Z axis), whether the room opens outwards or inwards and the degree of rotation up and down until the next location. For example, room 2. is to the northeast,

and to reach room 3., the stairs make an almost full revolution.

1. About 1/3 up the tower, there is a triangular outcropping to the southwest, and behind an artificial balustrade, an arched dark doorway is visible. There is no access to this place from inside, so the only way in is to climb the rocks (Average, 4d6 damage if unsuccessful).

The doorway leads to a dark chamber, where a stone throne looks towards the sunlight, flanked by ancient, corroded iron braziers. To the right, in a wall niche, there is a painted wooden chest reinforced with iron bands. The chest is locked, but so fragile it can be easily shattered. It contains four leather scrolls bound with red string – so fragile they disintegrate on touch. There is, however, a bundle of five slender ivory sticks carved with runes in one of the scrolls. The runes, if deciphered (Hard Read Signs), unveil instructions for an alchemical salt mixture which generates strong heat when touched to wet copper or brass – usable, for example, for "writing" on metal. This recipe may be worth approximately 500 gp if sold.



2. [NE, +7/8] The entrance to the tower is to the northeast, half buried in rubble and dust. It is flanked by two things which might have been stat-

ues, but are so worn that it is impossible to determine what they depicted. A short passage leads to a hexagonal, arched chamber with rubble-strewn floor. A rambling circular stairway leads upwards in a clockwise direction. It is wide enough for three men and not particularly steep. Occasional niches in the wall contain old clay lamps, dusty and useless.

**3. [N outwards, +3/8, -7/8]** A small, empty room. The floors are dusty and worn; little windows peer outside.

**4. [SE outwards, +7/8, -3/8]** Identical to 3., but an archway leads to the east into an inner room, where old clay pots are piled on one another. The contents of the pots are an old, dried out tarry mass that crumbles on touch. Tiny bones may be found inside if thoroughly examined.

**5. [E inwards, +5/8, -7/8]** Polished stone blocks forming a low and narrow arched passage, lead into a 15' diameter octagonal chamber. The chamber's walls and floor are tiled with black and yellow ceramics; the high ceiling is cross-vaulted. In each corner, a beautifully carved black stone statue of a falcon stands on a low pedestal. In the middle, the octagonal rim of a deep well opens – cold wet smell from below. An iron grille covers the opening.

**6. [NW outwards, +5/8, -5/8]** A short passage, which leads to *another staircase* winding down in a counter-clockwise direction. This staircase is closer to the outer walls, so it takes longer to make a full turn. Instead of wall niches, there are occasional windows peering outside. All of these are very small, and impossible to fit through. -1/2 to 7.

**7. [NE, +1/2, -3/8]** A brief rest in the descent of the stairs; three tall niches inwards with human-sized black statues of sitting falcons. The workmanship is impeccable (imagine a replica of the Maltese Falcon).

Opposite the niches are arched windows which allow an agile character (Average Escape Artist check) to pass through (this needs to be rerolled when returning). The windows open on a narrow ledge, which soon terminates abruptly. Above the ledge starts the cleft in the tower side, which reaches through the galleries of 11 to the broken domed chamber at the top (14). Although the cleft is too steep to climb even by a professional, at its bottom, there is a glint of metal from between two great stone blocks wedged together (Hard Spot, but a character who is looking around consciously will automatically notice it). This proves to be a 300 gp golden cup if someone retrieves it – braving the crumbling edge, the perilous precipice and the treacherous rock slide.

**8. [S inwards, -1, +3/8]** Room complex.

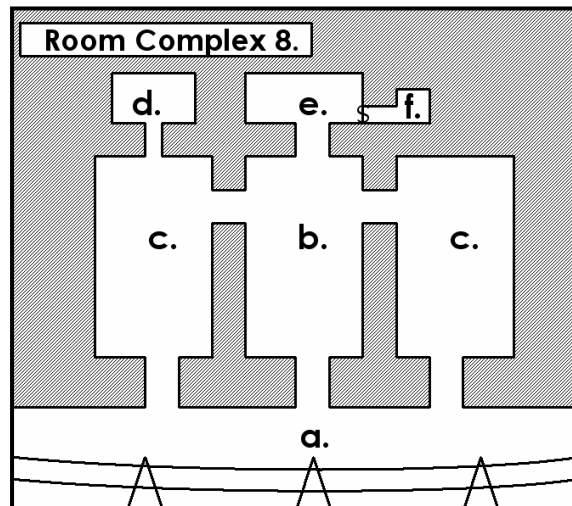
**a)** Three arched entrances. Intricate brass portcullises halfway down... all stuck and impossible to move without a Hard Strength check.

**b)** Mosaics in the floor and on the walls. Dry rectangular basin with blue and yellow tiles, bird motifs.

**c)** Empty rooms. The one to the east has deep, regular horizontal and vertical grooves in the walls – wide enough for a thin blade.

**d)** Fallen human body crumpled in the corner; dry flesh on protruding bones. Tattered green cloak riddled with holes and tears, round metal helmet, curved blade, shortbow and three daggers. Two unstoppered and empty metal flasks lying by the corpse. Pouch of 34 gp on belt.

**e)** Half-buried room; the northern and western wall has collapsed. In the southeast corner, a crawlway opens behind a secret door (one of the stone blocks pivots outwards). In the crawlway, a bundle of oil-



skin holds a crowbar, hammer and chisel.

**f)** Minuscule (7'x7') room. Roughly fitting stones with wide gaps in between, some narrower, others wider. Two apparent features: a block from the north wall has been removed and the handle-ring of a snugly fitting brass chest is visible; on the floor, a round stone plug is secured with two crossing iron bands bearing locks (2\*Average Open Locks).

Pulling on the heavy (fake) chest activates a trap operated by hidden counterweights. Iron skewers from the walls; 2d4+1 per character (Atk +6, 1d8+1 damage each). With a successful Reflex save, a character can avoid half of the skewers, -2 per each extra character in the room.

The stone plug, in fact the top of a stone column, is another trap: if the locks are opened and the iron bands removed, massive counterweights propel the column upwards and smash it against the ceiling: 6d8 damage, Reflex save to avoid (penalties as above).

A hollow niche within the column reveals the real treasure: a gold and silver box (440 gp) with a red velvet bundle. The bundle holds 5 platinum disks worth 200 gp each, a curved *dagger* +1 (red leather grip, sun symbol on pommel), a *ring of protection* +1 (blue metal ring with wavy red script) and *bracers of defense* AC 15. Symbols engraved on the inside of the steel bracers spell out the *gaseous form* spell, which may be used as a spellbook.

**9. [S inwards, +1]** The stairway ends in a black hall: smoothly polished rocks rise in delicate arches, yellow and black tiles, smell of cold water. Beyond the hall, there is a short (30'), very steep stairway up to an altar holding a heavy gold decanter. The stairway is flanked with 4-4 niches on both sides, and in each niche, there is a large idol of a black bird with red gemstone eyes (20 gp each, 16 gems total). The decanter is worth 800 gp, and holds cold, clear water.

If it is removed from the altar, a trap becomes active. The black idols shoot red beams from their eyes when someone walks between, inflicting 2d8 points each. A Reflex save may be attempted against each beam, or some item may be used to protect characters from them (however, even thick wooden items will be destroyed on the first hit, and metal is subject to a *heat metal* effect – the heat is enormous). Destroying an idol also deactivates the associated beam.

**10. [S outwards, +5/8, -5/8]** An intricate brass portcullis bars the entrance to a three-room complex. It lifts easily. Small windows outside. In the innermost room, there are torn remains of silk cushions and two long wooden crates. One is empty, the other has a scimitar with a pommel forming a moustached head (35 gp value).

**11. [NE outwards, +5/8, -5/8]** This room is a long gallery in one side of the deep cleft that cuts through the top of the tower. At the end, a smashed statue of an ibis stands in a small alcove. Through the large windows, two black openings on the other side of the cleft are visible, somewhat above the present level (**12.**). The climb is treacherous, with few footholds and crumbling rocks (Average Climb in both directions). A character who doesn't secure his way with ropes and spikes may plummet to the bottom of the cleft (6d6 damage), area **7.**

**12.** This place is only accessible from **11.** A dark gallery with no other exits except the two windows is a nest of several different birds; guano, nesting material and eggs obscure an old skeleton. It still wears a beautiful helmet with a golden pegasus device (130 gp) and a sword of so fine workmanship that it has a nonmagical +1 damage bonus (340 gp).

**13. [W, +3/8, -5/8]** Further progress is barred by a brass portcullis. It is stuck, but can be lifted with some work and afterwards closed by pulling hard

(Average Strength for each). Immediately after the portcullis, a large recess in the wall is visible outwards. A skeleton crouches inside. The recess is closed by thick brass bars set into the rock and impossible to remove.

**14. [CENTRE, -3/8]** The stairs emerge into a vast broken dome (~35' high). Natural light peers inside from the north-eastern crack, where the ceiling has collapsed and revealed the sky... In the walls, there are rows of arched niches, some with stones and debris, some with enormous nests. In the middle stand protruding stone blocks of variable height – also holding birds' nests. To the north, there is an odd, enormous idol: a black bird, polished smooth, brooding over a black altar where a great ruby casts red light – a light which provides no illumination.

The guardians of the tower are here, waiting to fall through the crack and slay the intruders: accursed bird-monsters, leathery and debased, with a malignant hatred burning in their eyes. They are humanoid, but stooped; they walk with a swift shambling motion, and attack until they or their opponents are slain. If the characters retreat, the monsters try to catch them from both sides – some take wing to enter the tower through the gallery at **11.** and assault PCs from below.

**Bird-Monsters (13):** HD 2+1; AC 13; Atk 2\*+3 claws 1d6+1 and +3 beak 1d4+1; +3/+3/+1; CE.

|    |    |    |    |
|----|----|----|----|
| Hp | 15 | 11 | 5  |
|    | 10 | 7  | 12 |
|    | 13 | 13 | 13 |
|    | 8  | 13 |    |
|    | 11 | 11 |    |

The only treasure in the dome is the gemstone. It is very valuable – worth at least 2400 gp – and magical, as the reddish-black radiance makes apparent. A type I. (vulture) demon is imprisoned within the ruby, and it may be called to serve the bearer of the stone if the proper command word is known (this should be the subject of another adventure). However, unless the ruby is securely stored (e.g. in a lead box), the demon also tries to master the character. When near civilisation, it compels him to commit murder and evil deeds while asleep. The character is unaware of these activities (except tiredness), but others may not be – probably leading to a curious murder mystery where, piecing together the clues, the investigator discovers that the culprit is... himself.





### III. Pentastadion

On the coasts west of the Sea of Mistakes stands the port city of Pentastadion (pop. 3200), a hub of commerce and reputedly the home of Fomalhaut's best seamen. Although its history stretches back a thousand years, the present city was re-established 300 years ago on the ruins of a former settlement, presumed to have been demolished by the talaioite barbarians. Now the size and power of the city far surpasses that old predecessor, although the talaioites remain a threat which necessitates the upkeep of a land army in addition to the swift war galleys. The surrounding lands are known for their abundance, and a number of fortified estates have sprung up to protect the rural communities during raids.

The rulers of the city, widely known for their boundless avarice, are a group named the Syndic Lords. This oligarchy of the rich and powerful, of which there are currently ten, consists of:

**Head Syndic Beslandar** (Fighter 5), a man devious and alert. He has a hand in every power struggle, playing off the others against each other in a complex game of favours and threats. Rumoured to keep a hidden lover in the Syndic's Palace under three locks; the mysterious female is in actuality a veiled and perfumed she-gnoll, for whom he has a perverted fondness.

**Syndic Koresh Gant, the High Priest of Kang the Thousand-Eyed** (Cleric 7), whose mean disposition has angered many, but whose zeal has carried him high in Kang's hierarchy. Koresh Gant's bearded, dark visage suggests origins in the far south; he always wears gilded plate mail and carries a great flail; also, he delights in lion-fights under the temple.

**Syndic Diakallis the Anome** (Thief 7), now long since retired from public affairs, she nevertheless holds her position due to an effective spy network.

**Syndic Dorias** (Thief 3), a magnate. Often away on shorter expeditions, his indecisiveness is as well known as his hypochondria.

**Syndic Thalasnar, Metrarch of Tsathoggus** (Cleric 6), so titled for holding a City Church, he is an exemplar of his faith with enormous girth, is ominously wide smile and a jovial temperament.

**Syndic Eschmer, Archdeacon of Mung** (Thief 4), the representative of Mungor City in Pentastadion. He is, sometimes derisively, best known for his devotion to the welfare of the poor. Eschmer, as it is prescribed for an archdeacon of the doctrine, is always willing to discuss his humanitarian mission, omitting his orders to eventually forge the squalid masses into an effective weapon against the other Syndics.

**Syndic Achenobarbus, Sea Lord** (Fighter 4), who, having gathered great riches in marine trade, has turned his gaze on the Head Syndic's throne. An aesthete with connections in Glourm, Achenobarbus

delights in elaborate tones produced by musical instruments purchased from ex-temporary sources. Those without the appropriate aesthetic inclination may suffer a horrible death when subjected to their sound.

**Syndic Malzarm the Grone** (Thief 3), usually present at meetings only when it is pertinent to his shipping interests; human head of wererat-cult based in the slums.

**Syndic Mir Thosga** (Illusionist 3): the aloofness of Mir Thosga has resulted in a gross overestimation of his magical aptitude, which he is content to leave that way – taking neither guests nor apprentices. Nevertheless, he has trained wild apes to guard his wealth and occasionally slay rivals; eight of these monsters are at his command, and they are all dangerous, man-eating beasts.

**Syndic Balaenos** (Cleric 4), currently the local bursator of Fedafuce after his predecessor's unexpected deposition. The Pentastadion branch of Fedafuce's church has been hard hit by a double theft, and the ambitious young cleric is tasked with rebuilding its reputation by any means necessary. Balaenos is a firm supporter of Beslandar, since the Head Syndic has made substantial deposits after the thefts to help maintain public confidence.

### Locales

**1. Harbour:** This long strip is bustling day and night; a number of open-air shops sell wine, food and various narcotics, while merchants from the city or other lands sell their wares. The four great warehouses rent space for both storage and more exclusive retail space.

**2. The Caravanserai of Orastes:** The building of the caravanserai rises above the merchants' quarter; although at a time shunned because of a series of disappearances, it has regained its good reputation after the events abruptly ceased (although they still occur in the slums with some frequency). Now there is a courtyard for caravans to saddle down, a bordello in a side wing and a number of rooms to suit every money pouch. Orastes maintains his guarded quarters on the top level. Thog the Strangler, a retired old thief lives below the caravanserai, the only one to know of a series of secret rooms.

**3. Dog market:** Xamander, a mean and thuggish type maintains an open-air dog market here; basically an area demarcated by strong wooden poles to keep the ugly mutts in. While the dogs are for the most part worth nothing, some may be useful for their sheer ferocity. Xamander keeps them in this temper with regular beatings with his whip and occasionally heavy staves. Pelts, fat and meat are also sold.

**4. Abandoned garden:** the walled and overgrown garden hides a mausoleum to Kantarol Oroee, a woman who had once taken the lives of several young girls and some lovers after wasting her inherited wealth on this place; stoned to death when discovered, her form and that of the victims still haunt here. However, the undead and the blood rose are only encountered in the evening, when the garden becomes a wholly different world and a death-trap to the incautious.

**5. Villas:** This area rests on top of a steep hill. Since the cliffs and the guards posted at the only way up keep the place well isolated from the rabble, this is where Pentastadion's aristocracy maintains its villas. A legend talks of statues walking on the deepest nights (and of a secret entrance which is only revealed when a certain statue leaves its niche), but while there are indeed several decorative marble images here, they are steadfastly inanimate.

**6. Slums:** In a depressed area where the earth had sunk by almost the height of a house, there is a tangle of cottages and small houses in the shadow of the hill. A wererat gang operates from here; there is also a small slave market with a low, mostly sub-standard selection.

**7. The temple of Mung:** The large domed structure is surrounded by a stone wall. Built over the last three decades, its size is meant to overshadow the fact that, jealous of newcomers, the other faiths prevented Mung from establishing a mission near the citadel, and only hefty bribes made it possible to erect it next to the slum areas. The temple is known for its charities to the needy, as well as occasional tasks deemed too sensitive for the men of Mung, and therefore delegated to more flexible and expendable outsiders.

**8. Training grounds:** These grounds are surrounded by military barracks, and are used for drills, mock combat, occasional parades as well as public executions. The way up to the citadel is watched by a contingent of guards. Strollers are stopped and questioned after nightfall.

**9. The temple of Tsathoggus:** The plain, windowless building extends from the side of the hill. A columned hall admits supplicants to the presence of the priests, who are overseen by the Metrarch, Thalasnar. Thalasnar's underling always labour to brew foul concoctions, which are sold at a temple for a tidy profit; the Metrarch himself is always in search of capable assassins for various lucrative missions.

**10. Towers:** These three round towers are empty and not currently in use. Some claim they predate Pentastadion's existence.

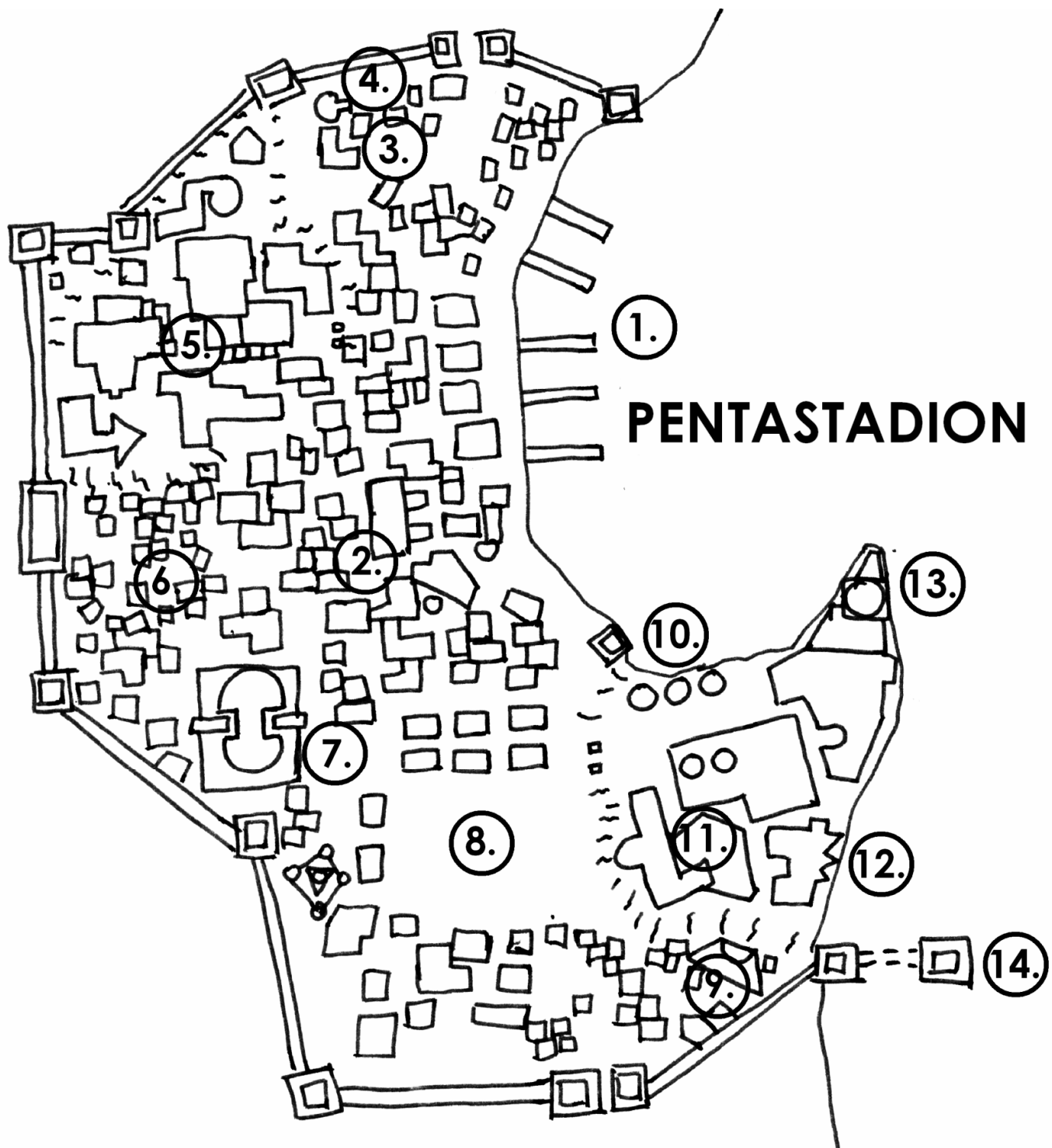
**11. The temple of Fedafuce:** The most prestigious position near the citadel is held by this double structure – a sleek columned temple on a lower base used for more ordinary activities. Outside mercantile interests, Fedafuce's clerics oversee a range of financial functions; the most popular is perhaps the sale of certificates in the form of silk strips which may be easily carried in clothes or perhaps a turban without detection. The certificates are redeemable at any of the god's temples and of course many other locations; available in values of 20, 50 and 100 gp at a surcharge of 10%, they are absolutely secure from duplication or counterfeiting.

**12. The temple of Kang the Thousand-Eyed:** To the upper city, the temple presents a thick colonnade; to the sea, a series of triangular terraces rising above each other. The massive idol, in plate mail and horned helmet, stands above the altar with its flail raised; from inside glitter the facets of an enormous unpolished crystal, "The Brain of Kang". The crystal (which is not a real brain *per se*) is literally beyond value, and it is also holy in the eyes of the clergy, who are well-armed and alert, as well as fanatical devotees (typically 2<sup>nd</sup> level Fighters), of whom 10-40 are usually in attendance. Below the temple are the lion pits, where those who have sinned against the severe deity – knowingly or not – are tried in their abilities; some have become free men or won divine favour, but many more have fallen on the uncaring sands. Koresh Gant is the current high priest.

**13. Syndic's Palace:** This impregnable fortress stands proudly on a high cliff. The outer sections hold the meeting halls of the Syndic Lords and various offices of public administration, while the inner citadel is Beslandar's private quarters (although he also maintains a dwelling elsewhere in the city). Somewhat to the left of the gates, there is a discrete little niche out of sight where anyone may make an anonymous report to listening ears. If the resulting investigation finds the report to be correct, an award will be granted to the informant on his return.

**14. Sea bastion:** This watchpost was originally linked to the city walls; it is now only approachable by boat. The lower levels are flooded, and are rumoured to hold secrets the authorities want to keep under wraps.





# Legal appendix

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