

RBL-705



BLACKOUT



AN EARTHDAWN ADVENTURE BY
ANDREW RAGLAND

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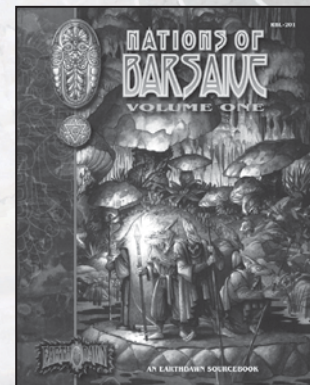
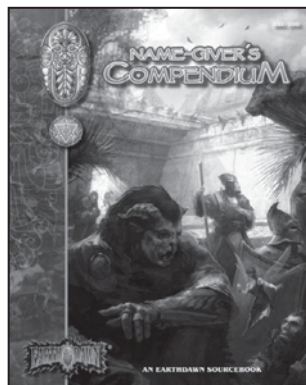
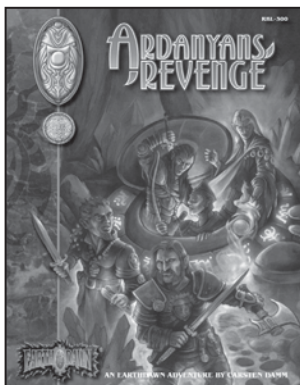


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ALSO AVAILABLE FROM REDBRICK:



BLACKOUT

You'd think that the races that can see in a sliver of light, peer into astral space, or detect heat would be immune to a fear of darkness. You'd be so very wrong...

• Gaurng Metsmetev •



Gaurng Metsmetev shivered, peering vainly through the pitch darkness as though straining his eyes might magically produce some glimmer of light. His footsteps echoed off the stone walls and ceiling, and his own breathing sounded like the roar of a hundred skeorxes in his ears. His bones ached with cold, and he was afraid. He didn't know what he was afraid of.

He couldn't see what he feared. He simply knew it was there. Something waited for him in the dark; something he couldn't name but knew existed. His breathing sounded louder now, faster. He willed himself to breathe more slowly, to calm down, but the harsh noise refused to subside. Slowly, it dawned on him that the roaring in his ears was not his own frightened breaths, but something else. Something ahead of him, somewhere in the dark.

The roaring descended in pitch to a rumble, like a mountain falling down. He had seen a landslide once, as a young boy on a trek with his father through the Throal Mountains. An entire hillside near them had crumbled away, tons of soil sliding downward at breakneck speed. The shock waves had toppled him and his father to the earth, where they lay clinging to each other's hands until the shaking stopped. Gaurng wished he had a hand to cling to now ... but there was nothing, nothing except the darkness and the noise and the terrible thing that lurked in it.

Gaurng took a step forward, then another. Far ahead of him, he saw a glimmer of reddish light; so faint he thought at first he was imagining it. The light frightened him, yet he could not stop moving toward it. Around him, the light grew brighter and the rumbling grew louder until he could feel his teeth rattling in his head. He could see the walls of the passageway now, winding to his left and vanishing in the red glow.

As he stepped around the corner, hugging the wall, he felt cold, sharp claws bite into his shoulder from behind...

"Sir! Sir! Lord Metsmetev, please wake up!" The voice was young, panicked ... familiar. Gaurng followed the sound upward, dragging himself out of the well of sleep. Young Nikol was bending over him, shaking his shoulder frantically. "Please, sir...!"

"I'm awake ... I'm awake," Gaurng muttered, struggling to sit up. Nikol dropped his hand and stepped back, respectfully giving him a few seconds to collect himself. From underneath the floor came a faint rumbling, like a far-off thunderstorm. "Do you hear that?" Gaurng asked.

Nikol swallowed and nodded. "That's what I've come to tell you about, sir. We've been hearing it all the way up here for hours now. The workers are panicking ... they all think the tunnels are going to fall in on them. Some of them are saying there's a monster down there, or an angry earth spirit that doesn't want us meddling with its domain.

"And—" Nikol broke off and stared at the floor, twisting his hands together.

Gaurng sighed. "Out with it, lad. I won't bite your head off, whatever it is."

Nikol looked up, his eyes full of fear. "The second team, sir. One of them's just come back." He bit his lip. "I'm afraid she won't last long, sir. Not even Kelix's poultice seems to help—"

Gaurng swung his feet to the floor and grabbed for his long coat. "Lead the way," he said gruffly. "We've got to find out what happened while we still can."



Blackout is a scenario for three to five Journeyman adepts of any Discipline. In this adventure, the characters travel to the tunnels and caverns far beneath the Inner City of Hustane. In addition to abilities suited to exploration and combat, **Blackout** requires social skills and characters should be able to deal with Throalic politics as capably as



Horrors. The adventure assumes that the characters have high enough status in Throal to come to the attention of the Royal Chancellery, and that they begin the adventure in Throal or Bartertown.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Blackout is presented as a series of events. Each is described for the gamemaster, who should use the information given to run each section. There is little text to be read aloud to the players, meaning the gamemaster will have to describe many of the scenes to the characters as he sees fit. Where possible the text describes the terrain and areas the characters will encounter, but much of the detail is left to the gamemaster to devise.

Each encounter contains four sections: **Setting the Stage** contains a narrative description that the gamemaster reads aloud to the players, **Themes and Images** helps the gamemaster set the mood and pacing for a particular encounter, and **Behind the Scenes** explains what is really going on in each encounter. The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track should things go awry.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In addition to the thousands of citizens who live in the Halls of Throal, the Kingdom of Throal also contains nine Inner Cities. Five of these cities—Oshane, Yistane, Tirtaga, Bethabal, and Wishon—are thriving communities with

sizable populations. Raithabal and Thurdane are still in the process of being built, although their construction has been halted (**Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 121). The Inner Cities of Hustane and Valvria opened only recently and are still filling up with settlers. Unfortunately for the dwarf kingdom, things are not going smoothly: it appears one settler took residence in Hustane far ahead of schedule—one whose presence threatens not only the city, but the entire Kingdom of Throal.

Far beneath Hustane lairs the Horror known as Emr'r'ko, the Dweller in the Depths. Unlike some Horrors, Emr'r'ko is not satisfied with the slow corruption of individual Name-givers. It intends to gorge itself on the pain of thousands of Name-givers all dying at once. This Horror has made its way into the depths of the Throal Mountains beneath the Inner City of Hustane, where it has begun creating Horror constructs with claws that can shear through rock. The constructs are digging around fault lines and stress points under the city to weaken its foundations so that the cavern that holds the Inner City of Hustane inevitably will collapse, crushing the inhabitants under millions of tons of stone.

The rumbling of the Horror's excavations has attracted the attention of the remaining worker crews still left in Hustane, who reported the strange noises to the Warden in charge of the construction. The Warden in turn alerted his superiors in the Royal Chancellery, who allowed him to send a team in search of the cause of the mysterious sounds beneath the city. After two unsuccessful expeditions, the Chancellery has decided to hire an experienced group of adepts who presumably will have a better chance of surviving.

Through a bit of cloak and dagger maneuvering, the adventurers are hired to venture into the tunnels beneath Hustane, both to discover the source of the mysterious sounds and to find out what happened to the previous two groups. The Chancellery has decided to keep news of any potential dangers a secret, however, which complicates the characters' mission. Chancellery officials fear that if word of the situation should spread, it might slow or even stop settlement of the city. The level of secrecy is so tight that even the newly appointed Baroness of Hustane, Divuna Divunicus (**Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 121), remains uninformed. The player characters cannot discuss their mission with anyone, not even after it is over. The common folk must never know the truth, lest fear of unknown Horrors and other hazards lead people to leave Throal in large numbers.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Despite the best efforts of the Chancellery, however, rumors have already spread among the Throalic nobility that the Inner City of Hustane is in some mysterious trouble. The rumors have caught the attention of Baroness Divuna Divunicus and Lendiltay, both nobles of House Moberl. Lendiltay served as Baron of the city of Bethabal until he was deposed by the crown for proving himself completely inept at his job. In an attempt to pacify Lendiltay's family, the king appointed Divuna Divunicus to the barony of Hustane. Lendiltay, however, feels he should

have gotten the job rather than "a jumped-up junior member" of his House. Insulted by Divuna's appointment, he is looking for anything that might let him discredit Divuna and take her position for himself. He plans to investigate the rumors, hoping to hit pay dirt. Divuna, meanwhile, has plans of her own to find the truth. Both these nobles have heard that the Chancellery hired a team of adepts to investigate Hustane, and both have taken steps to protect their own interests.

After gathering equipment and dodging inquiries, the adventurers set off for Hustane. Along the way, the characters are tailed by a Thief in the employ of yet another House Moberl noble, and attacked by thugs working for Lendiltay. After dodging the Thief and fighting off their assailants, the characters must cope with the difficulties of descending into the lower tunnels and caverns. They must cross chasms, climb down sheer rock walls and avoid flammable pockets of subterranean gases. Meanwhile, every light source they carry with them grows gradually dimmer, no matter what they do to compensate for the growing gloom.

As they descend further and further into Throal's depths, the characters discover that they are not alone. Two other groups of explorers are braving the deeps—one in the service of Lendiltay, the other working for Baroness Divuna. The adventurers must not only complete their mission, but also attempt to keep their activities secret from the other two groups.

Finally, the adventurers come face to face with Emr'r'ko and discover why their lights have been going dim: the



Horror detests light, and has been exerting a special power to dampen light sources in its vicinity. If the characters kill the Horror, they discover that its light-dampening power has become a curse on the city of Hustane.

As they start back toward the surface, the characters may end up dealing with the other two exploring parties. Upon reaching safety and reporting back to the Chancellery, the characters face one final hazard: politics. How they dealt with the other explorers and how they behave in the presence of nobility may determine their future in the dwarf kingdom.

A CONFIDENTIAL MEETING

In this encounter, the adventurers meet with an official of the Royal Chancellery, who makes them an intriguing job offer.

SETTING THE STAGE

When you first met the dwarf Named Ioroz, you thought he was the oddest person you'd ever dealt with, at least in Throal. He followed you halfway around the Grand Bazaar before asking you—in a voice so quiet you had to ask him to repeat his words just to be sure you'd heard aright—if you wanted to perform a great deed for a great power. And he flatly refused to say anything else—wouldn't answer a single one of your questions about himself or his employer. Definitely a strange one, that dwarf. But he intrigued you, so you told him you were interested, despite your better judgment.

Then things got even stranger. The dwarf sent you to an elf, a seller of potions Named Lirruri, who sent you to a grizzled old dwarf Named Poget who just happened to be a retired officer of the Arm of Throal. Neither of them would say a word about themselves or who they might be working for, either. In fact, Poget quizzed you unmercifully about your previous exploits, your current loyalties, and your discretion. Somehow—you're still not sure how—you satisfied him that you were trustworthy, because he sent you to see Tonliga Uvnimsaya. You recognized Uvnimsaya's Name immediately—an Officer of the Court, a remarkably important personage for you to be visiting. You still have no idea what "great deed" your services are wanted for, but it must be something serious for someone only two steps removed from the crown to be involved with it.

Two guards politely usher you into Tonliga's chambers, where an aide invites you to sit and offers you drinks. Once each of you has refreshments to your liking, the aide cautions you that not a word to follow must ever leave this room. You solemnly promise silence, and the aide disappears briefly through a small side door. Then Tonliga Uvnimsaya comes in—a pensive, tired-looking dwarf in his middle years. He carries a leather portfolio stamped with the royal arms and clasped with a rune-inscribed

lock. Taking a seat at his desk, he lays the portfolio down, folds his hands on top of it and regards your group with a worried expression. "An unknown force is threatening the kingdom," he says. "I need you to discover what it is and deal with it quietly. Word of this threat must never reach the ears of anyone outside this room—not the people of Throal, not the nobles. Especially not the nobles. Not naming Names, but some of them will use anything they can to harm His Majesty's government; and a mysterious threat is just the thing to make people afraid of their own shadows. Poget assures me that you are up to this vital task, and he is normally an excellent judge of character. Are you willing to take on this mission?"

THEMES AND IMAGES

Make this encounter feel like a scene from a spy movie. From beginning to end the characters learn of secrets hidden behind mysteries wrapped in conundrums. The situation facing them is layered like an onion; with more layers behind every one they see. When any of them asks questions that no one wants to answer, the characters get nothing but blank stares.

BEHIND THE SCENES

The adventure assumes that the characters have been through the web of contacts described in **Setting the Stage**. If the gamemaster wishes, he or she may roleplay the series of meetings leading up to the talk with Tonliga to enhance the "espionage thriller" feeling.

After Tonliga finishes his brief introduction, give the characters a chance to respond. If they ask about the nature of the threat to the kingdom, Tonliga hands them the letter on p. 6. If possible, make a copy of the letter and give it to the players to read.

Once the characters finish reading the document, Tonliga will ask for it back. If they ask to keep it, Tonliga politely but firmly refuses.

After the characters have read the letter, Tonliga briefly explains the political situation, saying that certain factions would like to see the newly appointed Baroness of Hustane—Divuna Divunicus—disgraced. He does not mention Lendiltay by name or hint that Divuna faces opposition from within her own House. Tonliga also urges the characters to begin their investigation as soon as possible.

Tonliga offers the characters three thousand silvers each, plus the heartfelt gratitude of the Crown of Throal, for successfully completing the mission. Depending on how successful the characters are, the latter may well be worth more than the former.

Once they accept the mission, each player character receives a pouch containing 150 gold pieces (equivalent to 1,500 silver pieces). They will receive the rest of their payment upon completion of their assignment. The characters may use this money to buy supplies for the expedition. Because secrecy is of paramount concern, they may not requisition gear through the Arm of Throal, as that would involve official channels and make an obvious connection

between the adepts and the government of Throal. When the characters leave Tonliga's office, go to **Traveling Tribulations**, below.

TR?UBLESH?OTING

The only possible problem in this encounter occurs if the characters turn down the mission. If they want more money, Tonliga can offer them another thousand silvers each, upon completion of the mission. If necessary, remind the players that refusing a request from an Officer of the Court is a bad idea—such an officer is only two steps removed from the king, and turning him down is almost like turning down royalty. If the characters remain reluctant, hint that an ugly fate may await those who find out deep dark secrets and then prove themselves unreliable by refusing to do the right thing. Keep in mind, however, that Throalic officials never make overt threats. They simply imply that a bad end may await people who fail in their obligations to the kingdom.

If the group includes a Nethermancer who wishes to use the Experience Death spell on the lone survivor of the exploratory team, Tonliga will grudgingly allow it. Unfortunately, the spell will only reveal the survivor's slow death without giving the Nethermancer any information about the nature of the menace below the city.

TRAVELING TRIBULATIONS

In this encounter, the characters travel to the caverns beneath Hustane. Along the way, hirelings of Baroness Divuna and her mysterious opponent, the former Baron Lendiltay, follow (and may confront) them. Everyone wants to know what is going on in Hustane, and some are willing to resort to extreme methods to ferret out the information they seek.

SETTING THE STAGE

The busy Halls of Throal seem shockingly loud after the hush of Tonliga's office. After a few moments, however, all the sound and motion becomes reassuringly normal. People of various races going about their business, groups of dwarfs blocking the passageways with debates—all the color and background noise of the dwarf kingdom washes around you like a river. You plunge in; heading straight for the stalls where you know you can get the best deals on supplies.

Plenty of people in the crowds seem to be going the same direction as you. Not surprising, considering how busy the Grand Bazaar is at this time of day. Still, you can't help looking over your shoulder now and then. Somehow you can't quite shake the suspicion that you're being followed.

THEMES AND IMAGES

Even though the characters are simply preparing for an adventure, the need for secrecy and the presence of spies

From: Gaurng Metsmetev, Chancellery of Hustane

To: Tonliga Uvnimsaya, Officer of the Court for Construction, Royal Chancellery of Throal

Subject: Report Concerning the Second Deep Exploration Team

Confidential: Officer's Eyes Only

My lord, what follows must receive immediate attention from your office, for the sake of Throal. I cannot sufficiently stress the urgency of this matter.

The rumblings from deep in the mountains below Hustane have gotten progressively worse over the past two weeks. They remain relatively quiet in the lower tunnels and inaudible in the upper levels, but several expert builders assigned to this project expressed concern over possible shifting of rock below the city. If the stone is indeed moving, at the least we will have to shore up the city foundations and discontinue settlement. Worse, these groanings may be early signs of an earthquake, in which case the entire cavern may collapse.

To answer these concerns, I sent a party of inspectors down into the deep tunnels. After some hours with no sign of them, we were forced to conclude that they had vanished—how or why, I do not know. I then sent a second team, better equipped and trained—this one included two adepts, a Warrior who once served with distinction in the Arm of Throal and an Elementalist recommended personally by Karon Foll of Yistaine. They were set upon by monsters in the depths of the mountain—of what nature, we cannot be sure. The monsters slew all but one of the second party, and the sole survivor died from her injuries soon after returning to the surface.

We must put together a third team immediately, consisting entirely of highly trained, powerful adepts, to discover what manner of fiend has invaded the depths of the kingdom. The issue must be handled with extreme discretion to avoid a panic. I beg you to use every resource at your disposal, and anxiously await the new team's arrival.

Yours,

Metsmetev

hired by Divuna and Lendiltay should turn a normally uneventful shopping trip into an exercise in paranoia. To make the characters even more suspicious of the people around them, have more than the usual number of people ask nosy questions about what the characters are planning to do with the provisions and equipment they are buying.

Merchants who normally show no more than the usual dwarf interest in their customers' affairs make a point of asking where the characters are heading and what they intend to accomplish on their excursion. If the characters seem nervous when answering these questions, or otherwise act as if they are hiding something, the merchants should treat them with a certain level of suspicion.

BEHIND THE SCENES

As the characters prepare for their mission, they have several brief encounters. The events described below occur after the characters leave Tonliga's office but before they set off toward Hustane, and should happen between the characters' other preparations for the adventure.

Research

Before they leave for Hustane, the characters may wish to do a little research at the Great Library of Throal on subterranean Horrors or creatures, or even the history of Hustane's construction. Nothing comes from researching the city, but the characters may obtain some potentially useful information about Horrors.



When making a Research Test (**Player's Compendium**, p. 245), treat the knowledge sought as Intricate information, with a Difficulty Number of 9. The **Research Results** below shows the information the characters can obtain, based on the result level of the Research Test.

Research Results

Pathetic: There is no such thing as subterranean Horrors.

Poor: You find a lot of material, but so badly organized that you could spend days just looking for a useable index.

Average: You get sidetracked, learning more than you might want to know about specific subterranean Horrors, but nothing that looks useful in the current situation. Well, at least you now know that these things exist, so you cannot rule it out for your mission.

Good: Plenty of Horrors seem to prefer deep places. Artificer is prominent among them, as well as others best not Named. Unfortunately, none in particular seems quite appropriate to your mission.

Excellent: Several records describe sounds from deep in the Throal Mountains, the Caucavics and the Tylon Peaks. Unfortunately, none of the adventurers who sought the source of these mysterious rumblings apparently survived to tell their tales.

Extraordinary: You find a fragmentary account of an encounter with something called the 'Dweller in the Depths.' Some of the pages are missing; others are damaged by fire and rot. Apparently the author ran into this Dweller during a trip into Braza's Kingdom. He describes it as having claws like a cave crab and a passionate hatred of light. The middle of the record is covered in messy scrawls, in which the author complains about not being able to see well enough to write properly.

I Want Some Answers!

While buying gear for their journey to Hustane's depths, the characters are cornered by Lady Chireget Yidrusn of House Moberl. A middle-aged dwarf of average height, she's a little stocky, but hides this under voluminous robes. Her jewelry is expensive but understated, and she carries her years well.

Chireget is a supporter of Baroness Divuna, though she does not tell the characters this. She has heard rumors of trouble among Hustane's construction crews, and she wants to know if the characters know anything about it. She has been told that the characters were seen leaving the offices of the Royal Chancellery and she wants to know where they are going—she recognizes adepts preparing for an adventure when she sees them. As a member of the queen's clan and a House of traditionally high standing, Chireget can and will pull rank on the characters if she feels they are lying to or evading her, but she does so reluctantly. Play her not as high and mighty, but as someone sharply aware of the responsibility to the kingdom that comes with her high position.

Being rude to a noblewoman is never a good idea, especially when she is simply displaying typical Throalic inquisitiveness. However, most Throalites expect non-dwarfs—who, in their minds, are more likely to be

outsiders—to take mild offense at what they consider polite social inquiries. Lady Chireget will therefore tolerate minor rudeness from the characters; but if it looks likely to get ugly, she stomps off in a snit. Almost immediately, a guard squad drops by to check out the disturbance. At this point, the gamemaster may gently remind the adventurers that secrecy is part of their orders, and that making a lot of noise violates their instructions.

If the characters ignore Lady Chireget and her questions, she has them followed, first by a pair of dwarfs and then—if those spies fail to get results—a Fourth Circle Thief Named Dendok the Unruly (see below for game statistics).

Ever Have the Feeling?

As the characters continue on their way, they may notice that they are being followed. A character who makes a successful Perception (7) Test notices that a pair of dwarfs have been following the adventurers since shortly after they ran into Lady Chireget. Evading the dwarfs should be easy enough—they are neither adepts nor professional spies, and so the characters can get away by simply ducking into one side of a tavern and out the other. For these dwarfs, use the statistics given for the thugs in **Ambushed!** on p. 9.

If the characters shake the two dwarfs, a successful Perception (11) Test allows them to notice that a third dwarf has now begun to follow them. This dwarf is Dendok, under orders to find out what the party is up to and report to Lady Chireget. Under no circumstances is he to interfere with the adventurers or stand and fight if they spot him. He will run away as soon as he realizes he's been tagged, but will continue shadowing the party at his first opportunity.

DENDOK THE UNRULY, FOURTH CIRCLE DWARF THIEF

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10	Strength (17): 7/D12
Toughness (18): 7/D12	Perception (13): 6/D10
Willpower (16): 7/D12	Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8	Initiative: 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7	Physical Armor: 2
Social Defense: 8	Mystic Armor: 5

Death Rating: 38 (58)*	Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 12	Knockdown: 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 30 (46)*	

* These values have been modified for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 26	Full Movement: 52
Karma Points: 15	Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents

Avoid Blow^D (4): 10/D10+D6
 Climbing (4): 10/D10+D6
 Durability (5/4) (4): 4/–
 Karma Ritual (4): 4/–
 Fence^D (2): 8/2D6
 Lock Picking^D (5): 11/D10+D8
 Lock Sense^D (4): 10/D10+D6

Melee Weapons (4): 10/D10+D6
 Picking Pockets^D (2): 8/2D6
 Silent Walk^D (5): 11/D10+D8
 Surprise Strike^D (2): 9/D8+D6
 Trap Initiative^D (4): 10/D10+D6

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman; Mason (2): 8/2D6
 Stone Carving (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Espionage (2): 8/2D6
 Subterranean Throat (2): 8/2D6

General:

Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12
 —Dwarf (Throalic)
 Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
 —Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*
 Streetwise (2): 8/2D6
 Tracking (2): 8/2D6
 Wilderness Survival (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Fernweave (Phys 2; Myst 3)
 Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)
 Dwarf Sword (Forged +1; Damage 11/D10+D8)
 Desperate Blow Blood Charm (3 Damage Points)
 Adventurer's Kit
 Carving Tool
 Climbing Kit
 Craftsman Tools
 Dwarf Miner's Garb
 Dwarf Rations (1 week)
 Light Quartz Lantern
 Quiet-Fingers Gloves

Loot

50 silver pieces

Legend Award

205 Legend Points

Notes

Dendok possesses the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

Fourth Circle: Thieves' Tongue (1 Damage Point)

Commentary

Dendok is a little taller and thinner than the usual dwarf, and definitely looks shiftier. He has worked for Lady Chireget before, is quite the professional and follows her orders to the letter, in spite of his name.

Ambushed!

Halfway to Hustane, the player characters are attacked by thugs working for Lendiltay (though the characters do not know this yet). The thugs do not know who they are working for—they only know they have orders to waylay the characters and do enough damage to slow them down. Not being stupid, they will break off the attack and flee if



the tide turns sharply against them. (Lendiltay's agent did not offer these toughs enough silver to make them loyal to the death.)

None of the thugs can provide any useful information if captured and interrogated. If the adventurers seem inclined to spend too much time tracking down the person or persons spying on them, remind them that they need to accomplish their mission as quickly as possible.

The characters can track down the agent who hired the thugs on Lendiltay's behalf, but this will also delay the expedition to Hustane. Finding the agent leads the character to an employee of House Moberl, who will not name Lendiltay as his superior unless his life is threatened (and in that case, his confession will not stand up before a magistrate). If the characters go this route, Tonliga will track them down either directly or through agents and express his displeasure at the delay.

The thugs are meant as a diversion, not a derailment. None of them are adepts, and so they are unlikely to cause the characters any serious problems.

THUGS

The following statistics apply to dwarf thugs. Those gamemasters who want more variety may apply appropriate racial modifiers (**Player's Compendium**, p. 45) to convert the statistics to another Name-giver race.

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12

Toughness (15): 6/D10

Willpower (14): 6/D10

Strength (15): 6/D10

Perception (10): 5/D8

Charisma (6): 3/D4

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9

Spell Defense: 6

Social Defense: 4

Initiative: 5/D8

Physical Armor: 7

Mystic Armor: 2

Death Rating: 38

Wound Threshold: 10

Unconsciousness Rating: 30

Recovery Tests: 3

Knockdown: 6/D10

Combat Movement: 28

Full Movement: 56

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman; Mason (1): 8/2D6

Craft Weapon (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:

Mining (1): 6/D10

Subterranean Throal (1): 6/D10

General:

Acrobatic Strike (2): 9/D8+D6

Avoid Blow (2): 9/D8+D6

Climbing (2): 9/D8+D6

Great Leap (2): 9/D8+D6

Melee Weapons (6): 13/D12+D10

Missile Weapons (6): 13/D12+D10

Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Speak Language (1): 6/D10

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Streetwise (2): 7/D12
 Surprise Strike (2): 8/2D6
 Throwing Weapons (6): 13/D12+D10
 Unarmed Combat (6): 13/D12+D10

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; Shatter 17)
 Ring Mail (Phys 6; Init 2)
 Broadsword (Damage 11/D10+D8)
 Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
 Throwing Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 15–25–30)
 Med. Crossbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 70–140–280)
 Quiver (with 15 medium crossbow bolts)
 Adventurer's Kit
 Climbing Kit
 Dwarf Miner's Garb
 Dwarf Rations (1 week)
 2 × Craftsman Tools
 Light Quartz Lantern

Loot

None

Legend Award

120 Legend Points

Notes

Thugs possess the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

TR?UBLESH?OTING

The biggest potential problem in this encounter occurs if the thugs seriously injure one or more of the characters. Given that the characters have each been paid 1,500 silver pieces, they should have been able to purchase sufficient healing aids to deal with any damage the thugs may do them. If not, feel free to fudge dice rolls as necessary to keep the carnage to a minimum.

The characters may also get into trouble with Lady Chireget. If they get too far out of hand, Lady Chireget may have them apprehended by the Royal Guards. In this case, Tonliga will get word of their arrest and make arrangements for their swift release—although he will not be happy about this.

G?ING D?WN

In this encounter, the characters travel through the half-settled city of Hustane and begin their descent beneath it. On their journey, they must cope with various natural hazards while either avoiding or confronting the exploring parties sent by Lendiltay and Divuna.

SETTING THE STAGE

You follow Tonliga's directions to the northwest portion of the cavern that houses the city of Hustane. The further you wander into the city, the emptier the streets become—until your footsteps echo off half-

finished buildings as if someone is following you. Every sound you make is magnified by the quiet, the emptiness, and the shadows. Out here, alone in the gloom, it's easy to believe in terrible unknown dangers.

You reach a partly completed structure, one story high and lacking a roof. Inside, a stairway leads down into darkness. Tonliga told you that the stairs go down roughly five stories, ending in a natural tunnel. Beyond this tunnel lie the caverns from where the mysterious rumblings have come. You gaze at the dark hole, and its inky depths stare back at you. From now on, you're on your own.

THEMES AND IMAGES

As the characters go through the tunnels and caverns beneath Hustane, make them feel as if they are exploring a haunted house. Spooky sounds—maybe echoes, maybe not—seem to come from around each corner. Strange shadows slip and slide across the walls and ceilings all around them. Countless unknown dangers may be lurking in the dark, waiting to pounce on unwary adventurers.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Parts of the city of Hustane are not yet complete. The entire cavern has been excavated, and large parts of the city are finished and settled, three dectants are still under construction—the streets have been laid out, and most of the buildings are half-finished. No one lives in these dectants yet except for the construction crews, and so the characters must pass by a large expanse of unlit and empty houses as they walk through the cavern. This part of the city is spooky, dark, and far too quiet for comfort. Describe the strange shadows, the echoes, and the creepy emptiness of the city to set the stage for this encounter and the subsequent descent.

The characters head down the tunnel and into the unworked caverns without incident. Describe their progress from carved stairs to partly worked tunnel with clear footing and recent tool marks on the walls, to partly cleared natural tunnel with rubble carefully swept to either side, to natural cavern with bits of fallen rock strewn liberally over the floor. From this point on, all movement takes place over difficult ground, and the Impaired Movement situational modifier is applied (**Player's Compendium**, p. 408). At this point, there is Light Impairment, but things will get worse over time, as appropriate to the descriptions in the individual encounters.

The characters will face a number of hazards as they explore, each of which is described below.

Finding Their Way

As the characters venture further into the tunnels beneath Hustane, they may wish to map the areas they explore so they can find their way out. Unless the gamemaster wishes it, mapping their course does not require the characters to make a test; simply assume that the characters draw an accurate enough map to let them find their way back to the surface.

Dimming Lights

As the characters get closer and closer to the Horror's lair, the light sources they carry will get progressively dimmer. Where appropriate, the events below describe specific reductions in the range of the light. For example, in **Bugs 'R' Us**, p. 13, the characters' light sources are reduced to half their normal effectiveness, meaning that a torch allows its holder to see for only 5 yards (see **Darkness** in the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 118), eventually leading to a Darkness modifier (**Player's Compendium**, p. 407) to actions.

If the characters think to link the reduction in light with the source of the strange rumblings, have each of them make Perception or Evidence Analysis (6) Tests. Any character whose test succeeds eventually figures out how to use the dimming effect as a direction-finder, which will prove useful in finding the Horror and getting back home after the battle. If the characters do not make the connection on their own, have them make Perception (9) Tests once their lights have been reduced to half the usual effectiveness to draw the conclusion described above.

The Chasm

Shortly after entering the natural caverns, the adventurers reach a chasm 50 yards deep and 5 yards across. The survivor of the second expedition cut the rope bridge that once spanned the chasm loose during her retreat toward the surface. If the characters choose to climb down one side of the chasm and up the other, each phase of the climb (descent and ascent) requires a number of Climbing (12) Tests as appropriate to the climber's Climbing talent or skill rank



(**Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 106). The characters may use any number of mundane or magical abilities to aid them in crossing, and the gamemaster should allow any reasonable idea for crossing the gap to work. After all, the characters cannot continue the adventure until they reach the other side! If they have the appropriate tools at hand and the ability to reach it, they might also be able to repair the bridge. It's anchoring can also serve to tie ropes to.

If a character fails a Climbing Test, he falls and takes normal Falling damage (**Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 107).

Hide and Go Boom

Ten to fifteen minutes after crossing the chasm, the characters enter a chamber measuring two hundred yards from end to end and side to side, sectioned off by walls and pillars of stalactites and stalagmites that have grown together. So numerous are these walls and pillars that the characters have no clear line of sight from one side of the cavern to the other. The Partial cover modifier (**Player's Compendium**, p. 407) applies to all missile weapon attacks made at a distance of more than 4 yards from a target; no such attacks may be made more than 10 yards away from a target.

Some of the concave portions of the ceiling contain pockets of flammable natural gases. If any of the characters uses fire as a light source (a torch, for example), roll D12 for every 20 yards the character moves while holding the flame high. On a result of 1, the flame ignites a gas pocket, causing an explosion. The blast does Step 8/2D6 damage to everyone within two yards of the flame, Step 4/D6 damage to characters two to four yards away, and no damage to characters more than four yards away.

Once the characters get halfway across the chamber, have each make a Perception (7) Test. A successful result allows a character to notice signs that another party has been through the area, possibly recently, and may still be somewhere in the chamber. Specific details noticed by each character depend on the result level achieved in that character's Perception Test. On an Average result, the character hears sounds somewhere between him and the far side of the chamber. A Good result indicates that the sounds could be voices. An Excellent result reveals scuff marks on the stone floor from boots, plus noises from up ahead that suggest the presence of half a dozen or so Name-givers. An Extraordinary result reveals that the other group in the chamber is about two-thirds of the way between the characters and the chamber's far side.

The group ahead consists of eight non-adept dwarf warriors led by Arrisaz Heptagar, a Fourth Circle dwarf Swordmaster. These warriors work for Baroness Divuna, and will do their best to avoid meeting the characters face to face. They are investigating the mysterious rumblings on their own, and are attempting to be just as secretive about it as the player characters. If the characters decide to try to catch up to the other group, make a Dexterity (7) Test for Arrisaz's party. In order to find Arrisaz's party, the player characters must make a successful Perception Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the result of Arrisaz's Dexterity Test. If any of the characters' Perception Tests succeed, they locate and catch up to the other exploring party.

If confronted by the player characters, Arrisaz identifies himself and his people as tunnel inspectors checking for fault lines. He claims they are all armed because Foreman Metsmetev decreed days ago that no inspectors were to travel into the deeps unarmed or in groups of less than five. Arrisaz has a plausible explanation for most questions, and clearly wants to get on his way. If necessary, a character can make an Insight Test to Detect Deception (**Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 93) to see through Arrisaz's story. Under no circumstances will Arrisaz's party join the characters on their mission.

Arrisaz's party will not start trouble. They want to leave the tunnels and return to the safety of Throal. If the characters threaten them, they will answer by asking if the characters are sure they want to start a fight. If the characters insist on drawing weapons, Arrisaz either uses Taunt against the character who has led the conversation with him or whips out his sword and makes an Impressive Strike against the nearest player character, both showing that he is more than a mere inspector, but likely an adept. What method he uses depends on how likely the characters will start a fight, as judged by the gamemaster. He uses Taunt when a fight is likely, a display at swordsmanship when he thinks it will convince the players not to fight. Starting trouble with Arrisaz's party will have repercussions later on, especially when the characters return to the surface and report to Tonliga (see **Endgame**, p. 17).

Use the statistics for the dwarf thugs in **Ambushed!**, p. 9, for the non-adepts in Arrisaz's party. Arrisaz's statistics appear below.

ARRISAZ HEPTAGAR, FOURTH CIRCLE DWARF SWORDMASTER

Attributes

Dexterity (16): 7/D12	Strength (14): 6/D10
Toughness (16): 7/D12	Perception (11): 5/D8
Willpower (15): 6/D10	Charisma (14): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 9	Initiative: 4/D6
Spell Defense: 7	Physical Armor: 7
Social Defense: 8	Mystic Armor: 2
Death Rating: 34 (69)*	Recovery Tests: 3
Wound Threshold: 11	Knockdown: 6/D10**
Unconsciousness Rating: 26 (56)*	

* These values have been modified for blood magic.
** Arrisaz knows the Wound Balance talent.

Combat Movement: 28	Full Movement: 56
Karma Points: 15	Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents

Avoid Blow^D (5): 12/2D10
Durability (7/6) (5): 5/—
Heartening Laugh (5): 11/D10+D8
Karma Ritual (4): 4/—
Maneuver^D (6): 13/D12+D10
Melee Weapons^D (4): 11/D10+D8

Riposte^D (4): 11/D10+D8
Speak Language (1): 6/D10
—Or'zet
Taunt (3): 9/D8+D6
Throwing Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6
Wound Balance (6): 12/2D10

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:

Acting (2): 8/2D6
Craft Armor (2): 7/D12
Craftsman; Mason (1): 8/2D6
Mapmaking (1): 6/D10

Knowledge:

Dwarf Lore (5): 10/D10+D6
Dwarf Military Organization (2): 7/D12
Mining (2): 7/D12
Subterranean Throal (2): 7/D12

General:

Climbing (2): 9/D8+D6
Conversation (2): 8/2D6
Forgery (2): 9/D8+D6
Great Leap (2): 9/D8+D6
Impressive Strike (4): 11/D10+D8
Missile Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6
Navigation (4): 9/D8+D6
Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Speak Language (1): 6/D10
—Dwarf (Throalic)
Streetwise (2): 7/D12
Wilderness Survival (2): 7/D12

Equipment

Chain Mail (Phys 7; Init 3)
Dagger (Damage 8/2D6; Range 9–15–18)
Dwarf Sword (Forged +1; Damage 10/D10+D6)
2 × Hawk Hatchets (Damage 10/D10+D6; Range 24–40–48)
Med. Crossbow (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 70–140–280)
Quiver (with 15 medium crossbow bolts)
Absorb Blow Blood Charm (2 Damage Points)
Horror Fend Blood Charm (3 Damage Points)
Adventurer's Kit
Booster Potion
Climbing Kit
2 × Craftsman Tools
Dwarf Miner's Garb
Dwarf Rations (1 week)
Kelix's Poultice
Light Quartz Lantern
Quiet-Fingers Gloves
Map/Scroll Case (with fake tunnel map)
Navigation Charts (in map/scroll case)
Painting Tools
Writing Kit

Loot

50 silver pieces

Legend Award

255 Legend Points

Notes

Arrisaz possesses the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests.

Commentary

Arrisaz wears dwarf miner's garb under a suit of well-kept armor. His blade is likewise well-kept and serviceable, but otherwise unremarkable.

Down is Bad, Back is Worse

Shortly after exiting the chamber, the characters reach a point where they must make a long vertical descent in order to continue exploring. When they reach this point in their travels, all the characters' light sources have become 25 percent less effective than normal. As the characters prepare to follow the decline, have each character make a Perception (5) Test. Any character whose test succeeds can hear sounds coming from behind the group, sounds clearly being made by yet another group of people in the vast chamber.

If the characters turn back to investigate these sounds, they run into Lendiltay's explorers (described in **Cast of Characters**, p. 20). Lendiltay has sent this group to find out what is going on beneath Hustane, stop the Chancellery's (and Divuna's) attempts to find the truth, and report back to him. If the characters confront them, Lendiltay's explorers at first give vague answers as to who they are and why they are down in the tunnels. If the characters do not buy their story, Lendiltay's party will attack the characters. They want to hurt the characters badly enough to force them to abort their mission, but do not want to risk severe injury to themselves.

This fight occurs at the meeting of three passageways, where the tunnel widens out enough for three people to stand abreast and swing weapons. Lendiltay's hirelings will retreat down one of the three tunnels at the first opportunity, more interested for the moment in finding the source of the strange rumblings than in harming the player characters. If pursued, they eventually vanish down a small winding passage. If the characters attempt to follow, let them know that their light sources are getting brighter. This clue should tell them that they are heading the wrong way.

Descending

If the characters follow the dimming of their lights as they move through the tunnels, they should proceed downward. If they have not yet figured out that they can use their dimming lights for navigation, another chance with a successful Perception (9) Test is appropriate now. The steep downward slope stretches forward for twenty yards and is fifty yards long. Getting down the slope requires a character to make successful Climbing (5) Tests unless the

characters drop a rope down the slope. In that case, they can use the rope to guide themselves down without making a test. Characters may also use appropriate magical abilities to aid their descent.

At the base of the slope is another tunnel that leads further downward, into the tunnels and chambers occupied by the Horror and its constructs.

Bugs 'R' Us

Their lights now at 50 percent of normal effectiveness, the characters enter a roughly excavated tunnel strewn with rubble and boulders. Suddenly, giant cave crickets, two per character, leap out from behind the boulders and attack the adventurers. The crickets will use their Surprise Attack power to begin the fight. To determine if a character counts as Surprised, you can let the character make a Perception Test against the crickets lowest Initiative Test result, or handle this at your discretion.

GIANT CAVE CRICKETS

DEX: 11

STR: 5

TOU: 5

PER: 4

WIL: 3

CHA: 4

Initiative: 10 (13)

Number of Actions: 2

Attack (2): 13

Damage:

Bite (2): 7

Death Rating: 32

Wound Threshold: 8

Unconsciousness Rating: 24

Combat Movement: 86

Physical Defense: 14

Spell Defense: 5

Social Defense: 5

Physical Armor: 6

Mystic Armor: 3

Recovery Tests: 2

Knockdown: 7

Full Movement: 172

Powers: Enhanced Senses (Listen, Smell) (2): 6, Surprise Attack (3)

Legend Points: 105

Equipment: None

Loot: None



Commentary

These insects are the size of large dogs, stone gray with pure white eyes. Totally blind, they rely on sound and scent to locate their prey, and chitter constantly during combat. Light-based attacks will not affect them. Savagely hungry, they will fight to the death in hopes of a meal.

Soon after they defeat the crickets, the adventurers stumble across Saryz Attrin, a survivor of Arrisaz's party. From her, they learn that the "tunnel inspectors" ran into Horror constructs soon after parting company with the adventurers. Saryz was separated from her companions during the battle with the constructs and has no idea what happened to her compatriots. Her leg is broken and loss of blood from her many claw wounds has weakened her so much that she cannot travel under her own power. In her weakened state, she will truthfully answer any questions put to her, but still refuses to volunteer information. If the characters choose to add Attrin to their group, she could become a potentially helpful ally when the characters finally return to Throal and must deal with local politics.

After the battle with the giant cave crickets, go to the next event, **Too Big to Be Termites**.

Too Big to Be Termites

By the time this event occurs, the characters' light sources have dropped to one-quarter of their normal effectiveness. As they round a corner into yet another tunnel, the characters encounter a pack of Emr'r'ko's Horror constructs chewing away at the rock. These Horror constructs, called stonecrushers, are giant beetles roughly the size of brithans. The stonecrushers sense the

characters as soon as the characters notice them, and immediately attack. There is one stonecrusher for every two characters, and these creatures will fight to the death.

STONECRUSHER

DEX: 10 **STR:** 12 **TOU:** 14
PER: 9 **WIL:** 12 **CHA:** 8

Initiative: 12 **Physical Defense:** 13
Number of Actions: 2 **Spell Defense:** 12
Attack (2): 12 **Social Defense:** 10
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 12
2 × Claws (3): 15 **Mystic Armor:** 7
Death Rating: 68 **Recovery Tests:** 7
Wound Threshold: 20 **Knockdown:** 15
Unconsciousness Rating: 61

Combat Movement: 78 **Full Movement:** 156

Powers: Climbing^S (3): 13

Legend Points: 520

Equipment: None

Loot: Claws worth 2D12 × 20 silver pieces (count as treasure worth Legend Points)

Commentary

Emr'r'ko created stonecrushers in its own image. As big as a warhorse, the stonecrusher is shaped like a large beetle, with a bony carapace covering its head and back. Rows of short, stout legs run down both sides of its body, giving it excellent balance and making it hard to knock over. Its glowing red eyes are set deep behind protruding bony plates. It has two massive front claws, sharp and strong enough to cut through and crush solid rock.

A Bonesmith can work the bone from a stonecrusher carapace into a set of armor (see **Nations of Barsaive, Volume One**, p. 288).

Parley or Fight

Before they can recover from the battle with the stonecrushers, the characters once again meet up with Lendiltay's explorers, who entered this lower level from another tunnel. Having gotten a look at Emr'r'ko, they are on their way back to the surface to report their findings. Lendiltay stands good chances that this report will be enough to embarrass Divuna and force the king to reconsider her appointment as Baroness of Hustane.

The gamemaster and the player characters have considerable leeway to determine what happens in this encounter. If the characters met Lendiltay's party in **Down is Bad, Back is Worse**, p. 13, the results of that meeting should be reflected in this one. Lendiltay's explorers are more interested in getting out safely than in anything else, but they will fight back if the characters attack them. The characters may instead choose to find out what—if anything—Lendiltay's party knows. The characters should find it fairly easy to get their fellow explorers to talk; Lendiltay's people are badly rattled by what they have seen in the deeps, and one of them



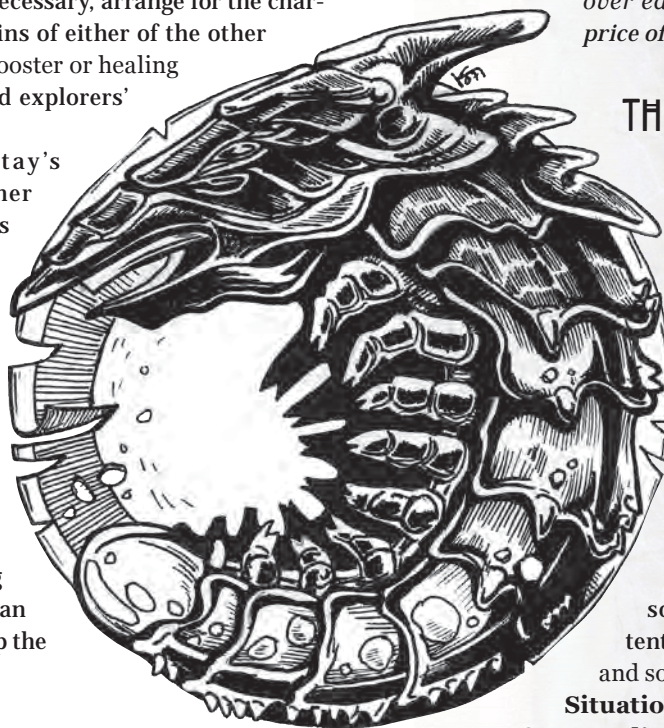
is quite likely to blurt out that “there’s a Horror down there!” If Lendiltay’s explorers insist on fulfilling their mission and reporting the Horror’s presence to the disgruntled noble who hired them, the characters will have to find some way of keeping the information secret from everyone but the king and his men—and might even need to choose a drastic solution.

If a fight starts, Lendiltay’s party will assess the odds at the end of each round and flee if the tide turns badly against them. If the characters slaughter Lendiltay’s group, they will face repercussions during their debriefing (see **Endgame**, p. 17). If they leave the explorers alive, Lendiltay’s people may cause trouble later on.

TROUBLESHOOTING

This encounter becomes problematic only if the characters are too badly injured to continue or to face the Horror in the following encounter. If necessary, arrange for the characters to discover the remains of either of the other exploring parties and find booster or healing potions among the deceased explorers’ supplies.

Dealing with Lendiltay’s explorers may pose another potential difficulty. At this point, Lendiltay’s people should be more of an annoyance than a serious threat; they cause real trouble later on, near the end the adventure. For now, do not allow them to prevent the characters from continuing on and finding the Horror. If necessary, a few remaining members of Arrisaz’s group can show up unexpectedly to help the player characters.



THE BATTLE BELOW

In this encounter the characters come face to face with Emr’r’ko, the Dweller in the Depths. Battered and bloodied from previous battles, they must now fight a powerful Horror in almost total darkness.

SETTING THE STAGE

Up ahead, you can hear something tearing at the mountain’s roots. More of the fearsome Horror constructs you just fought ... or something even worse? You draw closer, your lights dimming with every step. The grinding gets louder and louder, shaking its way from the soles of your feet to the top of your head. So much sound fills the air that you can’t hear each other speak, even when you shout.

As you walk around a turn in the passage, the

walls fall away and you emerge into a vast cavern, its ceiling apparently held up by a few spindly pillars of stone that hardly look strong enough to support the immense weight. Almost hidden in the shadows of the echoing vault is a creature three times the size of a thundra beast, bigger than a pair of mastery-liths. Rows of short, stout legs down each of its sides support a long, tapering body, and shards of rock bounce off its carapace without leaving a mark.

Abruptly, the noise stops. Wheeling with terrifying speed, the monster turns to face you. Seven eyes, set deep behind bony plates, regard you with cold ruby light. Two massive claws extend toward you, each large enough to cut a Name-giver in two with a single stroke. The monster snaps its mandibles and clashes its claws, then moves slowly toward you. “You have disturbed Emr’r’ko, the Dweller in the Depths,” it rumbles, in a voice like boulders tumbling over each other. “Now learn the price of your folly.”

THEMES AND IMAGES

This encounter is a desperate fight under terrible circumstances. The characters are fighting in near blackout conditions against a formidable opponent. The frantic dancing of shadows created by the dying flickers of light should create an atmosphere right out of the characters’ worst nightmares.

By the time the characters find the Horror, all their light sources have dimmed to one-tenth their normal effectiveness, and so a full Darkness modifier (see

Situation Modifiers in the Player’s Compendium, p. 407) applies to all tests

made in combat with Emr’r’ko. The characters confront the Horror in a cavern with an uneven, rock-strewn floor that leads to a Hard Impaired Movement modifier (**Player’s Compendium**, p. 408). Let each character make a Dexterity (7) Test each round he moves during combat.

During the battle, the Horror remains low to the ground to protect its less-armored underside, and uses spells to soften up the opposition before closing in for the kill. As they battle the Horror, the characters may notice that it stays in a crouching position; a successful Perception (9) Test allows a character to notice that the Horror’s armor is thinner on its underside. Attacking the Horror’s underside requires a successful Called Shot (see **Combat Options in the Player’s Compendium**, p. 404). If such an attack succeeds, use the Armor Rating listed in parentheses in the statistics below.

If and when the characters kill the Horror, Emr’r’ko uses sacrifice magic to create a dying curse (see **Sacrifice**

Magic in the **Player's Compendium**, p. 262). As the Horror breathes its dying breath, it whispers to the characters, *"My legacy will live on. The city above shall live in darkness for eternity."* With those words, a burst of black flames erupts from the Horror's carcass. These flames do no damage, but the characters all feel a deep foreboding as the Horror dies.

EMR'R'KO, DWELLER IN THE DEPTHS

DEX: 16 **STR:** 19 **TOU:** 17
PER: 15 **WIL:** 16 **CHA:** 14

Initiative: 16 **Physical Defense:** 20
Number of Actions: 3 **Spell Defense:** 19
Attack (3): 19 **Social Defense:** 18
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 21 (11)
2 × Pincers (3): 22 **Mystic Armor:** 16

Death Rating: 80 (197) **Recovery Tests:** 8
Wound Threshold: 23 **Knockdown:** 21
Unconsciousness Rating: 73 (177)

Combat Movement: 150 **Full Movement:** 300

Karma Points: 30 **Karma Step:** 11

Powers: Astral Sight (3): 18, Corrupt Karma (3): 19, Create Darkness (4): 20, Damage Shift (3): 19, Enhanced Senses (Listen, Smell) (2): 17, Forge Horror Construct (Stonecrusher) (3): 18, Horror Durability (13), Horror Mark (3): 15, Karma Tap (3): 18, Spellcasting (3): 18, Thought Worm (3): 18, Thread Weaving (Elementalism)^T (3): 18, Thread Weaving (Nethermancy)^T (3): 18

Spells: Elementalism and Nethermancy (Fourth Circle)

Legend Points (4): 20,740

Equipment: None

Loot: Carapace worth 5,000 silver pieces (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Commentary

Emr'r'ko appears in blurred shadows as a bloated crab with two massive pincers and six squat, bent legs. Emr'r'ko hates light, and so cloaks itself in unnatural darkness. The Horror also hates fire and high-pitched sounds. The Horror will focus its energies on eliminating any character using fire, light, or high-pitched sounds to attack it.

Rules

The following special rules apply to Emr'r'ko:

Armor Flaw: Emr'r'ko's armor is thinner in the belly. Attacking the Horror's underside requires a successful Called Shot (**Player's Compendium**, p. 404). If such an attack succeeds, use the Armor Rating listed in parentheses in the statistics above. In addition, the Spot Armor Flaw and Show Armor Flaw talents require one result level lower than normal for success.

Create Darkness: Emr'r'ko has a unique magical ability that allows it to dampen light sources of all kinds within a certain range of its location. This power gradually weakens

CREATE DARKNESS TABLE

Distance From Horror	Effectiveness of Light Source
10 yards	10 percent
20 yards	25 percent
50 yards	50 percent
100 yards	75 percent

as the light sources get farther away from the Horror. Emr'r'ko has been using its Darkness power to reduce the light cast by the characters' torches, lanterns, light-quartz crystals, and so on. With its dying curse, the Horror imbues the foundation of Hustane with this power, the effect of which will remain in place until it is broken. To use this power, the Horror makes a Create Darkness (5) Test. If the test succeeds, all light sources are reduced in effectiveness according to the Create Darkness Table. For every 5 points of Strain damage the Horror takes, double the power's area of effect. Each use of the power lasts for 24 hours.

In this adventure, Emr'r'ko has taken 10 points of Strain damage, increasing the range of its Create Darkness power by a factor of 4 (to 40–80–200–400 yards).

Darkness Invulnerability: Emr'r'ko is immune to the effects of darkness-based effects and attacks, such as Ethereal Darkness and Arrow of Night.

Fire Vulnerability: Successful fire-based attacks directed against Emr'r'ko are automatically Armor-Defeating Hits versus the Horror.

Light Vulnerability: Successful light-based attacks directed against Emr'r'ko are automatically Armor-Defeating Hits versus the Horror. Non-damaging light-based spells and abilities directed against the Horror, such as Blessed Light and Spotlight, require one result level lower than normal for success.

Sound Vulnerability: Non-damaging, high-pitched sound-based spells and abilities directed against the Horror, such as Battle Shout, require one result level lower than normal for success. Extremely high-pitched sound-based attacks successfully directed against Emr'r'ko, such as the Metal Scream spell, cause the Horror to become Harried. Emr'r'ko is not affected by low-pitched sounds, such as rumbling earth.

Going Up

After defeating the Horror, the characters must return to the surface and report to Tonliga. They should find going back up much easier than coming down, because they know the route and have already slaughtered many of the nasty creatures in their way. Their light sources get brighter as the characters ascend, making it even easier to find their way. When the characters finally emerge in Hustane, they see darkness spreading slowly over the city from the caverns below. The darkness heralds the beginning of the Horror's curse, which worsens until the entire city is enveloped in gloom that reduces the normal effectiveness of all light sources by half. For more information about the curse, see **Campaign Ideas**, p. 20).



TROUBLESHOOTING

This encounter's biggest challenge is to keep the characters alive. Because this is the big battle, don't feel compelled to pull too many punches. Even high-Circle adepts often die when they fight Horrors.

If you want to go easier on the characters, have the Horror refrain from using Karma in attacks made against them. Additionally, Emr'r'ko has enough weaknesses to allow the adventurers to defeat it, if it goes badly and the group does not note these weaknesses, describe the effects of the respective attacks or the Horror's behavior in more details. To successfully complete the adventure, the characters must slay the Horror; beating a fast retreat won't produce the results they are being paid to achieve.

The gamemaster determines what happens during the return trip to the surface, but because the battle with the Horror is the climax of the adventure, the ascent should be relatively uneventful.

ENDGAME

In this encounter, the characters report to Tonliga about their journey to the caverns below Hustane. At this meeting, they learn about the involvement of Baroness

Divuna and Lendiltay, and also receive answers to any remaining questions they may have as to what was really going on.

SETTING THE STAGE

After a long hike back to the Halls of Throal and a day of rest you tell your story to a Chancellery clerk just as Tonliga instructed. He writes down your every word, and with a practiced smile assures you that he will deliver it to Tonliga personally.

The next morning, an unfamiliar dwarf accosts you in the Grand Bazaar and politely but firmly asks you to follow him on "official business." He leads you to Tonliga's office, where you find Tonliga's chief aide tending to a well-dressed and dignified young dwarf woman and a slightly older dwarf male who is failing to hide his extreme agitation.

"May I present Baroness Divuna Divunicus of Hustane", says Tonliga's chief aide, "and Lendiltay of House Moberl." As you murmur appropriate greetings, Tonliga walks into the room.

Tonliga nods in greeting and speaks to you. "It seems you were not the only explorers who ventured beneath Hustane in the past few days. The others you



met were sent by Baroness Divuna and Lendiltay." Tapping a sheaf of documents on his desk, he continues. "I've read the account of your expedition. Now I'd like to hear the story from you. Neither the Baroness nor Lendiltay has heard any part of your tale, and I'm sure they will find it interesting. Whenever you're ready..."

THEMES AND IMAGES

This encounter is all politicking, and the characters are out of their league. Despite having been primarily responsible for resolving the situation in Hustane, the final outcome is not in their hands, but in the hands of the Throalic government. The characters should feel like spectators to the entire event, even though they played a significant part in it.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Before the characters relate their adventure, ask the players if their characters gave the clerk an accurate account of the journey and their meetings with the other exploring parties. If they told the clerk the truth, they should have little trouble in this encounter. If they exaggerated or lied, they may face some difficulty.

The characters will recognize the Baroness and Lendiltay by name, as the current Baroness of Hustane and the former baron of Bethabal deposed by the late king for incompetence. Both these nobles are of House Moberl, and the characters should guess right away that they have walked into an unusual (and tense) political situation.

Unless the characters already know the truth about the

other explorers (which is unlikely), they find out in this encounter who the others were and why they were down beneath Hustane. Depending on how the characters dealt with those groups when they met them, the truth may or may not be good news.

Unless the gamemaster wishes to complicate matters, assume that survivors of the other exploring groups told their respective employers the truth as well. The members of either group may have exaggerated about specific details, but the essence of their stories should match the characters' account.

If the gamemaster decides that one or both of the other parties lied or exaggerated in telling their versions of the adventure, he must then determine the reactions of Baroness Divuna, Lendiltay, or both to the characters' tale. This may teach the characters an important lesson about politics; namely that the truth is less important than the person telling it. The gamemaster may also need to adjust some of the material presented below; depending on how each group of explorers altered their version of the story.

The following paragraphs offer guidelines for resolving this scene, based on the specific events and circumstances of the adventure.

If Any of Lendiltay's Explorers Made it Back:

Lendiltay will be present for the meeting, as described in **Setting the Stage**, above. To his obvious irritation he is introduced only as Lendiltay of House Moberl, with no other title.

Lendiltay's actions depend on how the characters dealt with his hirelings. If the characters negotiated an agreement

with Lendiltay's people to take the matter to Tonliga for adjudication, Lendiltay is quietly intense. He is still angry about Divuna's appointment to the barony of Hustane, but the characters will not be in his line of fire. If the characters got Lendiltay's explorers to agree to keep the Horror a secret (see **Going Down**, p. 10), Lendiltay may not know about Emr'r'ko, unless the gamemaster decides that Lendiltay's explorers did not keep their word.

If the adventurers injured or killed any of his explorers, Lendiltay will act outraged. He will accuse them of brutality or even murder, and rant at Tonliga for hiring such callous brigands. In response, Divuna will point out that Lendiltay's own lack of judgment cost him his previous position, a comment that will only add fuel to the fire. Eventually he will calm down, as his tirade is mostly for show. Hirelings are hirelings, and Lendiltay does not care personally about any of them. When Tonliga threatens to toss him out, he will settle down immediately for fear of missing the characters' story.

If None of Lendiltay's Explorers Made it Back:

Lendiltay will not know about Emr'r'ko and will not be at the meeting, and so the gamemaster will need to adjust **Setting the Stage**, p. 18, appropriately, Divuna thanks the player characters for helping to resolve a touchy political situation (whether they actually did so or not). Tonliga elaborates slightly, saying that certain factions wished to see Divuna fail before she even took up her post. He does not want to know the details of the characters' dealings with Lendiltay's group, and stops them if they start talking about it.

If the Characters Dealt Peacefully with Arrisaz's Party:

Divuna thanks the characters for dealing peacefully with her hirelings and apologizes for hedging her bets, but explains that a proper ruler can never place all her trust in a single solution. If the adventurers assisted Saryz in some way, especially if they brought her back with them, Divuna commends them for their actions and offers them a place to stay should they ever travel to Hustane.

If the Characters Attacked Arrisaz's Party:

If any of Divuna's explorers survived, she will have heard their version of the conflict and will give the characters a scathing piece of her mind. If none of her hirelings made it back, she will suspect that the characters either killed them or injured them so badly that they succumbed to some other hazard, and she will ask pointed questions about whether or not the characters met her people. She will pick at the tiniest inconsistency in the characters' story, pushing Tonliga (and likely the characters) to the limits of his patience.

In Conclusion

After the characters tell their tale, their part in the adventure is over. In **Blackout**, taking out the Horror is only part of the adventure; the player characters must also relate their account of the expedition to the appropriate people

in an appropriate fashion. If they don't realize it when they begin, by the end of this adventure they will recognize that their actions, especially in Throal, can result in unexpected consequences. How the characters handle themselves in this meeting will determine their future with the Throalic government and various political factions in the dwarf kingdom. They have an opportunity to make a friend of the ruler of Hustane, and to prove themselves capable of handling touchy situations in front of an Officer of the Court. If Lendiltay is present, they may even impress him as professionals who are not afraid to do whatever the situation requires. Lendiltay may hire them himself at some future time. Business is business and personal grudges are an expensive indulgence. The characters should leave the meeting with a clearer picture of Throal's fractious politics, and wonder at least a little just how far they have wandered into the mire.

If they handled things especially badly, they may find it hard to get more work in Throal. Tonliga, Divuna, and possibly Lendiltay will tell everyone they know that the characters bungled this delicate matter, and word will get around that the characters cannot be trusted with real responsibility.

TROUBLESHOOTING

The biggest source of potential problems in this encounter is Lendiltay. His presence, especially if he is angry, offers plenty of opportunities to provoke the characters into acting carelessly or reacting to Lendiltay's heated rhetoric without thinking. If he manages to aggravate them into taking an extreme and unwise action, such as drawing a weapon, he simply stalks haughtily out of the room, pleased to have forced the player characters to show themselves in a bad light. Even if Tonliga agrees with the characters in their dislike of Lendiltay and acknowledges that they were acting under difficult circumstances, starting a fight in Tonliga's office will mean the end of adventures in Throal. The least the characters could hope for is exile, and they may fare worse. On the bright side, however, getting booted out of Throal could kick off a whole new campaign.

AFTERMATH

Whether or not the characters slay Emr'r'ko, the Horror's curse of darkness falls on Hustane. Rumors of the curse begin to spread through Throal, creating an atmosphere of unease. The opening of Hustane will be somewhat delayed, depending on the player characters' success or failure. Whatever the outcome, the politics surrounding it will remain complicated and nasty.

If the characters are successful, they come to the attention of several highly placed people in Throal, which may be good or bad. On the one hand, the Royal Chancellery is likely to offer them future work; they may even be hired to attempt to dispel the Horror's curse. Rumors spread by agents of the Eye of Throal claim that the curse was set by an evil Nethermancer angry at the dwarf kingdom, and that the characters are working to lift it. In addition, Baroness

Divuna and her supporters may also have work for the characters. On the other hand, Divuna's enemies may seek revenge for the thwarting of their plans.

If the characters fail in their mission but survive, they will get no more job offers from anyone highly placed in Throal for quite a long time. In addition, the king might reconsider Divuna's appointment to the barony of Hustane, and he may end up giving the office to another House entirely.

After all this trouble within House Moberl, King Neden is likely to think twice before assigning the baronetcy to another Moberl noble. Hustane's opening will be delayed while another party of adepts slays the Horror and lifts the curse, and while dwarf engineers shore up the foundations of the city. The people of Throal will grow restless as rumors of curses and monsters spread, and some may start moving away from the dwarf kingdom.

AWARDING LEGEND POINTS

As suggested in the **Gamemastering** chapter of the **Gamemaster's Compendium**, p. 94, **Blackout** awards a number of Legend Awards to the player characters. A single Legend Award should award a number of Legend Points as determined by the character's Circle. For example, a Seventh Circle character receives from 1,650 to 4,900 Legend Points per Legend Award, and a total of two to five Legend Awards per game session. In the final game session that concludes the adventure, the characters may gain two extra Legend Awards for completing the overall adventure goal. The adventure goal for **Blackout** is to defeat Em'r'ko.

The creatures and gamemaster characters presented in this adventure have listings for Legend Points. These are the points characters earn for defeating them.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

If the characters succeed, they have proven themselves capable and discreet, and so the Royal Chancellery will have other work for them. Baroness Divuna will owe them a favor, and will be glad to grant it if the adventurers did not massacre her explorers. The Chancellery or the Baroness may hire the characters to find and destroy the focus of the Horror's curse, a task that requires adepts of great skill and courage. The characters might also be hired to accompany teams of engineers venturing beneath Hustane to repair the damage done by the Horror and its constructs. Though Em'r'ko is gone, more cave crickets and stonecrushers may still roam the tunnels beneath the city. Depending on how the adventurers handle Lendiltay and his hired explorers, he may become a bitter enemy, a possible employer, or simply an annoying troublemaker.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

This section offers descriptions and game statistics for Lendiltay's explorers: an ork Nethermancer, a dwarf Warrior, an elf Thief, a troll Illusionist, and a dwarf Weaponsmith.

The exploring party also includes three dwarf soldiers who are not adepts. For them, use the game statistics given for the dwarf thugs in **Anbushed!**, p. 9.

CRIF ERMOREEM, FIFTH CIRCLE DWARF WARRIOR

Attributes

Dexterity (14): 6/D10 **Strength** (17): 7/D12
Toughness (18): 7/D12 **Perception** (11): 5/D8
Willpower (12): 5/D8 **Charisma** (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8 **Initiative:** 6/D10
Spell Defense: 7 **Physical Armor:** 5
Social Defense: 7 **Mystic Armor:** 1

Death Rating: 42 (87) **Recovery Tests:** 3
Wound Threshold: 12 **Knockdown:** 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 34 (69)

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

Karma Points: 20 **Karma Step:** 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike (5): 11/D10+D8
 Anticipate Blow^D (5): 10/D10+D6
 Air Dance (5): 11/D10+D8
 Avoid Blow^D (5): 11/D10+D8
 Durability (9/7) (5): 5/—
 Karma Ritual (5): 5/—
 Melee Weapons^D (6): 12/2D10 (Improvised Weapons)
 Swift Kick^D (5): 11/D10+D8
 Throwing Weapons (5): 11/D10+D8
 Thread Weaving (War Weaving)^D (5): 10/D10+D6
 Tiger Spring (5): 5/—
 Unarmed Combat^D (6): 12/2D10
 Wood Skin^D (5): 12/2D10

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:

Craftsman; Blacksmithing (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Dwarf Military Organization (2): 7/D12
 Military Procedures (2): 7/D12

General:

Physician (2): 7/D12
 Read and Write Language (1): 6/D10
 —Dwarf (Throalic)
 Speak Language (1): 6/D10
 —Dwarf (Throalic)
 Tactics (4): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; Shatter 17)
 Leather (Phys 4)
 Dwarf Sword (Forged +1; Damage 11/D10+D8)
 2 × Hawk Hatchets (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 24–40–48)
 Thread Wrist Carvers (Rank 4; Damage 12/2D10; 1 Strain Point for a +2 bonus to the next Attack Test with the wrist carver; 1 Strain Point for a chance to create a Bleeding Wound, if the opponent is Wounded by this attack, they take 2 Damage Points (No armor protects) per round until they make a successful Recovery Test)

Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)
 Adventurer's Kit
 3 × Craftsman Tools
 Dwarf Winternight Cloak
 Cloaksense Brooch
 Healing Kit (3 uses)
 Light Quartz Lantern
 Physician Kit (3 uses)
 Trail Rations (1 week)
 Traveler's Garb

Loot

80 silver pieces

Legend Award

520 Legend Points

Notes

Crif possesses the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

Fourth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests

Fifth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests

Commentary

Crif is the embodiment of most people's notions about dwarf Warriors: rugged, powerful, not bright, and stubborn as a glacier. He is unmatched at improvising weapons and strategy, and will use any tactic that might give him an edge over his opponent. In combat, he likes to get in close and use his wrist carvers on the legs of tall Name-givers and the necks of short ones, then finish them off with his sword while they're still checking to see where they're bleeding. Crif is the group's spokesman, and so the characters are most likely to interact with him.

NOVODTIC DRENEX,

FIFTH CIRCLE ORK NETHERMANCER

Attributes

Dexterity (15): 6/D10

Toughness (15): 6/D10

Willpower (13): 6/D10

Strength (18): 7/D12

Perception (14): 6/D10

Charisma (13): 6/D10

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 8

Spell Defense: 8

Social Defense: 7

Initiative: 6/D10

Physical Armor: 4

Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 38 (58)

Wound Threshold: 10

Unconsciousness Rating: 30 (45)

Recovery Tests: 3

Knockdown: 7/D12^{*}

^{*} Novodtic knows the Wound Balance skill.

Combat Movement: 32

Full Movement: 64

Karma Points: 24

Karma Step: 5/D8

Talents

Astral Sight^D (5): 11/D10+D8

Durability (4/3) (5): 5/–

Frighten (5): 11/D10+D8

Karma Ritual (5): 5/–

Read and Write Language (3): 9/D8+D6

—*Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Troll

Read and Write Magic^D (5): 11/D10+D8

Spellcasting^D (6): 12/2D10

Spell Matrix (5): 5/–

Spell Matrix (5): 5/–

Spell Matrix (5): 5/–

Spell Matrix (5): 5/–

Spirit Hold^D (5): 11/D10+D8

Spirit Talk^D (5): 11/D10+D8

Summon (Ally Spirits)^D (5): 11/D10+D8

Thread Weaving (Nethermancy)^D (5): 11/D10+D8

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.
Italicized talents require Karma.

Skills

Artisan:

Robe Embroidery (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Scourge History (2): 8/2D6

Subterranean Throat (2): 8/2D6

General:

Arcane Mutterings (2): 8/2D6

Engaging Banter (4): 10/D10+D6

Melee Weapons (4): 10/D10+D6

Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Speak Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Or'zet*

Unarmed Combat (4): 10/D10+D6

Wound Balance (4): 11/D10+D8

Equipment

Leather (Phys 4)

Dagger (Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)

Adventurer's Kit

Booster Potion

2 × Embroidered Robes

Embroidery Tools

Grimoire

Last Chance Salve

Light Quartz Lantern

Trail Rations (1 week)

Traveler's Garb

Spells

Astral Spear, Astral Whisper, Bone Dance, Circle of Astral Protection, Death's Head, Detect Nethermancy Magic, Detect Undead, Dispel Nethermancy Magic, Fog of Fear, Incessant Talking^M, Last Chance, Life Circle of One^M, Sculpt Darkness, Sense Horror, Shadow Meld, Shadow's Whisper, Shield Mist^M, Spirit Dart, Spirit Grip^M, Undead Struggle

^M Denotes a spell currently in a Spell Matrix.

Loot

80 silver pieces

Legend Award

685 Legend Points

Notes

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

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception-only Tests

Fifth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests.

Commentary

Quiet and cynical, with the air of someone who has abandoned most of his illusions about life, Novodtic is amazingly methodical for an ork. Only one thing rouses his *gahad*—Name-givers stubbornly holding onto false hopes and beliefs. Novodtic keeps himself in excellent shape, exercising in secret and hiding his impressive muscles under voluminous robes as an unpleasant surprise for Name-givers who assume all Nethermancers are weaklings. Novodtic finds grim amusement in messing with people's minds, using his Engaging Banter skill to tie them up in pointless discussions and then telling them things about Horrors that will give them nightmares for weeks.

HIATORI CAHZ, FOURTH CIRCLE ELF THIEF

Attributes

Dexterity (18): 7/D12

Toughness (10): 5/D8

Willpower (12): 5/D8

Strength (13): 6/D10

Perception (15): 6/D10

Charisma (18): 7/D12

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 10

Spell Defense: 8

Social Defense: 10

Initiative: 6/D10

Physical Armor: 6

Mystic Armor: 1

Death Rating: 30 (50)*

Wound Threshold: 8

Unconsciousness Rating: 21 (37)*

Recovery Tests: 2

Knockdown: 6/D10

*These values have been modified for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 38

Full Movement: 76

Karma Points: 15

Karma Step: 4/D6

Talents

Avoid Blow^D (4): 11/D10+D8

Climbing (5): 12/2D10

Durability (5/4) (4): 4/—

Karma Ritual (4): 4/—

Lock Picking^D (5): 12/2D10

Lock Sense^D (5): 11/D10+D8

Melee Weapons (4): 11/D10+D8

Silent Walk^D (4): 11/D10+D8

Surprise Strike^D (4): 10/D10+D6

Trap Initiative^D (4): 11/D10+D8

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:

Acting (2): 9/D8+D6

Knowledge:

Alchemy and Potions (2): 8/2D6

Torture (2): 8/2D6

Windling Poisons (4): 10/D10+D6

General:

Alchemy (2): 8/2D6

Conversation (2): 9/D8+D6

First Impression (4): 11/D10+D8

Flirting (3): 10/D10+D6

Missile Weapons (4): 11/D10+D8

Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Seduction (3): 10/D10+D6

Speak Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), *Sperethiel*

Streetwise (2): 8/2D6

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; Shatter 17)

Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

Dagger (Forged +1; Damage 9/D8+D6; Range 9–15–18)

Blowgun (Damage 7/D12; Range 4–8–16)

Box (with 10 needles; poisoned with *whadrya* venom [SD 6; Effect 10; Paralysis])

Adventurer's Kit

Climbing Kit

Healing Potion

Kelia's Antidote: Whadrya Venom

Kelix's Poultice

Light Quartz Lantern

Trail Rations (1 week)

Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Alchemy Kit (at home)

Loot

90 silver pieces

Legend Award

245 Legend Points

Notes

Hiatori possesses the elf Low-Light Vision racial ability.

Fourth Circle: Thieves' Tongue (1 Damage Point)

Commentary

Hiatori is a lovely, graceful elf who can entice Name-givers of any race into her arms with a single burning glance. Her cold-heartedness matches her charm, making her an extremely gifted practitioner of her Discipline. Who needs to sneak around to steal when you can make people hand over their valuables to you just for the privilege of basking in your presence? Once their money is gone, she drops her conquests, leaving them with empty pockets and a broken heart. Hiatori understands the attraction most Name-givers feel toward the exotic and the dangerous, and uses her wiles like bait on a hook. When crossed, she is a vicious opponent, with a blowgun and extensive knowledge of windling poisons. She enjoys paralyzing her enemies, then discussing her pique while removing small bits of them with a dagger.

T'PORIF THE REDEEMER, FOURTH CIRCLE TROLL ILLUSIONIST

Attributes

Dexterity (11): 5/D8 **Strength** (20): 8/2D6
Toughness (17): 7/D12 **Perception** (13): 6/D10
Willpower (15): 6/D10 **Charisma** (11): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 **Initiative:** 5/D8
Spell Defense: 7 **Physical Armor:** 4
Social Defense: 7 **Mystic Armor:** 2

Death Rating: 39 (55)* **Recovery Tests:** 3
Wound Threshold: 11 **Knockdown:** 8/2D6
Unconsciousness Rating: 31 (43)*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 22 **Full Movement:** 44

Karma Points: 14 **Karma Step:** 3/D4

Talents

Dead Fall^D (4): 10/D10+D6
Disguise Self^D (4): 10/D10+D6
Durability (4/3) (4): 4/—
False Sight^D (4): 4/—
Karma Ritual (4): 4/—
Read and Write Language (3): 9/D8+D6
—Or'zet, Sperethiel, Troll
Read and Write Magic^D (4): 10/D10+D6
Spellcasting^D (4): 10/D10+D6
Speak Language (2): 8/2D6
—Or'zet, Sperethiel
Spell Matrix (4): 4/—
Spell Matrix (4): 4/—
Spell Matrix (4): 4/—
Spell Matrix (4): 4/—
Thread Weaving (Illusionism)^D (5): 11/D10+D8

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:

Robe Embroidery (2): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Botany (2): 8/2D6

Farming (2): 8/2D6

General:

Melee Weapons (4): 9/D8+D6

Read and Write Language (1): 7/D12

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Speak Language (2): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic), Troll

Streetwise (2): 8/2D6

Unarmed Combat (4): 9/D8+D6

Equipment

Leather (Phys 4)
Troll Dagger (Damage 11/D10+D8; Range 9–15–18)
Troll Sword (Damage 14/D20+D4)
Adventurer's Kit
Booster Potion

Embroidered Robes
Embroidery Tools
Grimoire
Light Quartz Lantern
Trail Rations (1 week)
Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Spells

Assuring Touch^M, Bellow of the Thundras, Best Face, Conceal Tracks, Crafty Thought, Disaster, Disguise Metal, Displace Image^M, Ephemeral Bolt^M, Encrypt, False Floor, Fun with Doors, Great Weapon^M, Hunger, Memory Blank, Mind Fog, Nobody Here, Pauper's Purse, Remove Shadow, Unseen Voices, You Got Me

^M Denotes a spell currently in a Spell Matrix.

Loot

50 silver pieces

Legend Award

415 Legend Points

Notes

T'porif possesses the troll Heat Sight racial ability.

Fourth Circle: Glamour (1 Damage Point)

Commentary

As a troll Illusionist with impressive reserve, T'porif is an unusual person. Of lowland stock, he carries himself with dignity. Only the most observant people catch the faint smile constantly playing around his eyes and the corners of his mouth, evidence of his vast secret amusement at the world. Given to elaborate pranks and subtle jests, he finds it almost as amusing when people don't get the joke as when they do. Life is funny, and the deceptions people practice, especially the lies they tell themselves about their existence, are utterly ridiculous. One who reveals these lies for what they are just might redeem a fellow Name-giver from his inner illusions. A great believer in comfort, T'porif doesn't hold with unnecessary suffering, his own or someone else's. Despite his quiet manner, when angered or in danger he can lop off heads with his troll sword as efficiently as any troll raider. He uses his size to advantage, running over his enemies and slaughtering them once they are down.

JADRIS GANTRIEF, FIFTH CIRCLE DWARF WEAPONSMITH

Attributes

Dexterity (13): 6/D10 **Strength** (18): 7/D12
Toughness (18): 7/D12 **Perception** (17): 7/D12
Willpower (14): 6/D10 **Charisma** (10): 5/D8

Characteristics

Physical Defense: 7 **Initiative:** 5/D8
Spell Defense: 9 **Physical Armor:** 6
Social Defense: 6 **Mystic Armor:** 2

Death Rating: 41 (71)*

Recovery Tests: 3

Wound Threshold: 12 **Knockdown:** 7/D12
Unconsciousness Rating: 33 (68)*

* These values have been adjusted for blood magic.

Combat Movement: 22 **Full Movement:** 44

Karma Points: 20 **Karma Step:** 4/D6

Talents (Knacks)

Abate Curse^D (5): 11/D10+D8
Avoid Blow (5): 11/D10+D8
Detect Weapon^D (5): 12/2D10
Durability (6/5) (5): 5/-
Forge Blade^D (6): 13/D12+D10 (Forge Arrow)
Haggle^D (5): 10/D10+D6
Karma Ritual (5): 5/-
Melee Weapons (6): 12/2D10
Read and Write Language (3): 10/D10+D6
—Or'zet, Sperethiel, Troll
Speak Language (3): 10/D10+D6
—Or'zet, Sperethiel, Troll
Steel Thought^D (5): 11/D10+D8
Temper Self^D (5): 11/D10+D8

Thread Weaving (Smith Weaving)^D (5): 12/2D10
(Create Thread Item)

Weapon History^D (6): 13/D12+D10

^D Indicates a Discipline talent.

Skills

Artisan:

Weapon Runic Carving (3): 8/2D6

Knowledge:

Alchemy and Potions (3): 10/D10+D6

Ancient Weapons (3): 10/D10+D6

General:

Alchemy (3): 10/D10+D6

Physician (3): 10/D10+D6

Read and Write Language (1): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Resist Taunt (2): 9/D8+D6

Speak Language (1): 8/2D6

—Dwarf (Throalic)

Streetwise (2): 9/D8+D6

Trading (3): 8/2D6

Equipment

Buckler (Phys 1; Shatter 17)

Hardened Leather (Phys 5; Init 1)

Dagger (Forged +1; Damage 10/D10+D6;
Range 9–15–18)

Thread Scythan Axe (Rank 5; Damage
15/D20+D6; Climbing rank +2; Climbing
(2): 8/2D6; Opponent's Knockdown

Tests -2 or -3; see below)

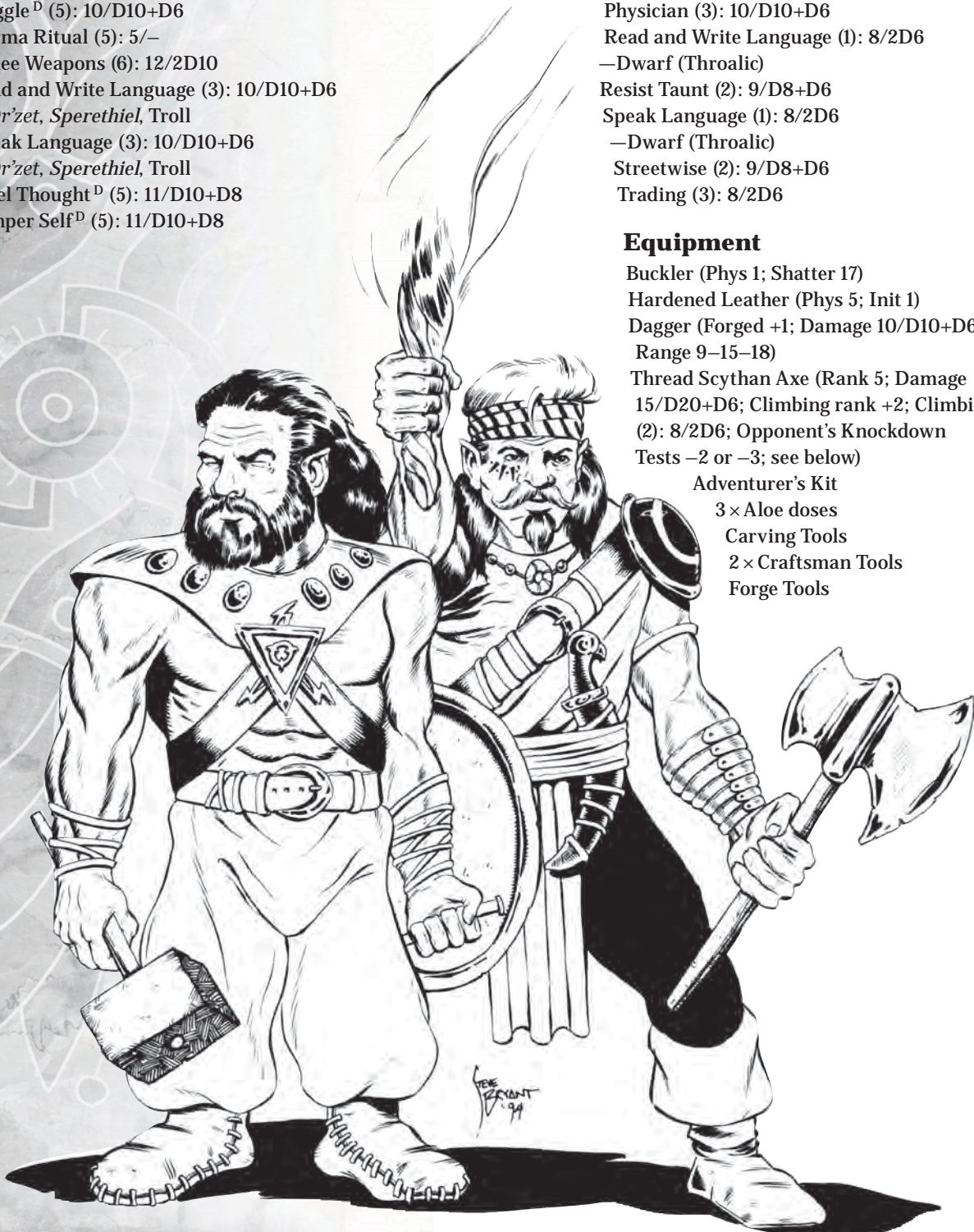
Adventurer's Kit

3 × Aloe doses

Carving Tools

2 × Craftsman Tools

Forge Tools



THREAD SCYTHAN AXE

The Scythan axe, also known as the *mareka*, is a one-handed weapon featuring a single axe-head. On the side opposite to the blade, the weapon is either flat or has a small spike or hook. The *mareka* shows the true pragmatism of the dwarfs of ancient Scytha, as the flat side can be used as a hammer, or the hook for climbing (the latter providing a +1 bonus to any Climbing Test where the hook or spike proves useful). The weapon is also referred to as “knee-crusher,” as it saw frequent use in the early wars that the Scythan dwarfs fought against larger foes such as trolls and ogres. The ancient dwarf blessing “May a shield be above your head, and may you strike straight” is more literal than it might first appear when it is applied to the *mareka*.

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 14

Thread Rank One

Cost: 200

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the axe’s Name.

Effect: The axe is now Damage step 6

Thread Rank Two

Cost: 300

Effect: The axe is now Damage step 7

Thread Rank Three

Cost: 500

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the axe’s creator.

Effect: The wielder now gains a +2 rank bonus to his Climbing talent when using the hooked/spiked side of the Scythan axe.

Thread Rank Four

Cost: 800

Effect: The axe is now Damage step 8

Thread Rank Five

Cost: 1,300

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the first ogre or troll struck by the axe.

Effect: The Scythan axe is often referred to as a “kneecrusher.” If the axe inflicts a Wound, bones are cracked and broken, the resulting pain causing the victim to suffer a –2 penalty to his Knockdown Test for that Wound. If the victim is an ogre or troll, they suffer a –3 penalty to their Knockdown Test.

Healing Kit (3 uses)
Light Quartz Lantern
3 × Mist Blossom Poultices
Physician Kit (3 uses)
Trail Rations (1 week)
Traveler’s Garb
Alchemy Kit (at forge)

Loot

130 silver pieces

Legend Award

380 Legend Points

Notes

Jadris possesses the dwarf Heat Sight racial ability.

Fourth Circle: Evaluate Weapon (1 Damage Point)

Fifth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests

Commentary

Having long ago abandoned any idea of family, Jadris considers herself married to her work. The forge is her altar. The creation and history of weapons consumes her. The possibility of uncovering any new secret of her craft draws her like a moth to a flame. Anything that gets between her and this knowledge must be overcome or destroyed. Her oppressiveness worries people, especially her fellow explorers in this adventure. She feels no regard for her appearance. With muscles the envy of any man, dark hair hacked off randomly whenever it got in her way, and old burn scars crisscrossing her face and hands, she fails to embody anyone’s idea of female beauty.

EARTHDAWN SHARDS: SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The **Shards** series is a collection of adventures and encounters for the **Earthdawn** game. Intended as an inexpensive adventure resource for **Earthdawn** gamemasters, they are also a springboard for aspiring writers. The **Shards** series is published and available for purchase online from *OneBookshelf.com*—it is possible that a collection might see print at a later stage. Please read the following guidelines carefully before submitting your idea for a Shard. Submissions that do not conform to the guidelines may not be accepted.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

Short adventures and encounters (including appropriate setting descriptions) for **Earthdawn**, written to be used with the rules contained in the **Earthdawn Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums**. A Shard can also contain new creatures and gamemaster characters. The tone and style of the text should fit the **Earthdawn** setting (refer to previously published adventures to get an idea of what we are talking about here).

As mentioned above, the **Shards** series also serves as a hunting ground to find potential new writers we can send outlines to and ask to participate in bigger projects, so succeeding here may result in future agreements.

WHAT YOU NEED TO SEND US

Your manuscript, formatted as outlined below, attached to an email sent to *submissions@earthdawn.com*. The email must contain a standard disclosure agreement (you can copy and paste the boxed text unaltered into the body of your email). Please note that these guidelines are subject to change, so check our web site at *www.earthdawn.com* for updates and an FAQ).

Formatting

We accept electronic submissions only. Each entry should come as a separate file (please use any of the following formats for your entries: DOC, RTF, TXT, or PDF). Your full name and email address should be provided clearly on the first page of the entry and/or in the header/footer. All pages should be plain white Letter- or A4-sized paper with one-inch margins all around, and set in a Times Roman type no smaller than 10 point). Using the default settings of your word processor is usually a good idea. Please pay close attention to spelling, grammar, and punctuation—use our **Submission Handbook** for **Earthdawn** as a guide.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY SUBMISSION GETS ACCEPTED?

If your submission survives our evaluation process (as outlined in the **Revisions and Rejections** section on p. 6 of our **Submission Handbook** for **Earthdawn**), we will contact you and start working on getting the Shard ready for publication (this involves editing, artwork selection/creation, and layout by our staff).

I wish to submit the materials attached to this eMail for consideration for publication by **RedBrick Limited**, subject to all of the conditions below:

I agree with the terms and conditions outlined in the **Earthdawn Shards Submission Guidelines**.

I submit my materials voluntarily and on a non-confidential basis. I understand that my submission and its review by **RedBrick Limited** does not, in whole or in part, establish or create by implication or otherwise any relationship between **RedBrick Limited** and myself that is not expressed herein. I further understand and agree that **RedBrick Limited** in its own judgment, may accept or reject the materials that are submitted with this email and shall not be obligated to me in any way with respect to my submission until **RedBrick Limited** shall, at its own election, enter into a properly executed agreement with me, and only then according to the terms of the **Earthdawn Shards Submission Guidelines**, as outlined under **What Happens When My Submission Gets Accepted?**.

I agree that **RedBrick Limited** may have a reasonable period in which to review this submission.

I understand and agree that the review by **RedBrick Limited** of the materials that accompany my submission does not imply or create (a) any financial or other obligation of any kind on the part of **RedBrick Limited**, (b) any confidential relationship or guarantee of secrecy, or (c) any recognition or acknowledgment of either novelty or originality.

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I warrant that the submission is original, and that its publication will not violate the rights of any third party, and that the person identified herein as the submitter is the sole owner of the submission.

Furthermore, I am of legal age in my country of origin and am free to make agreements relative to this submission.

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Once we reach this stage, your submission becomes the property of **RedBrick Limited** and **FASA Corporation**, meaning you lose all rights to publish it elsewhere.

Payment

Apart from the benefits of being a published author, you'll receive the following things from us:

—A complimentary copy of the Shard upon publication. If the Shard ends up in a later product (a printed collection, for example), you will get a complimentary copy of that as well.

—Depending on the Shard's final page count, you will also receive credit which you can spend on RedBrick products ONLY. This includes: miniatures, printed books, and eBooks. A Novice Shard (1-8 pages) will reward you store credit of US\$20; a Journeyman Shard (9-16 pages) will reward US\$30 credit; a Warden Shard (17-24 pages) US\$40; and a Master Shard (25+ pages) US\$50 credit.

Additional Guidelines

Check our web site at *www.earthdawn.com* for more information and general advice on how to create a Shard!

DEEP TROUBLE

Before science, before history, an era of magic existed in our world's dim past. Magic flowed freely, touching every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Name-giver races. It was an age of heroes, an age of fantastical deeds and mythical stories.

In this Age of Legend, bold heroes from all across Barsaive band together—ready to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire, which seeks to bend the rebellious province again to their yoke. Through noble deeds and sacrifice, the heroes of the world forge Barsaive's future, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures.

Earthdawn is a roleplaying game set in a world of high adventure, high magic, and terrible danger. The **Shards** series is a collection of adventures and encounters for the **Earthdawn** game, intended as an inexpensive resource for **Earthdawn** gamemasters.

This volume contains the adventure **Blackout**, designed for Journeyman characters of any Discipline. In this adventure, the characters travel to the tunnels and caverns far beneath the Inner City of Hustane, investigating a rumor about a potential threat to the Kingdom of Throal. What they find in the darkness, however, is far more serious than anyone had expected... Requires use of the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums**.



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