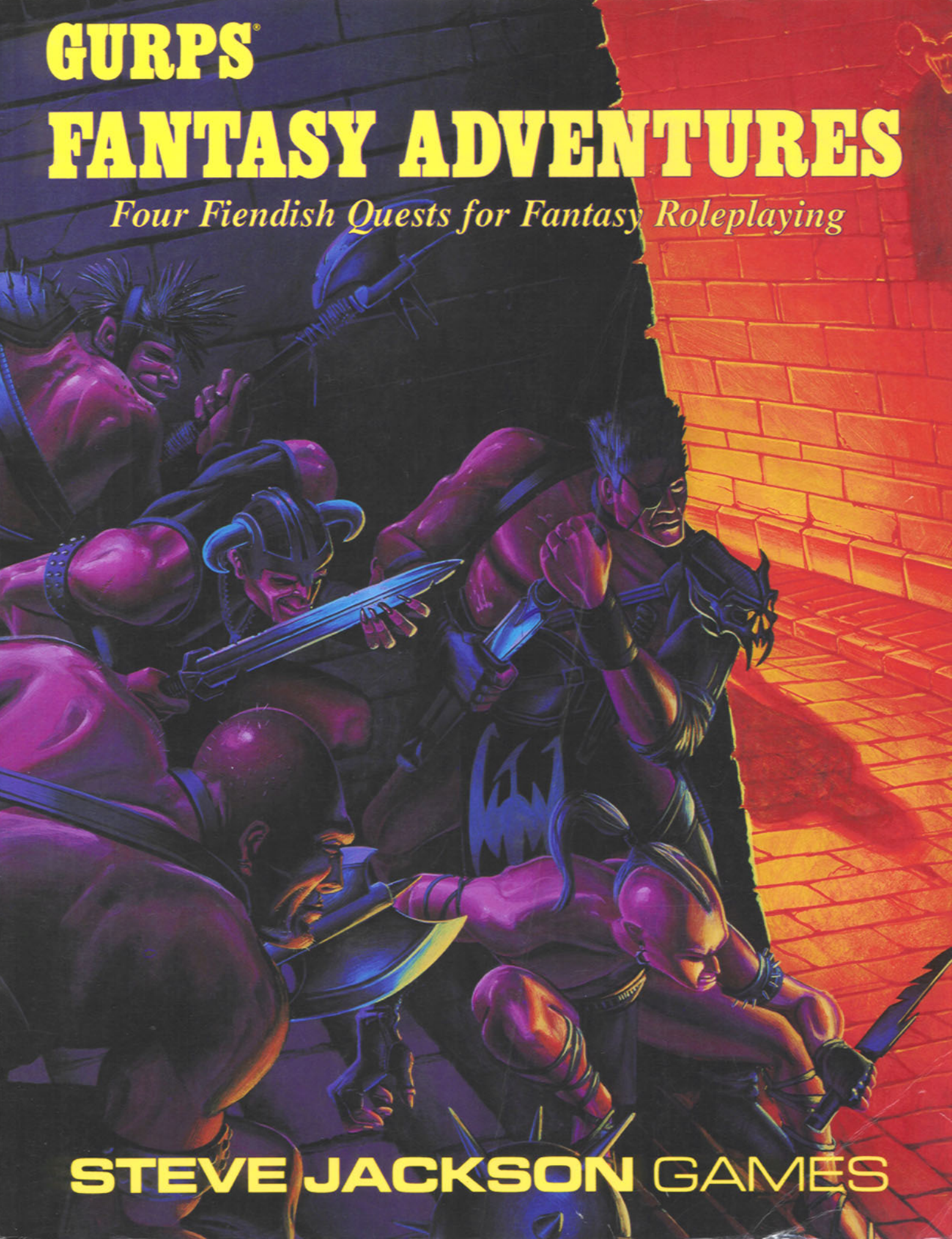
GURPS®

FANTASY ADVENTURES

Four Fiendish Quests for Fantasy Roleplaying



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS®

FANTASY ADVENTURES

Four Fiendish Quests for Fantasy Roleplaying

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INTRODUCTION

Dank swamps . . . magic rings . . . faerie princesses . . . fire-breathing dragons. The fantasy adventure is a standard in roleplaying games. Many roleplayers are introduced to gaming through tracking down the terrorizing Evilwizard, finding the lost Crown of Someancientelf, or rescuing the Princess of Somefaroffland. Others may have sat in on a ***GURPS Fantasy*** campaign and been drawn in by the magic, strange beasts, and the ever-reliable Loot at the End of the Adventure. The premise is almost always the same — a group of adventurers looking for work hears a rumor . . .

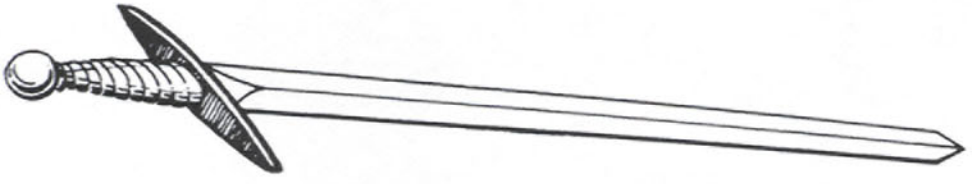
While the four scenarios in this book hold true to the conventions of fantasy campaigns, they represent a variety of adventuring styles, ranging from the mysterious and magical to the rough and physical to the hilariously funny. Each of them is set in the mythical land of Yrth (pronounced "eerth"); each is exciting, challenging and detailed; and each involves three to seven player characters. But that is where the similarities end.

Fighters of the Purple Rage leads high-powered PCs down into the intricate sewers of Megalos, pursuing a dangerous, renegade band of gladiators. The gladiators' skin has been magically dyed purple, so the hunters *should* be able to find them.But they only have a week before the spell wears off . . .

Lost Inheritance sends the adventurers on a routine hunt for a kindly woodcarver's missing treasure — routine, that is, until they face a raging storm, meet the mage Mazuka and get transported into the magical blackness of the Darkland.

Sahudese Fire Drill introduces the PCs to the lighter side of multiculturalism. The players will never stop thanking the GM for sending them on this burlesque romp through Megalos. They have one simple responsibility — keep the visiting Sahudese happy and out of trouble.

Mordag's Little Finger takes the party into the bad side of town: Northside, where gang rivalries, illegal casinos and tavern brawls at the Devil's Eye are the order of the day. They're tracking a renegade thief who stole a special staff, but he may not be working alone . . .



The ***GURPS Basic Set*** and ***GURPS Magic*** are all that is required to run these adventures, but ***GURPS Fantasy*** and ***GURPS Fantasy Folk*** will be helpful for reference. Though these scenarios were designed to be played in the ***GURPS Fantasy*** world of Yrth, they can easily be adapted to any fantasy world — even medieval Earth. In fact, with some adjustments, the basic plots of these stories can work with other backgrounds: ***Space, Horror, Special Ops,*** etc.

Game Masters should keep in mind that the material in these quests is designed to be modified to fit personal tastes and GMing styles. If you don't like the stats or description of a certain NPC, change them! In fact, if a scenario does nothing more than spark an idea for your own adventure, we've done our job. Additionally, adventure seeds are included with each tale, in case the PCs pursue a plot line beyond the point where it ends in the book. The best adventures are those the players create themselves.

— Jeff Koke

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the ***GURPS*** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Roleplayer. This bimonthly magazine includes new rules, variants, new races, beasts, information on upcoming releases, scenario ideas and more. Ask your game retailer, or write for subscription information.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us — but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all ***GURPS*** releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

BBS. For those of you who have computers, SJ Games operates a BBS with discussion areas for several games, including ***GURPS***. Much of the playtest feedback for new products comes from the BBS. It's up 24 hours a day at 512-447-4449, at 300, 1200 or 2400 baud. Give us a call!

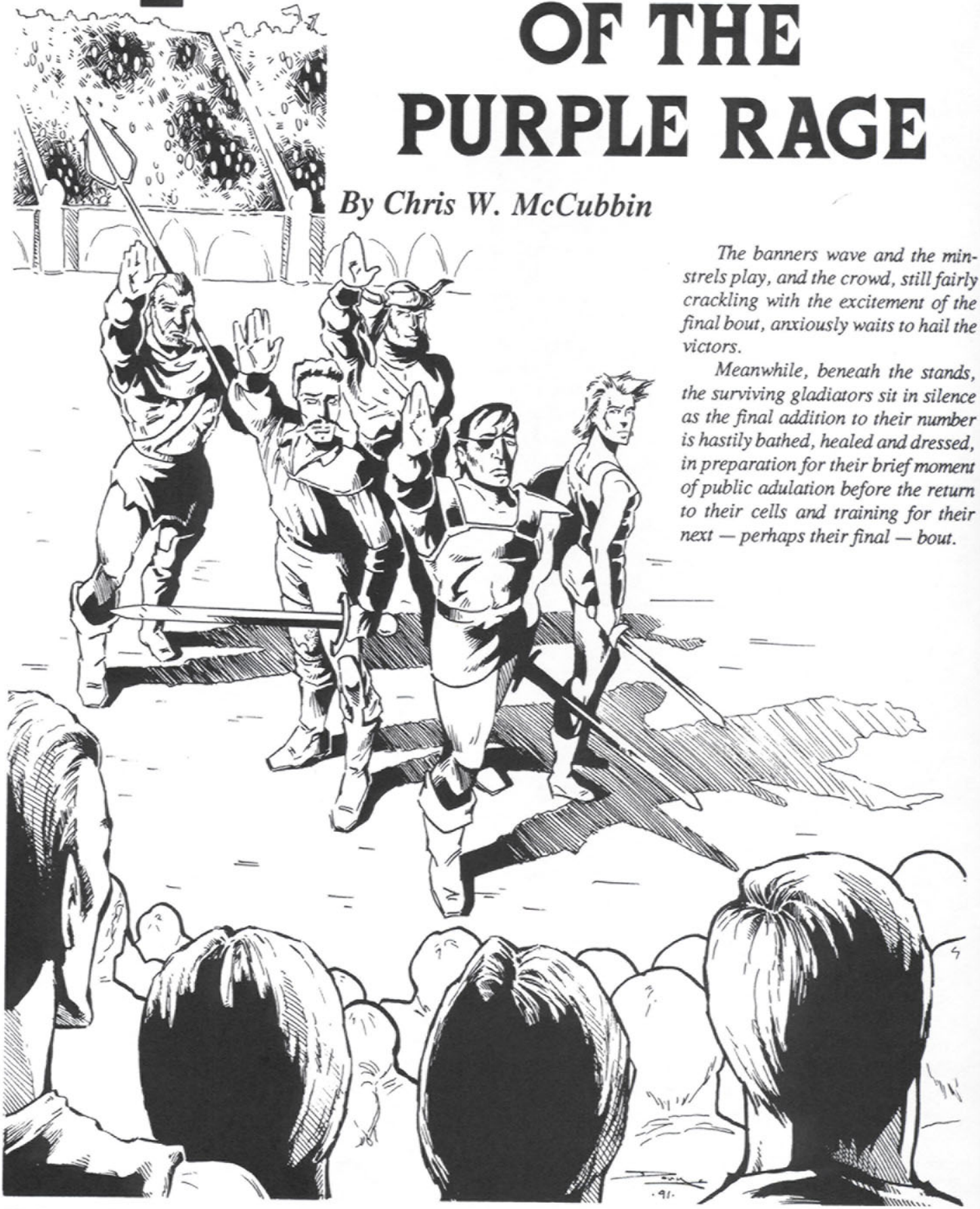
Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the ***GURPS Basic Set***, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to a page in the ***Basic Set*** — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the ***Basic Set,*** Third Edition. Any reference that begins with an M is for ***GURPS Magic***; a J refers to ***GURPS Japan***.

Note: These adventures require ***GURPS Magic***. ***GURPS Fantasy*** is useful for background material if the adventure is run in its standard setting. ***GURPS Fantasy Folk*** may help with playing the Giants in *Lost Inheritance* and *Mordag's Little Finger*; ***GURPS Japan*** is referenced in *Sahudese Fire Drill* and may be useful, but is not required.

1 FIGHTERS OF THE PURPLE RAGE

By Chris W. McCubbin



The banners wave and the minstrels play, and the crowd, still fairly crackling with the excitement of the final bout, anxiously waits to hail the victors.

Meanwhile, beneath the stands, the surviving gladiators sit in silence as the final addition to their number is hastily bathed, healed and dressed, in preparation for their brief moment of public adulation before the return to their cells and training for their next — perhaps their final — bout.

A grand flourish of trumpets brings the crowd to its feet, as the main portcullis is raised and the ten champions of the Grand Elimination march out in solemn double-file. In their freshly polished gear (and only the gladiators themselves remember the grime and blood that had accumulated on their equipment over the last seven days, before it was magically scoured for the final ceremonies) they purposefully cross the length of the coliseum, until they stand before the Imperial Box and make their salute to the emperor (a gesture of patriotism only somewhat dimmed by the fact that His Imperial Majesty was unable to remain for the closing ceremonies).

Then the victors begin their grand circuit of the coliseum, passing the four lesser gates, then the grand portcullis, then four more gates on the other side. The offerings of flowers and money that shower the champions are ignored — for a slave to willingly touch a coin of the realm would be a capital offense. The coins will be swept up later and duly delivered to the governor of the arena "for distribution to the needy" — the needy bureaucrats and nobility of the city.

As the circuit continues, the crowd's enthusiasm cools slightly. The champions are just marching, eyes straight ahead, arms at their sides, as though their adoring public doesn't even exist. As they approach the grand portcullis for the second time, the victors are met by the governor himself, who commands, "One more time 'round, and this time ***give*** *them something." A moment after the command is given, one gigantic warrior turns to the crowd and thrusts his fist into the air and bares his teeth, as though challenging the multitudes. At almost the same time a slighter, more handsome gladiator clasps his hands over his head and turns in his course — the universal gesture of victory. Responding even to this small acknowledgement, the crowd's roar waxes again, and the flagging rain of coins picks up, brightening the governor's day . . . briefly.*

For as the small procession passes the third lesser gate, a brilliant flash of light erupts in their midst, blinding most of the crowd and the guards. For most of the witnesses, their memories of the next few seconds are of a sudden, eerie silence, and the impression of several blurred figures hurrying through the lesser gate.

The silence shatters as the crowd finds its voice, exultation replaced by confusion. Seconds later, the ponderous attention of the crowd begins to shift, focusing on a point behind the outer wall, where those in the highest seats can see the fugitives burst out of the stadium and move in a tight wedge into the streets of the city. Attentive witnesses notice an extra fugitive among the escapees — a slight figure in a full-hooded cloak. Those few archers on the coliseum wall whom the crowd allows a clear shot find dots dancing before their eyes which cloud their aim; their arrows shatter harmlessly on the pavement below, as do a handful of unfortunate citizens, pushed over the coliseum wall by the press of their fellow spectators towards the action. On the near-empty streets below, some citizens jeer the gladiators, while others cheer them on, but no one stands in their way.

Suddenly a small contingent of the city guard turns a corner, directly into the path of the oncoming fugitives, pikes ready. The crowd falls silent once more

About the Author

Chris W. McCubbin is a non-graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, in English. He comes to gaming by the way of the comics industry — he was assistant editor of Fantagraphics Books' magazine *The Comics Journal* for six months, followed by 15 months as editor of Fantagraphics' other magazine, *Amazing Heroes*, where he still regularly reviews comics.

McCubbin is SJG's full-time staff writer, making him one of the lucky so-and-sos who get to do this for a living. He lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife Lynette Alcorn-McCubbin and their cat, Polychrome.

He is the author of ***GURPS Aliens, GURPS Fantasy Folk, GURPS Space Bestiary,*** and ***GURPS Magic Items***; he also edits SJG's ***Car Wars*** magazine, *Autoduel Quarterly*.

until it hears the two tiny forces come together in a crash of weapons. A gladiator falls, spitted on a pike, then another; then the escapees are inside the guards' reach, and their short and deadly arena weapons cut through the opposition like scythes through ripened grain.

On the wall, one observer is not jostled by the crowd, for he wears the distinctive robes of a mage in the Emperor's service, and even a mindless mob knows better than to annoy an Imperial wizard. As the last guardsman falls below, the mage raises his hand in a peculiar gesture, and breathes a single word.

The crowd's last view of the fleeing gladiators sees each gladiator's skin suddenly change to a vivid and magical shade of rich violet. Then the runners turn into a narrow side street, and disappear from the sight of the honest citizens of the city.

Introduction

Fighters of the Purple Rage is a high-powered adventure for 5-7 experienced characters. The party with the best chance of success will have an average character value of 150 to 200 points, with a good mix of fighting, stealth and magical abilities, and some useful low-to-mid level magical items and weapons. Enough cash for city lodging and several generous bribes is also a virtual necessity.

The adventure takes place in a medieval metropolis — preferably an Imperial capital, with a huge population and access to a major body of water. GMs running adventures in the world of Yrth will find that the city of Megalos is the perfect setting.

Fighters of the Purple Rage casts the PCs as bounty hunters. Their mission is to track down and retrieve the eight surviving escaped gladiators. Each gladiators is experienced, tough and desperate (see sidebars), so once the fugitives are located, the *really* interesting part of the adventure begins.

The adventure consists of several distinct sections with multiple encounters, and will probably take more than one gaming session to complete.

After the Escape

The City

A successful escape from the arena is not to be tolerated. The ramifications go far beyond the release of a few criminals and political prisoners. If the fugitives are not soon recaptured, the story of their escape could significantly harm the state's carefully calculated illusion of omnipotence, as well as create folk heroes for the rabble to rally around, encouraging rebelliousness.

The hunters did have one stroke of luck during the escape — the Imperial mage who was able to activate the Dye enchantment on the gladiators' skins. They instantly tripled the guard at all the city gates, as well as setting up checkpoints at five-mile intervals on all roads leaving the city out to 50 miles. All travelers are being stopped for a skin inspection.

However, the city knows the spell will only last a matter of days (2d days). So, when after three days the combined efforts of the watch and militia fail to turn up anything useful, the city posts a bounty of $1,000 for each of the gladiators returned to the arena, dead or alive, and an additional $1,000 for anyone who can be proved to have aided the fugitives in their escape.

The Gladiators

The Gladiators were rescued by Simeon, an earnest abolitionist who chose to use his considerable fortune and magical prowess to crusade against slavery and oppression, rather than to enrich himself. The escape is Simeon's swan song — he plans to flee the country with those he's freed.

Starting from Scratch

The opponents the PCs will be facing in *Fighters of the Purple Rage* are formidable fighters. In setting the recommended character-point level for this adventure at 150 to 200, it is assumed that the adventurers' primary edge over their gladiatorial opponents will be magical — specifically, the party should have at least one mage with a significant selection of personal combat spells, and each member should have a couple of useful personal magic items. In a campaign where either magic or magic items are de-emphasized, the PCs should either be 200- to 300-point characters, or the GM should significantly reduce the combat abilities or number of the gladiators.

If the GM wishes to run *Fighters of the Purple Rage* for players who have not worked their way up to the 200-point neighborhood through experience, he may allow them to generate new 200-point characters, then allow the party to distribute the following magic items amongst themselves:

Weapon, +2 Accuracy, +3 Puissance, Shatterproof (weapon type will be whatever sort the receiving character is most proficient in).

Weapon, +1 Accuracy, +1 Puissance, Flaming Weapon (type as above).

Dagger, +1 Accuracy, +1 Puissance, Loyal Sword.

Quiver of arrows or bolts, or bag of sling stones, as appropriate, enchanted with Cornucopia.

Wooden Staff, enchanted with Staff, Phantom Flame, and Blur -3 (m).

Chainmail, with Fortify 3, Deflect 1, and Lighten -25%.

Leather armor, a full suit with Fortify 2.

Shield, with Deflect 1 and Missile Shield.

Wand, with Minor Healing and a 5 point Exclusive Powerstone (grants 15 points of healing before the wand must recharge (m).

Cloak, with Mage-Stealth (m).

Gauntlets, with Might +2.

Boots, with Slow Fall (m).

Ring, with Suggestion (m).

Bracelet, with Sense Foes, two points of Power.

Amulet, with two Lesser Wishes.

In addition, the party may be given one 10-point Powerstone, plus one additional 5-point Powerstone for each mage. Mages may take a wand or staff enchanted with the Staff spell if they wish.

(m) — Indicates that casting the spell with the item drains energy, and that magery is required to use the item at normal or lower mana levels.

He accomplished his feat with the aid of an inside man — a senior guard at the arena, who risked his neck and career because of a combination of abolitionist sentiments and a healthy payment from Simeon. The guard took his loot and was on a fast boat to a far land the very night of the escape — he's completely out of the adventure.

Simeon and the fugitives have hidden in the depths of the city's sewers — an ancient architectural marvel that has never been thoroughly mapped and that no single man has ever explored. They plan to wait until their coloration has returned to normal, then take an ancient and secret escape tunnel out of the city.

Looking for Trouble

The GM will probably find the best way to involve the PCs in the hunt for Fighters of the Purple Rage is to have them present at the escape.

Admission to the arena is free. The city makes its profit on a cut from the bookmakers and the merchants who either set up shop outside the arena or roam the stands on tournament days. The city also profits from the good will of a populace provided with plenty of cheap, bloody entertainment.

The arena is packed on the last day of the Grand Elimination, and the only seats the PCs can find are high at the very top of the stands (through remarkable coincidence, the adventurers just happen to be sitting directly above the exit the gladiators emerge from in their escape). Weapons larger than daggers and offensive magic items are strictly prohibited in the seats.

If anyone wishes to gamble on the games, the GM should have the PC roll against the *average* of his Gambling skill (or default) and his best weapon skill (representing the ability to evaluate and compare the relative prowess of the warriors in the arena). Before the roll is made, the gambler should select a dollar amount greater than $10 — if he makes the roll, he wins that amount × the number the roll was made by. If he fails the roll, he loses a similar amount (takings are for the entire day, not for each bout). If any of the PCs take the time to inquire about favorites, or otherwise research their bets, the GM can use this as an opportunity to impart some information about a future fugitive.

When the escape happens, the PCs have a perfect view of the whole affair (though when the Flash spell goes off they must make a HT roll or be at -3 DX

The Gladiators

The Gladiators are survivors of the Grand Elimination, a venerable and extremely popular event held twice yearly, where 160 of the most promising combatants among the prisoners of the state are chosen to fight one-on-one, to the death, until after seven days only 10 are left. These 10 are then declared champions.

They are not, however, freed. Ancient Imperial law states that a prisoner may only win his freedom in the arena after emerging a victor in *50* combats. (This applies to criminals — the rules for professional gladiators, who fight of their own free will, are quite different.) Even though each of the four rounds of the Grand Elimination counts as three normal victories, winning the tournament won't advance the prisoner even a third of the way towards the requisite number. Even after their victory in this particular Grand Elimination, none of the fugitives has more than 20 victories to his or her credit. In fact, no more than a half dozen criminals in a given century have ever won freedom in the Imperial arena.

The following information is generally known about the eight champions who apparently survived the escape (complete descriptions of each can be found in later sidebars, but the information below will be easily available to the PCs).

Marlon. A rebel against the Emperor, Marlon is a former mercenary captain and a master of most forms of armed combat. Even before his capture, he had established a formidable reputation as a guerrilla fighter and tactician.

Groby. The son of an Orc father and an Ogre mother, of great size and said to possess superhuman strength. As a crossbreed of two such feared and despised races, just coming to civilization was enough to get Groby thrown into the arena.

Continued on next page . . .

The Gladiators (Continued)

Floyd. A former professional gladiator and mercenary, convicted of killing a nobleman. Though not the most physically impressive of the victors, Floyd's personal toughness and extensive experience in man to man combat saw him through the Grand Elimination. He's proficient with many weapons, but fights best with the broadsword.

Skuli. A savage berserker of northern barbarian stock, captured after an unsuccessful raid on a border outpost. His preferred weapon is a short thrusting spear.

Cee. A eunuch, and former bodyguard to a high-ranking noblewoman, Cee fell into disgrace under mysterious circumstances and ended up in the arena. Astonishingly tall, fat and strong, Cee fights with a huge and deadly maul.

The final three winners were all considered, more or less, dark horses.

Nurrien. The only woman among the victors, Nurrien is a Half-Elf from the western forests who ended up in the arena after harassing the staff and guests of a nobleman's hunting lodge for several months. She fights with shortsword and buckler, and makes up for her lack of size and strength with speed and sheer viciousness.

Jaim. The smallest of the competitors in the event, Jaim, a convicted thief, won through due to his astonishing speed and a unique two-weapon fighting style, in addition to several improbable strokes of luck.

René A traveling musician from Southern lands, imprisoned for publicly satirizing a noble, René won the crowd's favor with his good looks and flawless sense of drama; he won his battles through brilliant swordplay.

for the next full minute, by which time the escapees will have completely vanished), but the press of those who are trying to improve their less-than-perfect view make it impossible for the party to take direct action. To emphasize the impossibility of combat or spell casting in their current position, the GM should have the PCs make a roll vs. ST or DX (whichever is higher, but remember any modifications to DX due to the effects of the Flash), to avoid falling from the top of the stands. If any member of the party fails the roll, the GM should allow the characters on either side of him to catch him by making successful rolls vs. *both* ST and DX. If either of these rolls is missed, the person being grasped falls anyway. If either is critically failed, the would-be rescuer falls too. It's a 10-yard fall to the ground, and the victim takes damage according to the rules on page B141. The ground below the stands is "hard."

If the PCs want to leave after the final bout, but before the closing ceremonies, the GM should allow them to. In that case, they hear a few seconds of curious silence, followed by a great noise as soon as they leave the arena. A few seconds later, the escapees rush by, only a few feet from the adventurers. If the unarmed adventurers attempt to stop the armed and armored gladiators, it's their funeral. If the party tries to come to the aid of the guard unit that engages the fugitives a few seconds later, that brief encounter is over before they can cover the distance.

The Announcement

Within an hour of the escape the city watch and militia have been activated to hunt for the fugitives, and searches of all traffic out of the city are in effect.

Forty eight hours later the bills go up everywhere:

REWARD
By Order of His Imperial Majesty
FIVE GOLD MARKS shall be paid
For EACH of the following escaped FELONS and TRAITORS
returned to ye IMPERIAL ARENA
DEAD or LIVING.

The notice then gives the names and small, somewhat crude drawings of each of the gladiators, then continues:

As well as for any person who can be shown to have rendered aid
or comfort to these felons in their escape,
TEN SILVER PENNIES for INFORMATION
leading to the capture of these same.

Note that 5 gold coins is equal to about $1,000, in terms of spending power, and 10 silver pennies is about $100 — see p. F15.

Picking up the Trail

The PCs' first job is to figure out were the fugitives are hiding. Unless the adventurers moved directly from the Arena to a sealed barrel, and stayed there several days, they will be aware of the massive manhunt underway by the local watch and guard. Where could the adventurers possibly look that hasn't already been thoroughly combed by the authorities?

The Authorities

Trying to get useful information out of the watch is a futile exercise. The situation has the watch overworked and under pressure, and they're deeply resentful that the city government has called for civilian help. Any attempt to question watchmen or their commanders results in a curt brush-off. Persistence only gets the party placed under surveillance as suspicious characters. Anyway, if the watch had any useful information, they would have used it themselves.

Other sections of the city bureaucracy likewise have nothing useful to offer. The Governor of the Arena has gone into absolute seclusion at a country home. His deputy has issued strict orders to everybody at the arena not to talk to anybody except the watch and agents of the Emperor himself about the escape. Even if the adventurers do manage to get into the arena, they accomplish nothing except creating a strong possibility that they'll be arrested and enslaved as spies.

Information Magic

Knowledge spells aren't enough to locate the gladiators. Unless cast within an hour of the escape, Seeker spells yield nothing on anything less than a critical success (which gives the caster the image of a sumptuously decorated apartment or house). Simeon's refuge has a permanent Scrywall cast on it at level 21, making all attempts to divine the location of it or anyone in it very difficult. A critical success on a Divination spell gives the same vision as the Seeker spell.

The Word on the Streets

The best way, by far, for the adventurers to track the fugitives is to get in touch with the streets. As civilians (and fairly disreputable ones at that, if they're typical adventurers), the party has an edge over the watch. Knowledgeable underworld types would never knowingly speak a helpful word to a copper, but they might talk to the adventures — if the price is right. The party will find themselves severely handicapped in this phase of the hunt if they don't have a generous supply of bribe money on hand.

If the party starts looking for rumors about the gladiators on the streets, allow them one roll per half hour, based on the best Streetwise skill in the party.

The heroes get their first real lead at the Limping Lion tavern, but they have to work to get there. The first successful Streetwise roll starts the party on the trail that eventually leads to the Limping Lion. The GM can use the progression below, or make one of his own. If the party is short on cash, or the GM short on time, he can cut corners by rolling 1d and only subjecting the party to that many encounters before they arrive at the tavern. If the initial Streetwise roll is a critical success, the party may skip *Dock Urchin, Low-Class Pimp,* and *Rosco* below.

Street vendor, innkeeper, etc. — no bribe: "We respectable businessfolk don't know anything about such goin's on. You should ask those ruffians down by the docks."

Dock Urchin — $1 × 1d bribe: "Hey, I don't know nuthin' 'bout nothin', but mebbe I can fix ya up with somebody who does . . ."

Low-Class Pimp — $3 × 1d bribe: "Yer strangers 'round here, aintcha? Everbody round here knows that if ya want to meet someone, ya goes to Bekki."

City Watchmen

The typical watchman has ST 11, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 12, with the Legal Enforcement Powers advantage and the Duty disadvantage. Their skills include Polearm-12, Shortsword-11, Brawling-12, Streetwise-10. The watch is armed with halberds and poor-quality shortswords. Their uniform is brown leather armor (PD 2, DR 2).

Watchmen are known for being loud, abrasive, arrogant and often abusive. There are, of course, exceptions, but even the best watchman will not tolerate rudeness or any hint of a threat from civilians. They are obsequious in the presence of nobility, officials or military officers.

Bekki, wholesale wine merchant and black market arranger — $5 × 1d bribe: "Ah, there are many who seek the same information . . . but perhaps I know someone who can help you in your quest."

Rosco, professional criminal — $10 × 1d bribe: "You the guys Bekki sent? Follow me."

The Voice Behind the Curtain, mob rumormonger — $15 × 1d bribe: "Go to the Limping Lion. Ask for Xeno."

Of course, the hunt might not proceed as smoothly (if expensively) as all that. Between each Streetwise roll and each of the above encounters the GM should roll 1d. On a 5 or 6, the party has one of the following encounters. None of the below encounters should occur more than once. Of course, the GM should feel free to substitute any urban encounters or mini-adventures he has prepared.

Pickpocket (DX 12, Pickpocket 14, Stealth 12) attempts to lift someone's purse.

Harlots try to solicit the party. If refused, they follow the party for several blocks, decrying their cheapness.

Watch patrol (1d +1 men, see sidebar) stop the party and question them about their business. If the PCs are polite and noncommittal they are let go after 2d minutes. If they tell the truth, roll an immediate reaction roll at -3, and have the guards react accordingly.

Drunken, off-duty watch patrol (as above, except they're at an effective -1 to IQ and DX, and +1 to HT, due to the liquor, and they're not carrying their halberds), suspecting the party's business, attempts to pick a fight. A successful roll vs. Fast Talk or Leadership -3 (in their condition the guards are immune to Diplomacy) prevents violence. If the battle is joined, a sober, on-duty patrol arrives in 1 minute. They take the drunks' side, regardless of who's to blame. If the party defeats the drunks and immediately flees, the vanquished will not have any clear memories of their assailants upon awakening. But, if they linger until the on-duty patrol arrives, the party is arrested. If they escape, they find themselves wanted.

A pack of 2d wild dogs menaces the party (see p. B142). A successful Animal Handling roll disperses the curs, and they run off after any successful hit from the party.

Street minstrel (Bard 15) picks one of the PCs at random to satirize. If the target takes his medicine with good humor, the performer moves on to new targets after 1d minutes. Any surliness or threat of violence only increases the force of the satire, enough to earn the victim a -1 Reputation in that district of the City. Finally, if the victim fancies himself a wit, he might wish to engage in a

Sam, the Ogre Bouncer

ST 21, DX 10, IQ 9, HT 16.
Speed 6.5, Move 6.
Dodge 7, Parry 8.

Advantages: Acute Taste and Spell +2, DR +3, High Pain Threshold, Magic Resistance +1, Night Vision, PD 1.

Disadvantages: Ugly, Inconvenient Size, Odious Racial Habit (eats other sentients).

Skills: Brawl-13, Savoir Faire-11, Two-Handed Axe/Mace-15.

Sam is the chief bouncer at the Limping Lion. For an Ogre, he's very intelligent and astonishingly civilized — he never eats the customers — unless they were *really* asking for it.

He considers himself the tavern's host, and will roam the tables in the evening, chatting with the customers. He's quite polite, in his own way. He lives in a shack behind the tavern.

Sam doesn't wear armor, and fights with his trademark maul.

Contest of Skills with the performer. A critical success in such a contest gives the character a +1 Reputation in that district, as a *bon vivant*. A critical failure gives him a -1 as a boorish idiot. If the character puts up a good contest, win or lose, the bard remembers him, and looks on him favorably if ever contacted for reasonable help or information (he knows nothing useful about the escaped gladiators, though).

The Limping Lion: a Good Old-Fashioned Bar Fight

The Limping Lion is a waterfront dive in the grand tradition. It's spacious, sturdy, and reasonably clean by waterfront standards. Its most interesting features are its two remarkable bouncers: Sam the Ogre and Rover the Minotaur (see sidebars, pp. 10-11).

When not actively dealing with troublemakers, Sam and Rover's usual station is a large table just inside the front door. Every half hour or so one or the other gets up and patrols the bar. Sam occasionally stops and asks a patron if he's enjoying himself (the answer had better be yes, otherwise Sam is prone to speed the customer on his way to somewhere he'll be happier). Rover just roams the tables glaring at everybody.

Sam does all the talking for the team (Rover can talk, but almost never does). Sam is rather bright for an Ogre, and has an excellent memory for faces. When someone new walks in the door, they're immediately stopped by Sam, who gives them The Speech.

"Yer new here, aintcha?

"OK, dis is a respectable place. Anything ya breaks, ya pays for, (indicates patron's weapon, if any) and if dose come out, then dese (hefts one of the huge mauls that the bouncers use in a fight — behind him, Rover mutely does the same) comes out. Got it?

"Enjoy yer evening at da Lion."

If any of the PCs belong to the larger races — Half Ogres, Ogres, Minotaurs, Centaurs, Reptile Men, Insect Warriors or Giants (the Lion is capacious enough to accommodate a Giant of up to about 15' with minimal difficulty) — Sam politely but adamantly insists that he sit with the bouncers, and have a round on the house. Sam and Rover will keep the individual with them until the end of the inevitable bar fight (see below). The character will find the bouncers pleasant enough company, if less than intellectually scintillating.

In addition to the bouncers, the staff of the Limping Lion consists of 2-6 serving wenches (of average to attractive appearance), depending on the time of day and the number of customers, and one or two tap boys who change the casks of ale and wine when needed, keep the place clean and run general errands. The whole crew is presided over by MacArrigal, the barkeep, a taciturn ex-sailor

Rover, the Minotaur Bouncer

ST 15, DX 13, IQ 8, HT 14.
Speed 6.75, Move 6.
Dodge 6, Parry 7.

Advantages: Absolute Direction, Toughness +3, Extra Limb — impaling striker (horns), Magic Resistance +2, Peripheral Vision.

Disadvantages: Hideous Appearance, Berserk, Bloodlust, Odious Racial Habit (eats other sentients).

Skills: Brawling-17, Two-Handed Axe/Mace-15.

Rover has been Sam's partner and general shadow for three years. His history before that is a mystery. No one's ever had the nerve to ask him how he got his name.

For a Minotaur, he's a remarkably passive personality. He never starts trouble, but he's remarkably good at finishing it. He almost never speaks. Rover is usually content to follow Sam's lead, unless someone is foolish enough to provoke him.

Limping Lion Brawlers

The toughs are led by Mik, a mercenary guard. Mik has ST 14, DX 13, IQ 11, HT 15. He has the High Pain Threshold advantage, and the disadvantage Bully. His skills are Brawling-17 and Two-Handed Sword-17. He's wearing leather armor, and his blade is firmly strapped to his back during the fight. He knows Sam and Rover's capabilities, and will not draw the sword as long as the two bouncers are up.

Mik's gang members are a burly lot, with ST 13, DX 12, IQ 9 and HT 13. Their relevant skills are Brawling-15 and Knife-14. They are unarmored.

who prefers to let the bouncers handle any rough stuff (MacArrigal is not the owner of the Lion — exactly who the owner is is a bit of a local mystery, but he's generally believed to be an important underworld figure).

The Lion has earned a reputation as a place where respectable criminals can meet discreetly, and the staff members are chosen for their ability to keep quiet. If the bouncers, wenches or tap boys are questioned about Xeno, the gladiators or anybody else, the questioner is referred to the barkeep.

Xeno

Age 32; blond hair, dark blue eyes; 6' 0", 185 lbs.

ST 11, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 11.

Speed 7.25, Move 7.

Dodge 5, Parry 7.

Advantages: Alertness +1, Attractive, Charisma +2, Literacy, Patron (Large organization on 15 or less), Reputation +1 (City Underworld), Wealth (Comfortable).

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Pirate's), Duty to Syndic (15 or less), Enemy (City Watch: 9 or less), Social Stigma -1 (Criminal).

Quirks: Xeno is far too controlled to let his quirks show.

Skills: Acting-13, Administration-13, Bard-16, Brawling-14, Climbing-13, Detect Lies-14, Diplomacy-12, Disguise-13, Escape-12, Fast-Talk-15, Fast-Draw (knife)-13, Holdout-13, Interrogation-13, Jumping-12, Knife-15, Knife Throwing-14, Law-14, Lip Reading-15, Lockpicking-14, Merchant-13, Pickpocket-12, Poisons-12, Politics-13, Running-12, Savoir Faire-14, Sex Appeal-12, Shadowing-14, Staff-13, Streetwise-17, Traps-12.

Xeno is a spokesman for the City's most powerful criminal cartel. The Syndic's activities include protection, prostitution, drugs, theft and assassination.

Because of his polite, authoritative manner and his quick wit, Xeno is often sent when the mysterious inner circle of the Syndic needs someone to make a deal or close a contract (Xeno is not presently a member of the Inner Circle, but he's being groomed for it, and his opinion commands a good deal of attention from the bosses).

He's always disliked the idea of the revolutionary Simeon taking refuge Below, considering it an unwarranted risk to Syndic interests. He's eager to have an excuse to hunt the reformer down and dispose of him permanently.

Not a fighter, Xeno always has several bodyguards in his immediate vicinity, usually disguised or concealed. In battle he will hang back, commanding and coordinating Syndic troops, but staying out of the fray himself, if possible.

MacArrigal meets all questions with a laconic "Dunno," unless offered a bribe of at least $20. This elicits the information "Xeno oughter be in later on. Jes' sit tight." Whether or not MacArrigal is bribed, Xeno will still be in "a little later on" — in 1d-3 hour's time.

The party needs to buy at least one round of drinks each half-hour they wait, if they don't want to quickly wear out their welcome at the Lion. Drinks cost $1 each, and the Lion's brew is strong — with each round the drinkers must roll vs. their HT+2 or ST+2 (whichever is higher) or lose 1 effective point off their characteristics for 1d hours. Points will be lost from each of the characteristics in turn, in the following order: DX, IQ, ST, HT. If anyone tries to somehow avoid drinking entirely, roll 1d. On a 1-3, Sam the Ogre notices and comes over to cheerfully request that the patron drink up . . . *now.* If he still refuses to drink, Sam takes this as an insult to the establishment, and throws the character out. He isn't allowed back inside that night. If the rest of the party decides to remain inside to complete their business, the GM should devise encounters for the ejected PC, suitable for someone hanging around outside an underworld bar . . . after dark . . . in the very worst part of town. Characters with the Alcoholism disadvantage, of course, have their usual problems as detailed on p. B30. The Lion does not serve food or non-alcoholic beverages, and MacArrigal is insulted at any suggestion that they might.

The Evening's Entertainment

Sometime during their first half hour at the Lion, the PCs are confronted by a gang of evilly grinning toughs (the ruffians should outnumber the party by at least two or three individuals) led by a brawny mercenary. The gang starts verbally harassing the party, questioning their courage, competence and parentage in a patronizing, contemptuous manner. ("Ohhh . . . look at the size of his sword! You know what they say, the bigger the sword, the smaller the . . . courage.") They're obviously trying to pick a fight.

This is sort of an initiation ritual for new customers at the Lion. How they comport themselves in the brawl has a great influence on all the party's future dealings with the local underworld (-2 to +2 to all reaction rolls, determined by the GM, based on the party's performance in the fight).

If the party follows a few simple "house rules," the fight should be completed without anyone being seriously injured. Unfortunately, nobody bothers to explain these rules to the party beforehand. Someone with Empathy or Common Sense can, with a successful IQ roll, determine that the thugs' intentions are not deadly. Certain magical effects (Aura, Sense Danger, Sense Foes) yield the same information.

The adventurers can escape violence entirely by combining an offer to buy the thugs a round of drinks with a successful roll vs. Fast-Talk, Carousing or Diplomacy, all at -5. A successful casting of Mass Sleep, Mass Daze, Mass Stun or similar spell both prevents the fight, and insures the party's absolute privacy for the rest of the evening — the bouncers don't even bother them if they decide not to drink. Failing such extraordinary measures, however, the party eventually has to fight.

The most important thing for the adventurers to remember is the bouncer's warning against using weapons. If a weapon is drawn during the brawl, the Ogre and Minotaur seize their mauls and wade into the battle in the next round. Fighters with weapons out are their first targets. If the party manages to defeat both the thugs and the bouncers, 2d of the Lion's loyal patrons attack. They have stats identical to the thugs, but they fight with broadswords. If the PCs survive that attack, the bar will have completely cleared by the end of the battle. The party has 3d seconds to clear out before 4d members of the watch burst in, prepared to break heads first and ask questions later. If the newcomers are defeated after the bouncers step in, they are ejected from the tavern, and told in no uncertain terms to stay out. A decidedly annoyed Xeno finds them 14 hours later (see p. 15).

It is allowed, however, for the brawlers to use tables, chairs, tankards and casks in the fight. (The adventurers are well advised, however, to remember that "Anything ya breaks, ya pays for.")

Tankards are heavy pewter drinking vessels. They are used with the Brawling skill -2, but they add a +3 to Brawling damage. The ruffians all start the fight with tankards in hand — they're used to this sport, so they only take a -1 to their brawling skill. Tankards have DR 4 and 12 HP. In the unlikely event one is ruined, they cost $2 each to replace.

Syndic Operatives

The following stats can be used for any of Xeno's troops or underlings: ST 11, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 12, Brawling-14, Buckler-12, Crossbow-12, Shortsword-14, Streetwise-13.

Syndic operatives are all blandly handsome and dress well but not flashy. They keep silent unless spoken to and then their replies are short and succinct. They ignore casual insults, challenges or taunts, but react quickly to any overt threat. Their overall presence is quietly menacing.

Joram

There is no need to go into Joram's stats in detail. He's old, but might have the Longevity advantage, rather than the Age disadvantage. He's completely blind but gets around unassisted, and has a keen mind and an excellent memory, as well as the Voice advantage. Though rumored to be a mage, no one's reliably reported seeing him work a spell. He knows the sewers better than anyone alive. If the GM wants to bring him back into play after the brief meeting in Syndic headquarters, he can make up his full stats on his own. Joram may well be something quite different from what he first seems. In spite of his ties to organized crime, and his unusual lifestyle, he considers himself a loyal subject of the Emperor, and despises Simeon for his politics, as well as envying him for his reputation Below.

Chairs: There are about 70 chairs scattered about the tavern, most in use. Chairs are wielded using the fighter's best skill with any swinging weapon heavier than a short sword at -3. They do sw+2 crushing damage, and require one turn to ready between attacks. A minimum ST of 10 is required to use a chair effectively. They have DR 2 and 10 HP, and cost $25 to replace if broken.

Tables are too heavy to be swung as weapons, but can be overturned to make barriers or shields. Anyone hiding behind a table gains the benefit of the table's 4 DR (maximum possible DR from all sources is 6). A table can also be overturned onto an opponent's foot, doing 1d-2 crushing damage (roll vs. Brawling -5 to hit). Finally, a very strong character (ST 14+) can pick up a table and use it to pin up to 6 opponents against the wall. Each round thereafter he must win a quick contest of ST, vs the strongest of his victims, plus an additional +1 to this roll for each extra person trapped. This is a favorite tactic of Sam the Ogre. Tables have DR 4, 20 HP, and cost $90 to replace.

Casks can be thrown for 2d crushing if full, 1d if empty. Full casks have a range of ST-12, empties of ST-9. A stack of 1d loose empties can be found by the rear door. They require 1 turn to ready. The full casks are kept in a rack behind the bar, and require two turns to remove and ready. Casks have 1 DR and 5 HP. Empties cost $1 each to replace. Full casks can be either beer or wine. If the character doesn't check first, roll 1d. On 1-4 it contains beer, and on 5-6 it contains wine. Full beer barrels cost $60 to replace, and wine kegs cost $100. If a full cask is shattered in the fight, the GM can start requiring DX rolls each turn for the fighters to keep their footing on the slippery brew.

If the party has an outsized member sharing a drink with the bouncers, he is restrained — forcibly, if necessary — from joining the fray (if he offers, however, Sam accepts a wager of up to $10 on the outcome of the fight).

Each thug stops fighting if he takes 8 or more points of damage, except the leader, who gives up only if reduced below 0 HT or if all his followers are out. The PCs can give up at any time, simply by laying down and playing dead, but if they do this before taking more than 10 points of damage each, they acquire a -3 reaction in the tavern as wimps.

Flashy or dangerous offensive spells provoke the same reaction as drawing a weapon, but if the party mages manage to use more subtle and harmless effects to their advantage (illusions, mind control and the subtler body control spells all work well) they earn considerable respect (+1 to reaction rolls at the tavern).

If one of the thugs is severely hurt or killed during a "fair" fight, the tavern-goers consider this the fortunes of war. If anything, killing a man in a brawl enhances the PCs' reputation as "bad dudes." Of course, the deceased might have a brother or partner who's less fair-minded, who will someday come looking for the guilty PC, but that's up to the GM.

When the fight is over, if the PCs have acquitted themselves reasonably well — win or lose — and if they've paid for their damages (this bill is collected by Sam, so payment is likely), they are considered "part of the gang" by the Limping Lion crowd. Their next round of drinks are on the house, and their wounds are competently tended by a couple of the wenches (each with First Aid-13). If they won in a particularly impressive fashion (GM's option), the patrons take up a collection to defer all or part of their damage expenses. Their former opponents treat the party as the best of friends, and the adventurers are advised to reciprocate this joviality.

The Syndic

The oldest, largest and richest of the city's many criminal cartels, the Syndic's origins are shrouded in mystery, though it is known to have been a force in the city for more than 500 years.

Since its earliest days, the Syndic has kept its headquarters Below, in the sprawling sewers of the city. But it is only over the last two centuries that it has expanded and consolidated its control of the sewers to the present extent, where the legitimate government of the city is completely excluded from any knowledge of what goes on Below.

The profit-making activities of the Syndic have traditionally included extortion, prostitution, smuggling, contract kidnapping and murder and gambling. It still keeps a strong interest in all these activities, but in an indirect fashion. Instead of collecting protection money from honest businessmen, it collects a cut from the profits of younger and smaller criminal organizations (who, in turn, squeeze the honest merchants all the harder, to make up the loss). Rather than kidnapping or smuggling itself, the Syndic allows kidnappers to keep their captives, or smugglers to store their wares Below — for a price.

The Syndic is completely amoral. There are known to be two underground railroads operating Below, one serving to sneak escaped slaves out of the city to freedom, the other used to smuggle illegally-enslaved citizens to remote areas where they can be profitably sold. Both factions pay their bills on time, and the Syndic gives both the same service and security.

Most of the Syndic's energies, as might be expected, are directed towards defense. The front line troops of the Syndic are its cadre of operatives — an Syndic operative is tough, smart, skilled and completely merciless (see previous sidebar). They can be distinguished by their appearance, which is well-groomed and deliberately casual, and by the ominous silence they customarily maintain in public. Their exact number is a closely-guarded secret, but even the most conservative estimates agree that the Syndic could, at need, mobilize a force of at least 200 operatives on an hour's notice.

Continued on next page . . .

Xeno

At the appropriate time, Xeno enters. Xeno is a good-looking, fair-haired, soft-spoken young man of medium height and build, dressed in clean, casual clothing. He's quiet and likable, with an honest, open face. He looks like anything but what he is . . . the mouthpiece for one of the city's largest and most powerful criminal organizations.

If the PCs are watching the door (which they should be), they see Xeno walk through the door, greet Sam and Rover in a familiar way, then walk over to the bar. There's nothing unusual about his behavior until MacArrigal points him in the direction of the party and he starts over towards the table.

Xeno greets the party with a smile — and by name. He already knows what the characters want. After a few pleasantries, he cuts to the chase.

"I believe that we can do business in this matter. The people that I represent do have some idea as to the whereabouts of these fugitives, and are willing to provide you with this information, for due monetary consideration. I can assure you that you will find this information most useful in your search, and further, that without this information you have small chance of ever sighting your quarry."

The bottom line is a flat $1,000 for the mysterious "information." This rate is *not* negotiable, and the information is not guaranteed. Xeno is quick to point out that the amount is less than 15% of their potential takings.

If the party decides not to pay, or asks for more time, Xeno excuses himself, telling them he can be reached through MacArrigal, and suggesting that they change their minds quickly, if they want to have any hope of catching the gladiators.

If the party agrees, there's one more important bit of business to see to, even before Xeno collects the money.

"You must understand the deeply confidential nature of this arrangement. We must be assured of your absolute trustworthiness before we can continue. Please be assured that you will not be asked to participate in any criminal activity, nor will you even witness anything illegal. However, if you accept this arrangement you may be taken to places or persons whom it would be less than wise to discuss casually, and very, very foolish to discuss with the authorities. It's very important that you be completely clear on this. The fruits of imprudence could be . . . extreme." He then extracts a solemn pledge of secrecy from each party member in turn. The GM should remember Xeno's Detect Lies skill here!

(If, at any time in the future, any PC does betray his pledge, he acquires the Syndic as an enemy with a frequency of 12 or less inside the city, and 9 or less *anywhere* else.)

The Syndic (Continued)

The operatives are backed up by the army of sewer workers. The Syndic actively seeks out hearty ruffians for its labor force, and treats them generously, in return for loyalty and silence. The workers would gladly take up arms in defense of their jobs and their employer. This force easily numbers over 1,000.

This force is overseen by several dozen organizers (Xeno is a senior member of this group). These men, in addition to supervising the troops and conducting the negotiations for the deals which keep the Syndic profitable, also coordinate a formidable staff of specialists, which might include anything from scribes to assassins, to engineers, to mages of all stripes.

The true rulers of the Syndic remain mysterious. The most credible rumors say they're a council, of indeterminate number, made up of both the most gifted and experienced organizers, and certain rich and/or noble citizens of the city, whose social circle would be shaken to the core to discover where their true allegiances lie.

Those who know the street have long been aware of the Syndic's interest in contacting any available necromancer. This interest has given rise to some of the darkest rumors about the Syndic. It's said that they keep a whole legion of undead corpses dormant beneath the streets, ready to be called up to defend Below from any invaders who could conceivably overcome the operatives and the workers. Other whispers say that the Syndic sponsors an effective and established college of Necromancy Below, where mages are trained in the dark arts, to maintain and, if need be, control this eldritch fighting force.

Once the deal has been struck and the money handed over (or payment arranged), Xeno tells the party to be at a certain wall of a certain warehouse at dusk the next day. Formal business concluded, Xeno relaxes considerably, and stop talking so much like a written contract. If invited, he joins the party for a drink.

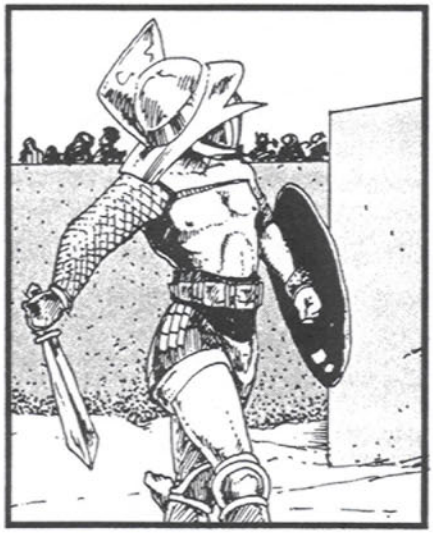
If questioned politely, he is quite forthcoming about the "Syndic's" motives for helping the PCs. In addition to making a healthy profit with almost no overhead, the Syndic also stands to gain from the apprehension of the fugitives, since the massive manhunt has been interfering with some profitable and sensitive operations. Also, the Syndic would enjoy embarrassing the watch by having civilians capture the escapees (at this point, Xeno strongly urges that, if the adventurers succeed in their quest, they use the money to move immediately to a different town). He also makes it quite clear that the fugitives are all political prisoners or small-time, freelance criminals — nobody his organization might owe any allegiance to. During this entire conversation, however, Xeno never refers to his employers and anything other than "my organization," nor does he specifically link it with any criminal activity whatsoever.

After a few minutes of socializing, Xeno takes his leave, with a closing admonition to "wear something sturdy, and not too expensive."

The Gladiators: Arms and Armor

During their escape, the gladiators wore their arena armor, and each was carrying their best melee weapon (Jaim, known for his two-weapon fighting style, escaped with a pair of short swords). Those who customarily fought with shields or bucklers were carrying the same during their escape. After the escape, Simeon provided those with the appropriate skill with missile weapons of their choice, and a dozen rounds of ammunition. Each gladiator also has a large knife.

A gladiator's armor is eclectic and bizarre. Usually they armored their most vulnerable points with scraps of leather, chain or even plate, while leaving less exposed places completely bare. The GM may, for simplicity's sake, treat the gladiators' armor as being equivalent to leather armor (PD 2, DR 2) for purposes of protection and encumbrance, or he may design a suit of armor for each combatant.



Dregs

The dregs are no threat to the party. These pathetic rejects of society can be treated as having 8 in all stats, with no advantages, but each with his personal assortment of strange diseases and stranger addictions. Their only significant skill is Stealth-12.

Though they flee from strong-looking groups, the dregs will viciously attack any lone wanderers below, mobbing him with rusty daggers and crude cudgels, then stripping him of his money, clothes, weapons and anything that might be saleable or exchangeable for liquor.

Below

The Syndic suspects — correctly — that the gladiators are hiding Below, in the ancient and unmapped sewers of the city.

Nobody knows how deep or how far the sewers extend. They have never been precisely mapped. They have grown with the city — its unseen, unknown roots.

If anyone can be said to "own" the sewers, it's the Syndic. They have made this vast undercity their home and headquarters for several centuries. So great is the Syndic's control of Below, that they even pay for its upkeep and organize the required labor . . . and do so quite effectively — the sewers provide excellent drainage for a city of that size and tech level.

This is perhaps the most important among of many unwritten treaties between the Syndic and the Government that allow both to coexist and flourish. If the city were to decide to wipe out the Syndic, they would, in addition to terrible expense and bloodshed, have to face the fact that they would be cutting off the source that has provided exceptional public utility service for centuries, at no cost whatsoever to the civic coffers. Likewise, if the city squeezes the Syndic too hard for too long, they know that they might impede the Syndic's cash flow to the extent that the drainage system might suffer. This all adds up to an effective and reasonably stable balance of power.

This is also the final reason why the organization has decided to aid the PCs, because the size of the manhunt has them concerned that the city might be desperate enough to take direct action Below. This is a situation not to be tolerated, and the Syndic finds the removal of the gladiators to be the most efficient way of eliminating the danger. However, they also prefer that the danger of facing the battle-hardened gladiators be borne by crazy freelancers, rather than by valuable Syndic operatives.

While the above information is useful to the GM if this adventure is played as part of campaign play, it is *not* easily available to the PCs. The only way they might learn it is to make a successful roll vs. Streetwise -5, and then only if they specifically state they are seeking out non-Syndic sources of information. (If the adventurers encountered and favorably impressed the minstrel on p. 10, he would be one good source of this information).

The Descent

The party's rendezvous with Xeno takes place on the waterfront, on a short stretch of beach beside the foundation of a Syndic warehouse. Xeno arrives at exactly the appointed hour, apparently alone.

He leads the party about a half-mile down the shore, to a huge outlet pipe (7' in diameter) that faces the beach. Since the last few days have been dry, there's only a trickle of water down the center of the pipe. The party can easily walk single file down the pipe without getting their boots muddy. This is the entrance to Below (there are actually several drier and more convenient entrances between the rendezvous point and the pipe, but Xeno does not feel that the party has any business knowing about them).

Guided by a lantern brought by Xeno, the party proceeds down the pipe for about 20 minutes, moving very quickly, taking several turns and passing other branch passages. The way can only be recalled by a character with Eidetic Memory (either level) or who possesses Absolute Direction and makes an IQ roll. Anyone who *specifically states* that he's trying to remember the route can later retrace his steps on a successful roll vs. IQ -5.

Until, that is, the adventurers reach an octagonal chamber with a passage leading out from each wall. There, they are met by two silent, implacable men. Xeno explains that from this point they have to go blindfold. If the party refuses, Xeno simply expresses his regrets that the deal could not be completed and offers to lead the party back to the exit. If the party is stupid enough to actually take him up on this offer, the journey back begins innocently enough, but about 5 minutes later Xeno vanishes, and 5 minutes after that the group is assaulted by a formidable force of Syndic troops — the exact composition of this force is left to the GM, depending on how severely he wants to punish the players for messing up his adventure. If the PCs do survive, they would be most unwise to let sunrise find them still in the city.

The final stage of the journey takes 25 minutes. The blindfolded PCs are instructed to place their right hands on the right shoulder of the individual in front of them and walk in single file. Xeno leads, with one of his companions going ahead to clear obstructions, and the other following behind to guard against stragglers. The PCs have no chance whatsoever of memorizing this part

Gators

The sewers sport a large and well-fed population of alligators. How they got there no one knows, but they've been living beneath the city for centuries.

ST: 18-24	**PD/DR:** 3/4
DX: 12	**Dmg:** 1+1 cut
IQ: 3	**Reach:** C (1 with tail)
HT: 12/20-26	**Size:** 4-6
Speed/Dodge: 7/6	**Wt:** 700-1,500 lbs.

Alligators are sluggish creatures, who spend most of their time basking. They are shy of humans, and will flee on sight. When cornered, however, they are vicious fighters.

The city's 'gators feed on the refuse from above, on the vermin that comes with it, and on the occasional careless dreg.

The alligator attacks by grabbing and holding with its teeth. It then attempts to drown its victim by pulling it under water. To pry open its jaws, one must win a regular Contest of ST.

To hold them shut, on the other hand, one must win a Contest of ST vs. only ¼ the alligator's ST — the muscles that open the jaws are much weaker than the muscles that close them.

If forced to fight on land, the 'gator will attack by biting and by whipping with its tail. It can use both attacks each turn. The tail-whip has reach 1, for 1d damage. It is specifically intended to knock opponents to the ground, where the jaws can more easily reach them.

On land, the alligator normally has Speed 2, but can sprint short distances at Speed 4. In the water, its Speed is 7. It has PD 3, DR 4 everywhere except its stomach, which has PD 1, DR 2.

of the route unless one of them has *both* Eidetic Memory *and* Absolute Direction, and even so he has to make a successful IQ roll. A character with the Escape skill may make one roll at -5 to surreptitiously peek under the edge of his blindfold. If he succeeds, his odds of remembering the path are as above.

Eventually the party hears the unmistakable sound of a very heavy door being unlocked and opened, then closed behind them. Their blindfolds are removed, and the party finds itself in a huge, torchlit room 60' square. The door they just came through is 8' broad and 10' high, and banded with iron. Similar huge doors can be seen spaced at regular intervals around the room. The walls of the room are lined with tools and dozens of workmen hurry around the room. The chamber is one of the least sensitive of the Syndic's major areas — the main workroom of the sewer maintenance workers.

Simeon

Age 51; brown hair, brown eyes and glasses; 5' 10", 170 lbs.

ST 8, DX 11, IQ 15, HT 10.

Speed 5.25, Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry 6.

Advantages: Charisma +1, Literacy, Magical Aptitude 3.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (radical reformer), Nearsighted, Sense of Duty (to slaves and the oppressed), Skinny.

Quirks: Enjoys theological debate; Will go to great lengths for a new book; Gives away most of his money.

Skills: Administration-11, Detect Lies-13, Disguise-12, Fast-Talk-14, History-12, Holdout-14, Hypnotism-14, Knife-12, Law-13, Literature-12, Naturalist-13, Physician-15, Research-14, Savoir-Faire-14, Scrounging-15, Sling-11, Streetwise-14, Teaching-13, Theology-13.

Spells: Area Knowledge-19, Awaken-16, Beast-Soother-16, Clumsiness-16, Compel Truth-16, Control Person-16, Cure Disease-16, Daze-20, Drunkenness-16, Fear-16, Foolishness-16, Halt Aging-15, Hide Thoughts-16, Hush-16, Insect Control-16, Itch-16, Lend Health-16, Lend Strength-16, Mage-Stealth-20, Major Healing-20, Mind-Reading-16, Minor Healing-20, Neutralize Poison-16, Panic-16, Persuasion-16, Possession-15, Recover Strength-20, Regeneration-15, Restoration-15, Scryguard-15, Scrywall-15, Sense Emotion-16, Sense Foes-16, Sense Life-16, Share Strength-16, Silence-16, Sleep-20, Soul Rider-15, Sound-16, Spasm-16, Stealth-12, Sterilize-16, Terror-20, Truthsayer-16.

Continued on next page . . .

The adventurers are led across the room to a smaller door which opens into a 20' × 20' room where several groups of men — not workers — are standing in conversation. The men all fall silent and avoid the party's gaze as the PCs cross the room and exit through another door.

The party is led down a short, featureless corridor to a final door, which opens into a 15' by 15' room, barely lit by a single candle.

The little room is quite crowded, with the PCs, Xeno and his two silent associates, and the two men who were waiting there for them. One of the men is plump, middle-aged and unremarkably dressed. He remains seated quietly in a corner. The other, central figure is more memorable — a tall, lean old man with sharp features and a full head of unruly white hair, dressed in a ragged robe, carrying a tall staff (if anyone in the party is able to check, the staff is not magic), and wearing a bandage around his eyes in the manner of the completely blind.

Perhaps the most impressive thing about the old man is his smell. It fills the small room. It's certainly not a stink — it's not even completely unpleasant — but it's strong and pervasive, mellow, not pungent. It's the smell of someone who's spent 50 years living in a sewer.

Xeno makes introductions. Ignoring the little man in the corner, he says:

"This is Joram. He knows Below better than any man living. He'll tell you what's known down here concerning you quarry, and where best to begin your search."

Joram immediately begins to speak, in a rich, deep voice. "The men you seek have been seen in the far depths of this place, in the presence of a man called Simeon, a rabble rouser and fanatic. I know where this Simeon makes his lair, and I'll tell you how to get there. From the place where you'll begin, you'll travel 200 paces straight ahead, taking the third branch tunnel to your left . . ."

The directions go on for several minutes, involving many turnings and descents, ending with . . .

"Beyond this room is a 30-pace tunnel with no branchings or turnings. At the end of this tunnel is a door which opens onto a gallery which completely circles the wall of a great, deep chamber. Simeon lives somewhere near this chamber, but I do not know precisely where. If you're nimble and mind your way, you can make the journey in a bit less than two hours."

Identified in the directions are two stretches of particularly treacherous footing, and three short but tricky descents.

Unless they have Eidetic Memory, the party cannot possibly memorize the directions from one hearing. But if they ask for a repeat, Xeno simply tells them, "Later."

The party may now ask questions. If they ask Joram why he lives Below, or what happened to his eyes, he replies, "When I was above, the sun hurt my eyes, so I came here." He says nothing more about himself.

If asked what the Syndic has against Simeon and the gladiators, Xeno explains, "They're not our people; they're political prisoners and foreigners, and Simeon's a troublemaker. We don't mind such folk, as a rule, but they're drawing the city's attention down our way, and we can't have that."

If asked about dangers in the sewers, Joram replies, "Not many, not many, if you watch your footing and don't lose your way. There's the dregs, of course, but they're no danger to a group like yours. The only real danger is the 'gators, but they're no great problem — just avoid large groups, stay out of deep water and don't provoke 'em."

If the party asks for more detail about dregs and 'gators, the GM can feed them a few pertinent details from the respective sidebars (see pp. 16-17).

If they ask for more information about Simeon, Xeno tells them that he's been crusading against slavery and poverty for almost 30 years, both within and outside of the law. When things finally got too hot for him on the surface, two decades ago, he came Below, where he's lived ever since, except for a few clandestine operations on the surface. He's known as a scholar and a clever planner, and he's also a competent mage, though not known for his combat magic.

After a few minutes of questions, Joram leaves, and only then does Xeno introduce the other man in the room. He is a Syndic scribe (his name isn't given), gifted with Eidetic Memory. His job is to see that the newcomers commit their route to memory. He begins drilling them immediately.

Each PC has to make a series of IQ rolls, each representinga half-hour of work. The rolls begin at -5, and increase by one each subsequent roll. Once a character successfully makes his IQ roll, he has the route memorized, and does not need to make any further rolls. The scribe does not stop until every member of the party has made a successful roll.

Once the route is memorized, Xeno tells the party their plan of action. They will spend the night where they are, and begin their hunt in the morning. The Syndic is not open to negotiation on this point — the party will not be allowed to return to the surface until their mission is complete. If they left equipment above that they need, it will be fetched for them. The Syndic will even purchase anything the party thinks they might want to buy (using the PCs' money). Xeno suggests only one item if the party doesn't think of it themselves — a good supply of rope.

If the party absolutely refuses to remain overnight, Xeno coldly reminds them that they don't know the way out — their only sure way back to the surface is to complete their mission, on the organization's terms. If the party foolishly tries to fight their way out, the GM should confront them with a sizable force of Syndic operatives — one large enough to probably inflict significant casualties on the party, if not completely wipe them out. If the characters try to sneak out,

Simeon (Continued)

A thin, bespecticaled, balding man of about 50, Simeon began his career as a promising young professor of theology at the Imperial university, but while there he became embroiled in radical reformist movements, particularly abolitionism. He soon established a reputation for vocal activism that shocked even his liberal companions.

Such activities do not go unnoticed in an absolute monarchy, and inevitably Simeon was forced to flee his home and job, only minutes ahead of a squad of the Imperial Bodyguard. Almost everybody thought he fled the country, but instead he went Below, where he bought his security by ministering to the health needs of the dregs, and occasionally even the Syndic.

His flight underground did not inhibit his radical activities however, but intensified them. He re-contacted his most militant associates and began to coordinate a wide range of illegal activities, from underground railroad-like schemes to outright violent terrorism (always, however, against property, not persons). Between exploits he explored Below, finding his hidden refuge, then the secret Imperial Escape Tunnel, along with many other secrets.

Now, after two decades, he's sick of life underground. Simeon feels he's done his part, and is ready to resume his life as a quiet academic in some more enlightened country. His rescue of the gladiators is to be his last grand gesture of defiance.

He's a voluble man with a keen wit. He loves vigorous argument and books of all sort. He's good company, in an intense sort of way, though his conversation tends to leave his mental inferiors behind, and his political obsessions will annoy many.

Simeon is no fighter. If he becomes embroiled in a situation he can't talk his way out of, he relies first on stealth, then magic to get him out. He's a cool head in a crisis, and plans his exploits meticulously. He has a personal 12-point Powerstone mounted in a ring, but no other magic items.

they can try, but the Syndic is a group of criminals, with many masters of stealth in its number.

Once the party is reconciled to the Syndic's plan, they're fed an excellent meal (with good drink, though not in sufficient quantities to allow drunkenness), and bedded down comfortably in a side chamber with a rosy coal stove.

Marlon

Age 37; Short brown hair (balding), clean-shaven with an eye-patch; 6' 0", 190 lbs.

ST 14, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 13.

Speed 8, Move 8.

Dodge 7, Block 9, Parry 9.

Advantages: Alertness +3, Charisma +2, Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Toughness +2, Strong Will +1, Voice.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Mercenary's — 5 points), Lecherousness, One Eye, Stubbornness.

Quirks: Likes children; Prefers buxom women; Uncomfortable around nobility.

Skills: Acrobatics-12, Armoury-12, Axe/ Mace-15, Bard-16, Bow-12, Brawling-15, Broadsword-17, Camouflage-14, Climbing-14, Detect Lies-11, Fast-Draw (sword)-15, First Aid-13, Flail-12, Interrogation-12, Jumping-13, Knife-15, Leadership-15, Net-14, Polearm-14, Riding (horse)-13, Running-12, Savoir Faire-15, Sex Appeal-14, Shield-16, Sling-11, Staff-14, Stealth-13, Strategy-11, Streetwise-14, Tactics-13, Teaching-12, Throwing-14, Two-Handed Axe/Mace-12, Two-Handed Sword-13.

Continued on next page . . .

The Hunt

The next morning the party is awakened after a good night's rest, and fed a hearty breakfast. Each member is given one meal and a canteen of fresh water, and the group is offered two 18" wooden dowels, on which a Syndic mage has cast 4-point Continual Light spells. At this time anything which was fetched or purchased for the party the previous night is delivered. Once ready, they are lined up in single file, blindfolded, and the final phase of the adventure begins.

The party is led through the sewers for a half-hour before their blindfolds are removed, at the entrance to a tunnel which they immediately recognize from the previous evening's intensive drills.

Xeno leaves the party with a final word, "This is the edge of our territory down here. From here on you're on your own."

He and his two silent henchmen vanish into the shadows.

The GM should make IQ rolls for each member of the party. In the unlikely event that every single PC fails the roll, the party becomes hopelessly lost, wandering the sewers for several days, until finally being rescued by disgusted and annoyed Syndic representatives, long after the gladiators have made good their escape. Encounters suitable for such misfortune are left as an exercise for the GM.

Otherwise, the party has no difficulty following Joram's directions, *unless* one of the characters critically fails his IQ roll. If this happens, the GM should tell him that he's *completely certain* that the party has taken the wrong turn, and give him every chance to convince the rest of the players to deviate from the memorized route.

The hunters should also make two HT rolls each. The first is to become accustomed to the overpowering odor of the lower reaches of the sewers. If it's failed, the hunter loses 2 points from ST, DX and HT for 1d hours. The second roll is to avoid contracting an infection from the unsanitary conditions. If the roll is failed, the victim becomes ill after 1d days. The infection can be treated as a "generic" disease described on p. B133. A successful Cure Disease spell completely cures the infection.

During the journey, the party sees several alligators, but in each case they get out of the hunters' way of their own free will, twisting off into some small side tunnel. They also see some shadows that might be dregs, but they can't be sure in the gloom.

At both of the areas of bad footing discovered by Joram, each hunter must make a DX roll. At each of the three descents a Climbing roll is required. The GM can allow positive modifiers if the party takes suitable precautionary measures (for instance, +2 to all rolls if the party ropes themselves together, +3 if they anchor a rope at the top of a descent). A sure-footed character can also help a single less dexterous companion, at some risk to himself. If anyone states he's helping someone else, average the Climbing or DX values for the two, and have both roll against the resulting number (round down). So, for example, if a thief with Climbing 15 wanted to help a mage with a Climbing default of 8, both characters would roll against an 11. A character helping or being helped by another still gets any positive modifiers from the party's safety precautions.

Both the first two descents and the areas of bad footing are over water. If a climber slips at these places he takes no damage, but must immediately make a

Swimming roll. If the Swimming roll is failed, he is drowning and must be rescued (see p. B91). If the rescuer fails his Swimming roll, the rescue attempt fails, but he is able to pull himself back to land. If the rescuer critically fails his roll, both he and the original victim are drowning, and both must be rescued.

If a character enters the sewer water for any reason, he must immediately reroll both Health rolls he made upon entering the sewers (yes, it is possible to contract more than one disease — simply double the number of daily HT rolls that must be made during the sickness). Additionally, the GM should roll 1d. On a 5 or 6, the swimmer disturbs 1-3 annoyed alligators.

Below the final descent is hard stone, and if the Climbing roll is failed the adventurer falls 4 yards, taking 1d-3 damage per yard.

The First Chamber

Finally, the adventurers arrive at the door to the final room before the great chamber. When they enter the room, they find it occupied by 3d dregs, who cower away from the intruders in a pitiful heap in a corner of the room. The room is dry, bare and filthy.

If the PCs stay together they can completely ignore the dregs, but if for any reason one or two adventurers venture into the room without the rest of the party, the dregs attack *en masse*. They fight with clubs and daggers until the victims are overcome, or the dregs take more than 50 points cumulative damage. If the dregs overcome their victims, they loot the bodies and flee. If the PCs survive, the dregs just flee. Any attempt to track fleeing dregs only leads to a similar ambush.

If the party attempts to question the dregs, there's no need for an Interrogation roll. The GM should simply roll 1d. On a 1 the terrified dreg drops dead from sheer fright. On a 2 or 3 he's hysterical, gibbering or sobbing uncontrolla-

Marlon (Continued)

In addition to being a formidable warrior in his own right, Marlon is a military commander of great skill. Now in his early 40s, he began his career as a mercenary, and even the loss of an eye couldn't impede his rise. But slaughter for profit eventually came to repel Marlon, who wanted to do something more meaningful with his life. Since war was all he knew, he enlisted in an armed rebellion against the Empire (GM's note: in Yrth, Marlon would have been an officer in Brennan's hard-bitten guerrilla force — see p. F46). After several notable successes, Marlon was caught, under strange circumstances. He suspects that he may have been betrayed by his own commander, who feared that Marlon's leadership abilities were a threat to his own.

Marlon can fight competently and mercilessly with almost any sort of weapon, and he's almost unbeatable with broadsword and shield. Though somewhat reserved in social encounters, he's an inspiring, eloquent leader of his troops. He's a good commander, who puts his men's welfare ahead of his own, and thus inspires great loyalty. In many ways Marlon is the best possible friend to have, and the worst possible enemy.

Cee

Age 29; bald headed with blue eyes; 7' 0", 485 lbs.

ST 15, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 12.

Speed: 6, Move: 6.

Dodge 6, Parry 8.

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +2, Musical Ability +3, Rapid Healing, Toughness +1.

Disadvantages: Eunuch, Fat +100%, Gigantism, Gluttony.

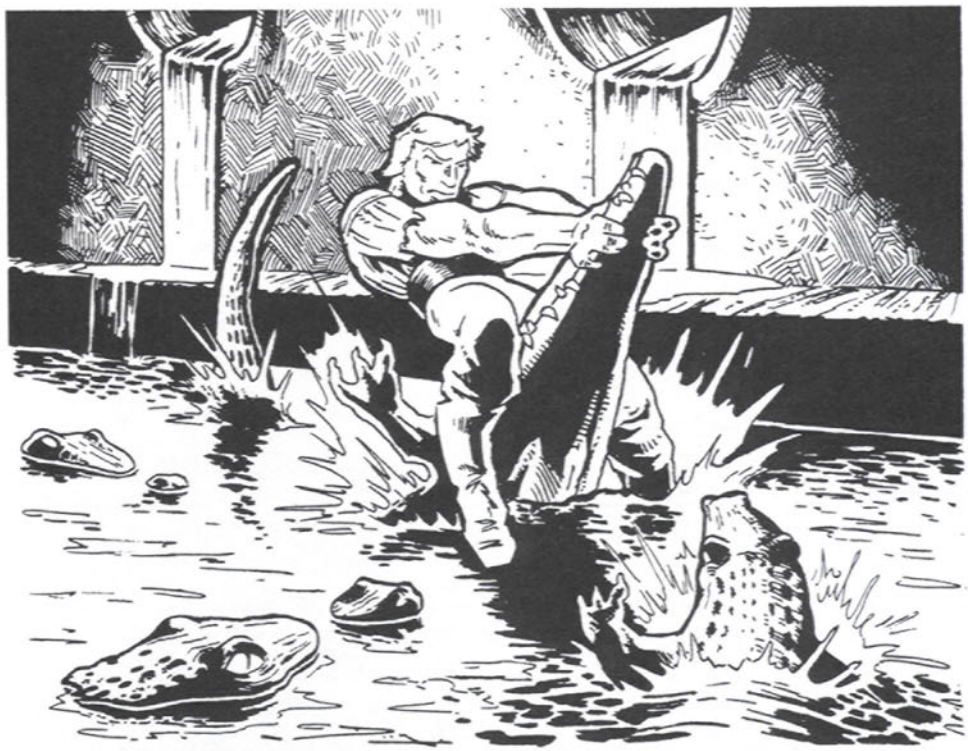
Quirks: Likes to wear jewelry; Slight hypochondriac; Dislikes pets; Acts fierce.

Skills: Acting-14, Administration-11, Brawling-14, Carousing-13, Cooking-14, Fast-Talk-13, Gambling-14, Holdout-14, Knife Throwing-15, Lip Reading-12, Musical Instrument (Dulcimer)-13, Performance-10, Physician-13, Savoir-Faire-14, Singing-16, Teaching-11, Two-Handed Axe/Mace-16, Whip-13.

A eunuch since early childhood, Cee was once the chief bodyguard and general factotum to a very powerful noble matron with close family connections to the Imperial Throne. However, Cee's mistress took a young lover, and Cee became the go-between and confidant in the affair. When her husband discovered this betrayal, his wife and her lover were executed, and Cee went to the arena.

In spite of his emasculation, Cee is a doughty fighter, and his sheer size (7' tall, over 500 lbs.) makes him a terrifying foe in battle. His skill with the great maul he prefers is impressive.

In the arena, for reasons of self-preservation, he developed the habit of acting very short-tempered and dangerous. In reality, he is a man of fine taste and considerable culture.



bly, and on a 4 to 6 the dreg talks. He knows nothing useful, however, only begging the party not to hurt Simeon, who is "a good man, master, a very good man. He helps us poor folk when we're sick, master," and confirming that the good man lives somewhere beyond the great chamber.

The room's exit stands immediately opposite the entrance. If the players don't think of it themselves, the GM can allow an IQ roll to notice that even though the dregs could have easily fled through this door as the hunters entered, they didn't even try. By this time, however, the dregs have gathered their courage enough to vanish back to the sewers, unless the adventurers specifically stated they are standing guard over them, or keeping one hostage. If there's still a dreg around as the party prepares to open the door, he goes hysterical, and the truth comes out, "No! No! Don't open that! There's 'gators back there! Big 'uns!"

The Lizard Pit

This 100' corridor is recessed, with a short stairway at each end.

Simeon and the gladiators have not been inactive since their escape, and they've made the corridor their first line of defense. Using his intimate knowledge of the sewers, Simeon has managed to flood the hall to the top of the stairs, and somehow he's lured a family of large alligators inside, before sealing off the doors.

The 'gators haven't had a decent meal since their imprisonment, and they're feeling mean. There are three with ST 18 and 20 HP, three with ST 21 and 24 HP and one 20' monster bull with

ST 25 and 30 HP. The party must magically circumvent the reptiles, or fight their way through. It's as simple as that.

The Great Chamber

Once the adventurers have achieved the far end of the tunnel, they are confronted by a great door, 6' broad, 8' high and two feet thick, made out of ancient tarred wood. The door is designed to be barred from the characters' side, so it's not locked. As they pass through, someone with Architecture or Engineering skill might notice that the door is designed to be watertight, and to withstand great pressure.

The chamber beyond is truly awesome — a masterpiece of ancient engineering. It's shaped like the interior of two stepped pyramids, placed together, base to base, with great tiers tapering up to the ceiling and down to the lowest floor. It's almost 90' across at its widest point, and over 70 ' tall to the tip of its great domed ceiling. At the lowest level is a great pipe, 10' in diameter, in the center of the room. The party enters at the second level below the ceiling, two levels above the great pipe.

This is one of the city's main drainage chambers. If the city is faced by tremendous storms that the sewers can't normally handle, the excess water is diverted here, rather than being allowed to back up to the surface, causing flooding in the streets. Millions of gallons can be stored in this great room, waiting to be drained away through the great central pipe. The explorers are able to deduce this information on a successful roll vs. Civil Engineering or Architecture -3. There are several pipes opening into each level of the room, all 1-3 feet in diameter. The largest pipe would be a slow, filthy, dangerous crawl for an average-sized human.

A few seconds after they enter the room, the party suffers a hail of arrows. The party is being attacked by three regular bows and a ST 12 crossbow. The shots are coming from the right of the party and a little above. The adventures can't tell anything else about their attackers, unless they have magical aids to vision — the distance is far too great for their little lights to reach.

If the party extinguishes all lights, the rain of arrows stops, but each party member who tries to advance has to make a successful roll vs. DX or IQ (whichever is greater) or slip and fall down one level (a 10' fall). All Climbing rolls are at -5 in the dark.

Once the party gets within 40' of the ambush, the gladiators withdraw through a door very much like the one the PCs entered by.

If the hunters are approaching with the lights on, they know exactly when the ambush flees — the arrows stop flying, and they glimpse the great door shutting at the extreme range of their light. If they've extinguished their lights, the ambushers escape stealthily, and the adventurers have to make a critical success with a Hearing roll to detect the withdrawal.

When they reach the door, they find it barred from the inside. If they can't open or pass the door magically, they have to break it down. A formidable task. If they start whittling away with their weapons, the door doesn't give out for 2d

Floyd

Age 36; short brown hair and green eyes; 5' 9'' 175 lbs.

ST 13, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 14.

Speed 6.5, Move 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 9, Block 9.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Toughness +2.

Disadvantages: Ugly, Bully, Intolerance (wimps), Laziness, Sense of Duty.

Quirks: Talks in military parlance; Gets drunk and starts fights to relax; Avoids horses; Friendly to opponents who put up a good fight.

Skills: Armoury-11, Axe Throwing-12, Axe/Mace-12, Blackjack-12, Boating-11, Brawling-13, Broadsword-16, Camouflage-11, Climbing-12, Crossbow-12, Fast-Draw (sword)-13, First Aid-11, Flail-13, Interrogation-12, Knife-14, Knife Throwing-12, Leadership 9, Net-15, Polearm-13, Riding (horse)-11, Savoir-Faire-10, Scrounging-11, Seamanship-10, Shield-16, Sling-12, Spear-13, Spear Throwing-12, Stealth-12, Streetwise-12, Tactics 9, Two-Handed Axe/Mace-12, Two-Handed Sword-12, Whip-13.

Before his escape from the arena, Floyd was at the nadir of a long decline. He began his career as a mercenary, rising to the rank of sergeant, but he was forced to flee for his life after striking his commander. He became a professional gladiator. He was successful enough in the arena to stay alive, but then he killed a young noble in a barroom brawl, and was sentenced to return to the arena — this time as a prisoner. Unlike the professional bouts, where the fighters are evenly matched, and even a loser will often survive if he puts up a good fight, prisoner games are a virtual death sentence.

Though not a big man, Floyd is tougher than nails, and he knows it. He can be a brutal bully, but he can also be a true friend to those who earn his respect. In the arena he fought both with net and trident and with sword and shield, but it was with the later that he excelled, and that was what he was carrying during his escape.

Groby

Age 22; Very ugly and hairy; 6' 5", 350 lbs.

ST 18, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 14/16.

Speed 6.5, Move 6.

Dodge 6, Parry 8.

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell +1, Alertness +1, DR +2, High Pain Threshold, Magic Resistance +1, Night Vision, Toughness +1.

Disadvantages: Ugly, Intolerance (Humans), Odious Racial Habits: Eats other sentients.

Skills: Brawling-16, Language: local human-8, Pole Arm-13, Stealth-12, Two-Handed Axe/Mace-17.

Groby is a Half-Ogre, a cross between an Orc and an Ogre. Imperial law mandates that any captured Orcs be enslaved or exterminated — Groby was close enough. The story of how he came to be in civilized lands to be captured is probably actually quite interesting. Unfortunately, Groby is nowhere near articulate enough to tell it. Actually, Groby is quite intelligent for a Half-Ogre, for whatever that's worth.

He fights exactly like a Half-Ogre is expected to fight. It works, too. He's immensely fond of his huge battleaxe, but in the arena he was learning to use the halberd. (There was talk of making him a bodyguard after the Grand Elimination, but Groby knows nothing about that.)

hours. However, if they say they're examining the great chamber, and make a successful Vision roll, they get a major break.

At the lowest level of the chamber is a muck-encrusted beam, washed into the chamber during some great storm. If the explorers can raise this beam from the lowest level to the top, it makes an admirable battering ram.

Raising the beam, however, requires at least four people, with a cumulative ST of 50+.

In addition to the normal Climbing rolls for each level on the descent (all the ladders or climbing rungs in the chamber have been removed or destroyed by the gladiators), the ascent requires a Climbing roll at -2, and a ST roll for each level. Using rope gives a +1 to all ST rolls. A successful Engineering roll gives a +1 to the Climbing rolls and a +3 to the ST rolls.

Once the beam is raised, it still requires at least four workers with a combined ST of 50+ to batter through the door in 3d minutes. Each continuous minute of battering costs the crew 1 fatigue.

The Big Finish

The barred door opens to a long flight of narrow stairs, that ascends almost 100 feet. The stairway ends at a locked, but not barred door. Though massive, the lock is ancient and rather crude, and can be picked at +2. The door can also be knocked down. It has DR 4, and 25 HP.

Beyond the final door is a most astonishing sight. The door leads to an ancient suite of luxurious rooms — practically a subterranean manor house. This chamber was originally built as a refuge for some particularly paranoid ancient noble, and while there has been much decay over the centuries, it remains remarkably comfortable (compared to the rest of the sewers). The walls consist of crumbling, but still vivid mosaics, or are hung with ancient and fragile tapestry, and the doors are of sturdy carved wood. Much of the carpet that originally covered the tile floors has been taken up and thrown away, due to mildew and infestation, but in places it still remains, a threadbare reminder of former grandeur.

The apartment contains several sleeping chambers, a Roman-style bath, a full kitchen and running water (that still works). Its sparse furnishings are evenly divided between huge, ancient original pieces and newer, flimsier items scavenged by Simeon. There is little here to loot — the few pieces of furniture that remain in saleable condition are large and heavy, and would be impossible to return to the surface economically (the very knowledge of such a place , though, would be worth a tidy sum to the right parties).

It is here that the hunters finally face their quarry.

The gladiators are very tough opponents. It is incumbent upon the GM to see that the final encounter, while *very* challenging, is not automatically fatal to the party. If the GM decides the adventurers are no match for the fugitives, there are basically two ways to adjust the odds in the party's favor. First, the GM can arbitrarily cut a gladiator or two out of the adventure entirely. Second, he can divide the gladiators into two or even three groups, giving the PCs a chance to whittle down their opponents, take stock of those that get away, and use magical healing and recover fatigue between combats (this is bad tactics on the gladiators' part, but everybody makes mistakes). The chart in the sidebar may be helpful in deciding whether to split the opposition.

The party's magical strength is another factor that must be considered before the GM decides how to deploy the gladiators. The gladiators are tough fighters, but, being gladiators, their skills are almost exclusively in armed combat. If the PCs count a martial mage among their number (particularly one with a few good mass destruction spells in his grimoire), it's a significant advantage. Likewise, the gladiators have no magic items to speak off. If the party has a significant magical arsenal, that's another point in their favor (see the sidebar on p. 6 for an assortment of magic items suitable for the PCs in this adventure).

If the gladiators divide into two groups, the first group will consist of René, Nurrien, Jaim and Skuli, who will attempt to attack from ambush when the party is in room 2. The remainder of the gladiators will be waiting in room 7. If they split into three groups, the ambush will be manned by Jaim, Nurrien and René, while Skuli, Cee and Floyd will wait in room 7, and Marlon, Simeon and Groby will be waiting in 4.

Other than the GM-mandated split of the gladiators, if any, the fugitives should be played as smart, tough, competent and desperate. The GM might find it helpful to introduce an assistant GM at this phase of the adventure, whose job is to take the role of the gladiators, and play them in the most effective way possible.

If the gladiators are divided, any of them in the first two groups who takes more than half his HT in cumulative damage will attempt to slip away from the combat. If he succeeds, he'll fall back to Simeon for healing, then wait with the final group. Likewise, if there's only one fighter left in the first group(s), he'll attempt to fall back to the next site. The final group, however, fights to the finish.

Skuli

Age 27; black hair and brown eyes; 5' 6" 180 lbs.

ST 13, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 13.

Speed 7.875, Move 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 9, Block 7.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2, Combat Reflexes, Magical Resistance +3, Peripheral Vision, Toughness +1.

Disadvantages: Unattractive, Berserk, Gullibility, Intolerance — civilized folk.

Quirks: Not acclimated to civilized life; Hates to get wet; Believes a person's soul is contained in his helmet.

Skills: Brawling-15, Buckler-13, Camouflage-13, Climbing-14, Fishing-12, Knife-14, Net-13, Running-13, Seamanship-11, Shortsword-13, Spear-16, Spear Throwing-15, Stealth-14, Survival (tundra)-12, Swimming-12, Tracking-14, Ventriloquism-11.

Skuli is a barbarian warrior from beyond the fringes of the empire — a short, bandy-legged, leather-tough man. He was captured during an unsuccessful raid on an Imperial border fort.

Skuli is basically clueless about how civilization works or how civilized people think. Frequently his actions, in turn, seem bizarre to city folk. In the arena he fought with the short thrusting spear he'd used to hunt and fight with since early childhood. His arena trademark is his horned helmet, which Skuli regards as a sacred object.

Aftermath

Whether the adventurers win or lose the battle with the gladiators, their adventure is not over (unless all are killed outright, which is unlikely).

If the Party Wins

If the party wins, it faces the problem of getting the gladiators back to the surface. The easiest thing to do would be to kill them all and return their heads for the reward — there is nothing to prevent this except the adventurers' ethics (if any).

Unless dead, unconscious or gagged, Simeon makes an impassioned plea to the party to release them and join them in their flight. He has deduced the Syndic's role in the adventure, and makes a convincing case that the Syndic has no intention of letting the PCs collect the reward — that the adventurers now know too much about the Syndic, that they will be quietly assassinated, and the gladiators executed and their bodies returned anonymously to the arena. Whether or not this is true is up to the GM (see below).

If any of the party members are critically injured, Simeon offers his healing skills. This offer is quite sincere, and Simeon doctors anyone who needs it, with both magic and physician skill. Once this is taken care of, though, he seizes any chance to escape that he is offered. He doesn't hesitate to escape without the gladiators — Simeon knows the sewers almost as well as Joram, and he will follow the party and magically harass them on their trip to the surface. The details of such harassment are left to the GM, but they should be enough to seriously jeopardize the party's chance of ever collecting the reward.

On the return journey, the PCs have to make IQ rolls again to remember the route back.

If the party tries to shepherd the fugitives back to the surface, it is left to their ingenuity to get a hostile, bound prisoner up a sheer wall or across a stretch of tricky footing. The GM should be liberal in assigning penalties for Climbing and DX rolls. The gladiators use any means possible to escape. Since they literally have nothing to lose, their efforts can be both wild and dangerous; a gladiator will not hesitate to, for example, throw himself over a 15-foot drop into a alligator-infested pool of filth with his hands bound (preferably taking a captor or two with him).

When they reach the rendezvous point, the GM has a choice; the organization can honor the deal, or they can fulfill Simeon's prediction by betraying the party.

Jaim

Age 18; long brown hair and fierce blue eyes; 5' 10", 165 lbs.

ST 11, DX 16, IQ 12, HT 11.

Speed 8.25, Move 8.

Dodge 6, Parry 9, Block 8.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +1, Alertness +2, Ambidexterity, Double-Jointed, Extraordinary Luck, Night Vision 10.

Disadvantages: Greed, Kleptomania, Overconfidence.

Quirks: Flashy Dresser; Wiseguy; Knows nothing about wine, but pretends to; Never admits that he's wrong; Won't tolerate rudeness to ladies.

Skills: Acrobatics-18, Acting-12, Blowpipe-14, Bow-15, Brawling-16, Buckler-16, Camouflage-14, Carousing-12, Climbing-18, Disguise-13, Escape-17, Fast-Talk-14, Fast-Draw (sword)-16, Gambling-11, Holdout-14, Jeweler-10, Jumping-16, Knife-17, Knife Throwing-18, Law-10, Lockpicking-15, Merchant-11, Pickpocket-15, Poisons-10, Running-12, Scrounging-12, Shortsword-19, Stealth-17, Streetwise-13, Swimming-13, Traps-14.

Jaim is a professional criminal, a thief and burglar of some skill. But he got careless during a second-story job, and ended up in the arena. He has no connections with the Syndic — in fact, several of his more reckless exploits alarmed and annoyed them.

The youngest and smallest of the winners of the grand elimination, Jaim survived through his dazzling speed, unique two-sword fighting style and several truly astonishing strokes of luck.

He's brash, impetuous and more than a bit annoying. He'll try anything if it seems fun or exciting. He considers himself a ladies' man and a swashbuckler.

Success!

If the Syndic honors the deal, the hunters are met by the shadowy figure of a dreg, who beckons them over, out of earshot of the captives. When they approach, they discover that the "dreg" is really Xeno in disguise. He congratulates the party, and gives them their cover story — they decided to search the sewers through sheer luck. They tracked the gladiators by alternately bribing and interrogating dregs. Xeno emphasizes that if the Syndic is as much as mentioned in connection with the capture, the consequences could be severe, and very likely fatal (the party acquires the Syndic as an Enemy, which appears on a 12 or less inside the city, and on a 9 or less anywhere in the known world). If the PCs tell Xeno about Simeon's hideout, he asks them to keep quiet about it, too.

The party is not blindfolded — Xeno leads them to the surface using a different, and surprisingly short route. He leaves them at the entrance to the same large pipe where their underground exploits began. From there the party only has to present themselves and their captives (or what's left of them) to the arena, or just the first Watch patrol that happens by — which will escort them to the arena. Their reward of $9,000 (if all the gladiators, plus Simeon, were turned in for the bounty) is paid on the spot, in gold. The party is closely questioned about the capture, but if they stick to the story Xeno gave them, the officials won't press it.

The gladiators and Simeon will be returned to the arena, where they'll be sentenced to fight in hopelessly unequal matches against horrible monsters or whole squads of professional gladiators. All will be dead within the month.

Betrayal!

When the party reaches the rendezvous, it is met by an ambush of Syndic operatives led by Xeno (the number of opponents should be chosen by the GM to seriously threaten the party, without being completely hopeless).

Xeno holds back from combat, and if the fight is going against his men, he flees to report the defeat to his superiors. Any surviving gladiators seize this opportunity to attempt escape, perhaps providing the party with a badly-needed diversion.

If the party survives the encounter, Simeon (if still present and conscious) renews his offer to let the adventurers join the fugitives in their escape. If the party refuses, they have to find their own way to the surface. Simeon could show them the way, but doesn't. If tortured, he cheerfully leads both the party and the fugitives into the granddaddy of all alligator pits, rather than face the "justice" of the city.

If they attempt to find their own way to the surface, they face a challenge. Finding their way requires a successful roll vs. one of the following: IQ-12, Tracking-7 or Civil Engineering-7. Figure the best such roll in the party, and roll vs. that value once per day (if any member of the party has Absolute Direction, add +2 to the roll). Each day spent searching for the exit, the GM should roll 1d — on a 3 to 5 the party encounters a party of Syndic searchers, similar to the ambush above. On a 6 they acquire two such parties. If the critically succeed in their search roll, they find the exit first thing that day, and the GM does not roll for an encounter with the Syndic that day.

Once on the surface, the party can then collect their bounty (if they still have any fugitives to present). However, they've also acquired the organization as an Enemy on 12 or less, anywhere in the country. They're well advised to get on a ship going somewhere far, far away, as soon as possible.

Nurrien

Age 72 (appears 20); short silver-blond hair and hazel eyes; 5' 9" 155 lbs.

ST 10, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 11.

Speed 7.5, Move 7.

Dodge 7, Parry 8, Block 7.

Advantages: Alertness +2, Animal Empathy, Attractive, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Magical Aptitude 1, Night Vision.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper, Bloodlust, Severe Shyness, Unluckiness.

Quirks: Despises everything about humans; Vegetarian.

Skills: Animal Handling-15, Bow-15, Brawling-14, Buckler-13, Camouflage-13, Climbing-13, Falconry-16, Fast-Draw (arrow)-14, Jumping-13, Knife-13, Knife Throwing-13, Lasso-13, Leatherworking-13, Naturalist-12, Poisons-12, Running-12, Shortsword-14, Stealth-14, Survival (forest)-12, Swimming-14, Tracking-14, Veterinary-15, Woodworking-12.

Spells: Apportation-12, Blur-12, Clumsiness-12, Continual Light-12, Create Water-12, Darkness-12, Dehydrate-12, Destroy Water-12, Haste-12, Hush-12, Itch-12, Lend Health-12, Lend Strength-12, Light-12, Minor Healing-12, Pain-12, Paralyze Limb-12, Poltergeist-12, Purify Water-12, Recover Strength-12, Seek Food-12, Seek Water-12, Shape Water-12, Silence-12, Sound-12, Spasm-12, Strike Blind-12, Strike Dumb-12, Tanglefoot-12, Test Food-12, Total Paralysis-12, Umbrella-12, Winged Knife-12.

Continued on next page . . .

Nurrien (Continued)

A Half-Elf from the wildwood, Nurrien's home was razed by a human lord who wanted to build a hunting lodge. Most of the Elves just pulled up stakes and retreated before the human advance, but Nurrien stayed and fought — until she was caught.

She's a small, delicate, attractive woman. She looks like she's in her early 20s, but could be a century or two old — she won't talk about her age or any other personal details. She survived the Grand Elimination, against all odds, through a series of lucky draws in the early rounds, combined with sheer merciless determination to survive. She fights with shortsword and buckler.

Nurrien has always had an attitude problem about humans, which the destruction of her home has raised to near-paranoia. She doesn't even like her fellow gladiators. If the party and the gladiators join forces, she's the most suspicious and unpleasant of the gladiators, and will likely react violently to any would-be human Romeos. On the other hand, if the party contains an Elf, Nurrien will attach herself to the Elf with near-canine devotion.

Simeon has loaned her his extra Powerstone, a three-pointer mounted in a locket.

The Big Battle

The GM can use the chart below as a rough guideline of how many separate engagements make the final confrontation with the gladiators. The vertical axis is the average point value of the PCs, the horizontal axis is the number of PCs. When cross-indexed, they give the suggested number of encounters for the final battle. (For other factors that the GM needs to consider in planning the final battle, see the maintext). A dash (—) means that this adventure, as written, is not recommended for a party of that size and power.

	5 or less	6 or 7	8+
100-150	—	3	2
151-200	3	2	1
200+	2	1	—

If the Party Loses

If the gladiators defeat their hunters, it's not necessarily the end of the PCs, or even the end of the adventure. Simeon is no murderer, and he uses his magic and skills to heal any foe seriously wounded in the fight. He then gives the party a chance to join the fugitives in their flight, as above. This is either because he's letting his missionary zeal get ahead of his common sense, or because he's checked the party's aura and likes what he sees. Simeon's no fool, however. He uses Truthsayer, Compel Truth and his Detect Lies skill to make sure that the party is sincere. If they decide to join, skip to the section marked *If the Party Joins the Gladiators*.

If the group doesn't join, Simeon leaves them behind. The Dye spell has almost worn off — some of the gladiators look completely normal, the rest have faded to a delicate lilac. The gladiators are preparing to make their final escape from the city. The adventurers are securely bound and guarded constantly. Simeon sees to it that spellcasting is completely impossible. When the gladiators are ready to leave, Simeon attempts to put the PCs magically to sleep. If that fails, he uses his medical supplies to drug those who are still awake — roll vs. HT-3 or lose consciousness, no side effects. If *that* fails, a gladiator efficiently clubs still-wakeful adventurers into unconsciousness (the victim takes 1d real damage).

Once they wake, the party is able to free themselves in 3d hours, or 1d hours if an Escape roll is made. A critical success on an Escape roll allows the party to have a chance of catching the fleeing fugitives — see below for details on the escape route.

If the characters return to the rendezvous point alone, they are met by Xeno, who demands a full report. Xeno is not necessarily angry at the failure of the mission — the party's $1,000 more than paid the Syndic's expenses, and the party has provided him with some solid leads to pursue as he continues his hunt for Simeon. He'll probably put the defeat down to fortunes of war, and lead the party to the surface, with a stern warning against discussing *any* of their experiences below, with *anybody*. He emphasizes that an attempt to collect the "information leading to the capture" portion of the bounty would be particularly foolish.

If, however, for some reason the GM feels that the characters haven't had a bad enough day already, he can have Xeno lead them into an ambush.

If the Party Joins the Gladiators

If, for whatever reason, the hunters have a change of heart and decide to join their prey, they can do so. This agreement must be sincere — barring extraordinary magical defenses, Simeon *knows* if a PC is attempting to con him.

The extended party travels in the guise of the itinerant gang of agricultural workers. This means they cannot wear their armor or carry any weapon larger than a knife. They store their arms and armor in a large pushcart, which Groby pushes. He and Cee can easily carry the cart over stairs or other obstacles.

At the rear of Simeon's apartment is a secret door leading to a narrow tunnel 300 yards long. The tunnel ends at another secret door (the door is only concealed from one side — it's easily visible from the side the escapees are approaching from).

This door opens onto one of the empire's most secret secrets, the Imperial escape tunnel, running directly from the Emperor's chambers to a point almost 5 miles outside of the city. Simply knowing of the tunnel's existence is a capital

crime — actually speaking of it is cause for lengthy torture first. The tunnel is patrolled regularly by officers of the emperor's personal bodyguard of Reptile Men (see p. F45), but Simeon has carefully chosen a time when an inspection is most unlikely. If it is so much as suspected that criminals are using the Imperial escape tunnel, there would be a manhunt that would make the earlier search look like an Easter-egg hunt. The tunnel is broad, solid, and almost completely straight and level.

If the GM wishes to spice up the trip down the tunnel, the group may be overtaken and attacked by 15 to 20 Syndic operatives, perhaps led by Xeno. This is a clean-up party dispatched to follow in the PCs' tracks, and evaluate their success. The tunnel carries sound quite well, and the fugitives will be aware of the pursuers' approach long before they see them. They have a full minute from the first successful hearing perception roll to prepare to meet the attack.

The tunnel ends at a huge stone door. Once unbarred, the door swings out on its hinges effortlessly. From the outside, the door is cunningly designed to look like the rocky hillside. The only way to rebar the door from the outside is with Apportation or similar magic — note that the Nurrien has the Apportation spell in her grimoire. If this is not available (or if the escapees left any Syndic corpses rotting in the tunnel), the Emperor will soon know that the security of his escape route has been breached. However, if the party stays to Simeon's schedule, they should be out of the country before anything comes of the discovery.

The plan is for the fugitives to rendezvous in two nights' time with a smuggler's ship in a secret bay south of the city. They travel by night and spend the day in a secret refuge Simeon knows.

Each night, the party has to fight or (preferably) avoid Imperial horse patrols. Treat the patrols as watch, except they fight from horseback, with spears and shields. (Riding 13, Shield 12). Each patrol consists of 1d +1 individuals.

Their refuge for the day is a concealed cellar below an abandoned woodcutter's hut, in a small forest. The fugitives might take a fright during the day, when a 5-man horse patrol stops on the front lawn for lunch. After the meal, one of the patrolmen casually checks the inside of the building, but if the fugitives keep quiet and don't do anything stupid, the patrolmen go about their business none the wiser. Otherwise, the group is discovered and the patrolmen ride off in an attempt to raise a posse.

If all goes well, the group arrives at the smuggler's cove on schedule, at two hours past midnight on the second night. They find the fast smuggler's ship loaded and waiting for them. If they are delayed past an hour before dawn, the ship sails without them, and they face the intimidating prospect of an arduous land journey to safety.

If they make the rendezvous, there is one final complication — the smuggler

René

Age 32; dark curly hair and moustache; 6' 0", 190 lbs.

ST 11, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 11.

Move 6, Speed 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 8, Block 6.

Advantages: Acute Hearing +2, Appearance: Attractive, Charisma +2, Combat Reflexes, Language Talent +2, Literacy, Musical Ability +5, Voice.

Disadvantages: Alcoholism (legal), Lecherousness, Odious Personal Habit: obnoxious and insulting when drunk, Truthfulness.

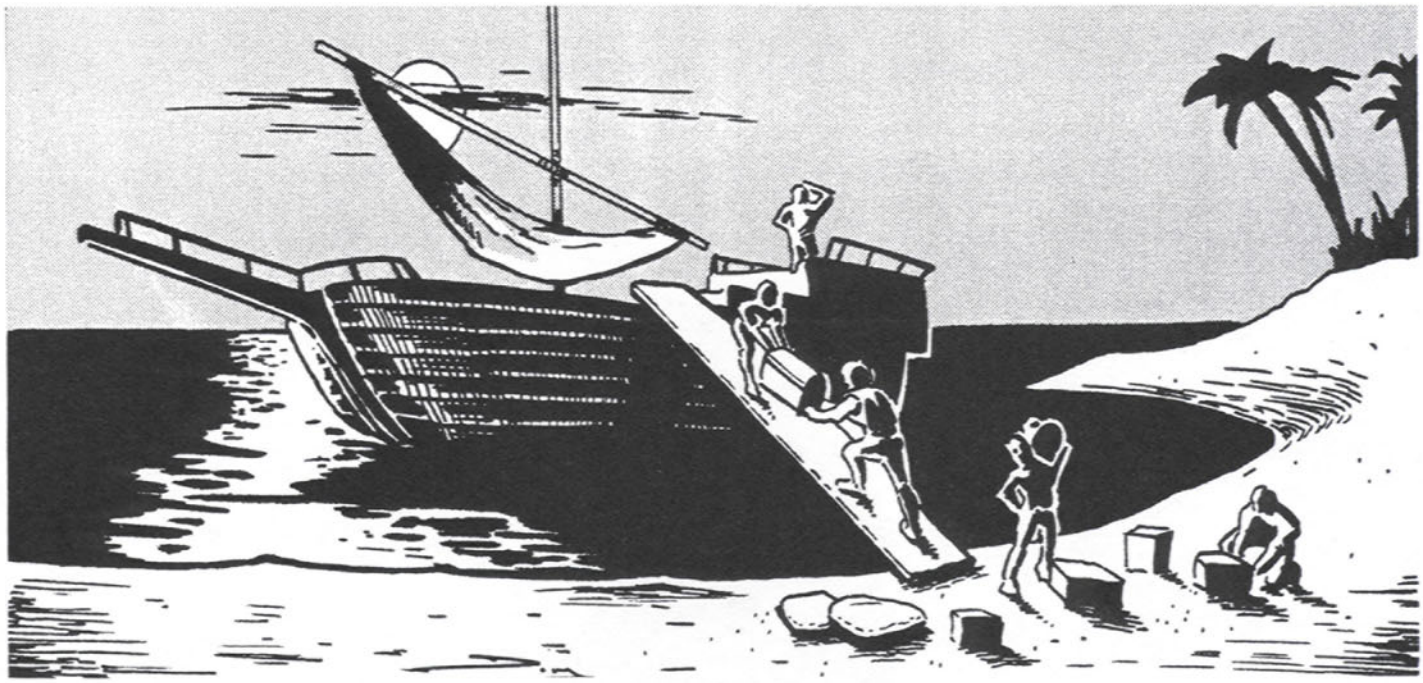
Quirks: Dislikes beer, prefers wine; Sometimes adopts a slight French accent; Very careful of his appearance; Waxes his moustache; Sings in battle.

Skills: Acting-12, Bard-20, Brawling-13, Broadsword-17, Carousing-12, Climbing-12, Dancing-12, Diplomacy-13, Disguise-12, Fast-Talk-13, Fast-Draw (sword)-14, First Aid-13, Fishing-13, Gesture-13, Heraldry-12, History-11, Holdout-12, Knife-14, Knife Throwing-15, Language (GM's option)-15, Language (GM's option)-16, Linguistics-12, Lip Reading-12, Literature-11, Musical Instrument (drum)-16, Musical Instrument (flute)-18, Musical Instrument (harp)-20, Naturalist-11, Performance-15, Poetry-12, Research-12, Riding (horse)-12, Savoir-Faire-15, Scrounging-13, Sex Appeal-12, Shield-13, Singing-20, Stealth-12, Streetwise-12, Survival (woodland)-12, Swimming-15, Teaching-13, Theology-11, Woodworking (optional specialization — musical instrument making)-12.

René is a traveling bard, and a good one. He's an excellent musician, a charismatic performer and a learned scholar. Unfortunately, he's also a drunk, and when he's in his cups, his naturally sharp wit often becomes offensive.

In his home country, this failing was tolerated, but he made the mistake of coming to the Imperial capital, then playing a noble's party while tipsy. He made a few hilarious (though accurate) remarks about his lordship's recreational habits, and ended the evening in the arena dungeons.

In addition to his artistic achievements, René is a nearly brilliant swordsman, which saw him through the grand elimination. When sober, he's a charming and charismatic companion. If the PCs and the gladiators join forces, René is probably the most likely of the gladiators to remain with the party after the adventure.



wants $300 per head for the extra passengers. Simeon will make up the difference if the PCs don't have enough on them.

The voyage takes three days. If the GM wants to throw in any encounters with pirates, Imperial Navy or sea monsters he may do so. Otherwise, the adventurers arrive safely at a foreign port (Bilit Island, if on Yrth).

At this point Simeon and the gladiators split up and go their separate ways. One or two gladiators might remain with the party for a time, as NPCs, or even replacement PCs for someone killed during the adventure.

Turning it Around

If the GM is willing to do a little work, he might prefer to run this adventure with the PCs in the role of the gladiators.

If played as part of an ongoing campaign, the GM is advised to do away with the idea of the Grand Elimination entirely — the odds of the party surviving such an event intact are astronomical. Instead, the adventurers may be "fresh meat," just sent to the arena as punishment for infractions (real or trumped up) against the empire, selected more or less at random by Simeon for his grand gesture.

Alternately, for a high-powered one-shot adventure, the players can take the roles of the gladiators above, with the adventure beginning during the tournament (the bouts can either be roleplayed, with the PCs facing off against challenging but inferior opponents, or the bouts can take place "off stage," with the PCs dealing with Simeon's inside man to plan the escape between their victories).

In either case, once the escape is made, the fugitives' job is to evade the watch patrols and Xeno and his goons while they wait for their skin to return to its normal shade and make good their escape.

Other Adventures

The Hunter and the Hunted

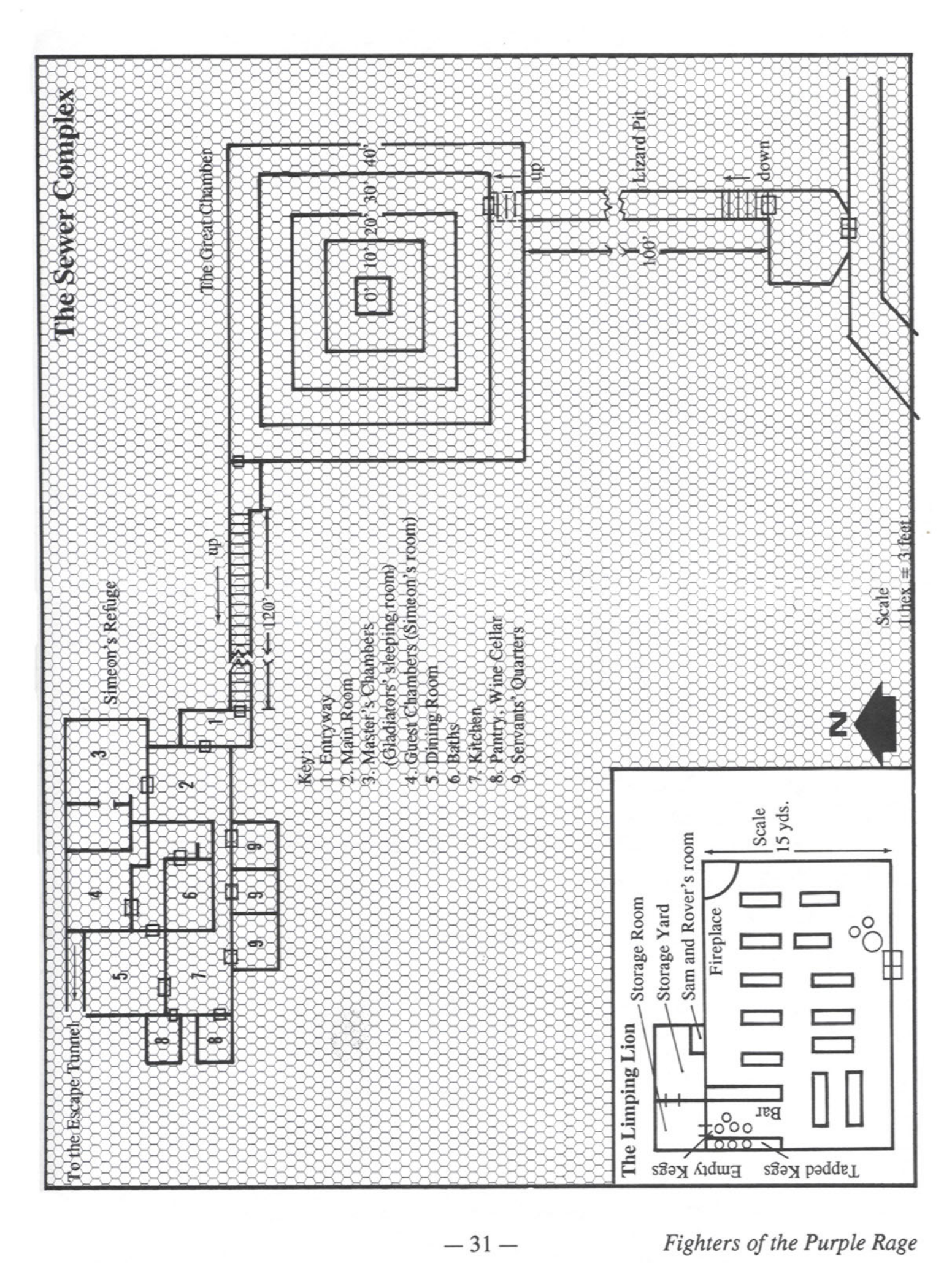
If the party returns some or all of the gladiators to the arena intact, most will be dead in a matter of weeks (see p. 27). But it could happen that one of the gladiators escapes this fate — in which case he'd certainly seek revenge on the adventurers who sent him back to the arena. Likely candidates for avenger are Marlon, Jaim and Nurrien.

On the other hand, if the party decides to escape along with the gladiators, they might also acquire a nemesis — perhaps an assassin hired by the Syndic, or even Xeno himself, shamed in the eyes of his superiors by the PC's betrayal, seeking to redeem himself by destroying the architects of his disgrace.

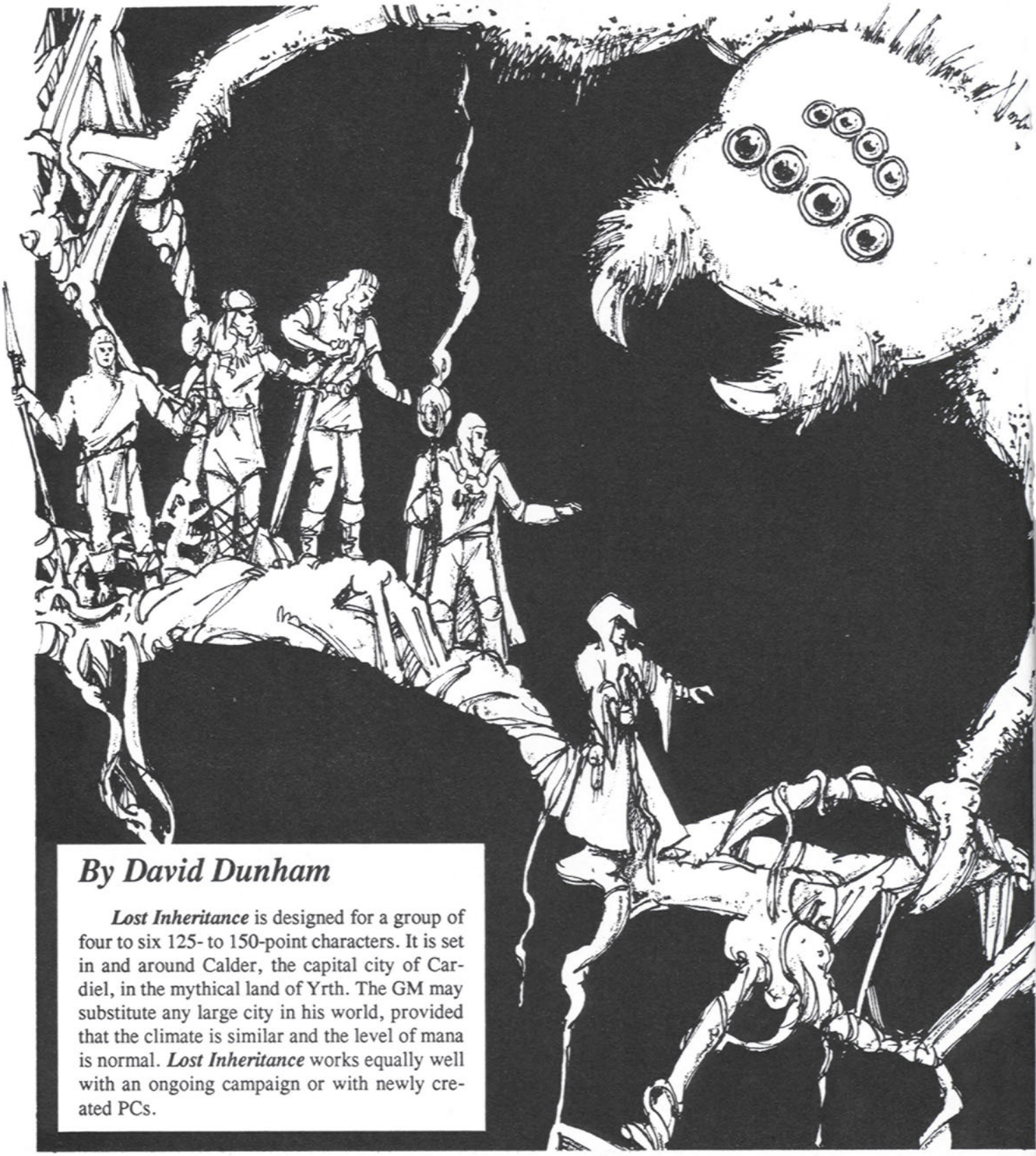
Deep Cover

After the capture of the gladiators, the adventurers are approached by a young noble, who offers them a small fortune if they can insinuate themselves into the Syndic and bring back a detailed report of activities Below (he might well be especially interested in the reports of Syndic-sponsored necromantic activity; see the sidebar, pp. 14-15).

If the PCs think of it, they might well provisionally accept the offer, then go straight to Xeno, tell him they've been approached to spy on the organization, and by whom, and offer to be double agents, feeding the government only that information which the Syndic wants the government to have. Xeno would certainly find such a Machiavellian scheme attractive . . .


The Sewer Complex
To the Escape Tunnel
Simeon's Refuge
The Great Chamber
0'
10'
20'
30'
40'
up
Lizard Pit
100'
down
120'
Key:
1. Entryway
2. Main Room
3. Master's Chambers (Gladiators' sleeping room)
4. Guest Chambers (Simeon's room)
5. Dining Room
6. Baths
7. Kitchen
8. Pantry, Wine Cellar
9. Servants' Quarters
Scale
1 hex = 3 feet
N
The Limping Lion
Storage Room
Storage Yard
Sam and Rover's room
Fireplace
Scale
15 yds.
Bar
Empty Kegs
Tapped Kegs

2 LOST INHERITANCE



By David Dunham

Lost Inheritance is designed for a group of four to six 125- to 150-point characters. It is set in and around Calder, the capital city of Cardiel, in the mythical land of Yrth. The GM may substitute any large city in his world, provided that the climate is similar and the level of mana is normal. ***Lost Inheritance*** works equally well with an ongoing campaign or with newly created PCs.

Since the adventure incorporates a good deal of magic, one of the party members should have at least one level of Magical Aptitude (it is even better if one is a trained wizard). Other skills and advantages may also be useful. The GM can suggest as many of the following as he wishes:

Advantages

- Magical Aptitude
- Danger Sense
- Common Sense
- Night Vision
- Literacy

Skills

- Horse Riding
- Singing
- Swimming
- Climbing
- Diplomacy
- Fast-Talk
- Streetwise
- Escape
- General Weapon Skills

Getting Started

The adventure begins at the Inn of Seven Shades, a notorious night spot in one of Calder's semi-affluent sections. Getting the party to the starting point is a recurring GM dilemma — a too-obvious ploy reeks of manipulation, yet subtlety often leaves the characters scratching their heads in the town square, discussing the merits of stealing horses for a living. Here are a few suggestions:

The Meeting

One of the characters wants to form an adventuring/mercenary group. He has put advertisements around the city inviting anyone interested to meet at the inn at a certain time (the GM can also use this to introduce annoying NPCs who have no recognizable skills, yet desperately want to join the group).

The Social Event

There is a party/show/assembly/fight at the inn that the members of the party have been invited to (or wish to attend).

The Mutual Friend

All of the party members have a mutual friend who invites them to the inn for a drink and maybe to give them some useful information (this is also a good way to get the party on the right track if they aren't very good at or are not interested in picking up rumors).

Certainly, the GM can use his imagination to make up any interesting and believable story. Once the characters have made it to the inn, the adventure begins.

The Inn of Seven Shades

Calder is one of the largest and most diverse cities in Yrth, and the Seven Shades is the largest and most diverse inn in the city. It is always crowded and reeks of sweat, blood, ale and food. Merchants and tradesmen congregate to the

About the Author

Born on the East Coast, David Dunham has wandered considerably. He was a Texas gamer during the early days of the hobby, coming in almost on the ground floor — his *Space Gamer* subscription tarted with #2. (This adventure first appeared in issue 6 of *Fantasy Gamer*.)

He now lives in Seattle, where he works as a software designer. He was one of the creators of *Acta* for the Macintosh.

David has few chances for face-to-face roleplaying any longer, but still spends time on Compuserve. His ideal game would be one with no rules at all.

Encounters at the Inn

The Inn of Seven Shades is a huge two-story building, sturdily constructed of wood and stone. It is the main hub of after-dark activity in the southern section of Calder. It is likely that the party will run into some interesting people when they visit the inn. These NPCs can spice up the introduction to the adventure and give them a little breathing room before they launch off into the quest.

Graydor

Graydor is the Seven Shades' large, surly downstairs bartender. He keeps the mugs full and the fights from getting out of hand. He is known for his booming voice and his predilection for telling wild stories of adventure. He is of medium height, stocky and muscular. Any PC who gets involved in a tavern brawl will end up dealing with Graydor. His specialty is silencing loud tavern drunks from across the room with a beer stein to the head.

Age 30; brown hair, blue eyes; 5' 9", 220 lbs.
ST 16, DX 15, IQ 11, HT 14.
Basic Speed 7.25, Move 7.
Dodge 7, Parry 8.
No armor or encumbrance.
Advantages: Voice, High Pain Threshold, Combat Reflexes.
Disadvantages: Compulsive Liar, Overconfidence.
Skills: Brawling-22, Broadsword-17, Carousing-17, Cooking-16, Fast-Talk-15, Throwing (beer steins)-16.
Weapon: Club, 3d-1 crushing; Beer steins, 1d+2 crushing.

Continued on next page . . .

Encounters (Continued)

Piskin

Piskin is a weasel-like gambler who always has one hand on the dice and one on his victim's cash. Piskin is feared throughout the gambling community for his uncanny ability to win almost any bet. He enjoys preying on unsuspecting adventurers who don't know his reputation.

Age 34; dark skin, black hair, and beady black eyes; 5' 4", 145 lbs.
ST 9, DX 12, IQ 16, HT 10.
Basic Speed 5.5, Move 5.
Dodge 5, Parry 8.
No armor or encumbrance.
Advantages: Lightning Calculator, Extraordinary Luck.
Disadvantages: Greed, Reputation (-1 among gamblers), Odious Personal Habit (picking his nose in public).
Skills: Carousing-10, Fast-Talk-17, Gambling-25, Knife-16, Savoir-Faire-16, Stealth-15, Streetwise-17.
Weapon: Large Knife, 1d-2 impaling.

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second floor where the ale is a bit more expensive and the wenches a bit less ugly, leaving the first floor to the hardier (and perhaps less honest) folk.

On this day, the first floor is packed with the usual lot: hardy fighters, scheming gamblers, con-artists, mysterious loners, obnoxious drunks and a few off-duty guards. It is the perfect atmosphere for an intrepid party of adventurers to scout for rumors. There is also room for a small diversion or two if the GM doesn't want the adventure to go too quickly — see sidebars, pp. 33-35, for some possible encounters at the inn.

A successful Streetwise roll+2 (or exceptional roleplaying) reveals a very interesting rumor. It appears a furniture maker in a nearby town is offering $8,000 for the recovery of lost family valuables. The job seems simple — almost too simple for such a handsome payoff. But if there is a catch, the PCs will have to pursue the matter to find out.

Upon further questioning, the party finds out that the reward is being offered by a fat, jolly craftsman named Oinet, who lives with his wife Nazru in Tin Hill, a town only 60 miles to the west. It is the perfect opportunity to help a local craftsman and make a healthy profit in the bargain.

The Road to Tin Hill

Tin Hill is a four-day journey on foot — two days by horse. The traveling is easy because the land around Calder consists of small rolling hills dotted with grass, scrub brush and a few small trees. In the valleys, there are copses of cedar and elm. The road is clear and busy, but if the travelers think to ask, they will learn that there are rumors of banditry in the area.

On the morning the group departs, the day is warm and blustery (if the party chooses to travel at night, skip this section and see the sidebars, pp. 36-37, for potential night encounters). The morning passes without incident; however, around noon, a successful Vision roll+2 will alert a PC to black clouds clustering on the horizon — a storm is coming and by the looks of it, a big one (if the roll is missed, the storm comes up very quickly and catches the party by surprise). The party can either set up camp early and wait out the storm or take their

chances and trudge onward. At this point the GM should make an IQ roll for anyone with the Common Sense or Danger Sense advantages. A successful roll gives that PC a strong desire to set up camp early. If the party chooses this action, skip to the section marked *Meeting with Mazuka.*

Facing the Storm

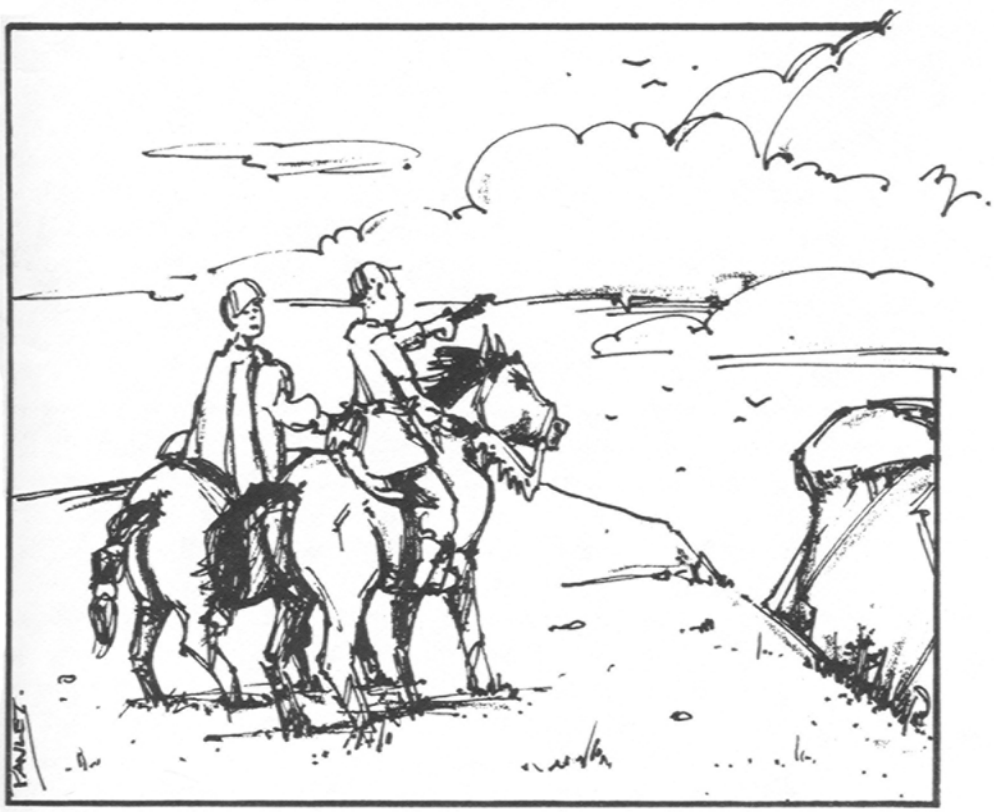
The storm arrives 30 minutes later. If the characters choose to continue traveling, their speed is halved and they become subject to the storm's dangers. The GM may choose any combination of the following options or make up his own. Note that the party can avoid some of these by stopping early — but if the party isn't careful where it sets up camp, there are still those flash floods . . .

Mudslide!

After a few hours of rain, the road turns to a muddy mess. On a steep section of the road, the surface gives way and the party is caught in a mudslide. PCs must make a successful Climbing skill roll (DX-4) to avoid being caught in the slide and taking 1d crushing damage from rocks and mud. A critical failure means that the victim has been buried and must be dug out. Anyone who is buried suffocates as if drowning (see p. B91). Anyone on horseback must make a Riding skill roll at -4. If he fails this roll, he falls and is automatically caught in the slide (see above). A critical failure means he has taken a crippling injury from the fall. For any horses without riders, make a DX roll for the horse to keep it from also being caught in the slide and taking 1d crushing damage.

Lightning Strike

During an electrical storm, metal armor acts like a lightning rod. Anyone in chain, scale or plate mail has a 1 in 6 chance *per hour* of getting hit by lightning and taking 2d crushing damage (armor does not protect!). Travelers within 4 yards of a strike also take damage; subtract 3 points per yard of distance from the strike. Non-armored travelers are vulnerable to direct strikes if they are more than 4 yards from someone in metal armor, but the chance drops to 1 in 20 (5 or



Encounters (Continued)

Dirne

Dirne is a belligerent city guardsman who is intent on "testing the mettle" of some young, inexperienced fighter. He walks around the tavern, slapping anyone wearing armor on the back, and dishing out insults like, "Where did you learn to hang a scabbard? Sahud?" or "I gave a sword like that one as a gift once. Yeah, as a toy for my son."

Dirne will accept almost any challenge to non-lethal combat to be held in the street in front of the inn. If given a choice, he will suggest hand-to-hand combat, "like real men fight."

Age 29; Red-faced with short blond hair and a mustache, blue eyes; 6' 1", 210 lbs.

ST 15, DX 16, IQ 9, HT 12.

Basic Speed 7, Move 6.

Dodge 9, Parry (varies by weapon type), Block 8.

PD 3, DR 5 (Chainmail + Toughness 1), light encumbrance.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Toughness 1, High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Bully, Intolerance, Bad Temper.

Skills: Broadsword-20, Fencing-15, Karate-17, Shield-15, Whip-16.

Weapons: Broadsword (2d+2 cutting, 1d+2 impaling); Saber (2d+1 cutting, 1d+2 impaling); Whip (1d+3 crushing).

Dirne's punches do 2d+1 crushing; his kicks do 3d crushing.

The GM should also feel free to make up his own NPCs to populate the Inn of Seven Shades.

Potential Night Encounters

If the party travels at night, it will avoid the problems of the storm and the thieves (Mazuka will not attempt a robbery in the daytime). However, there are other dangers — dangers that abound during the hours of darkness. The following are a few suggestions for nighttime encounters.

Wolves

The GM rolls an IQ roll for any character with the Danger Sense advantage. If the roll is successful, the PC has the eerie feeling that the group is being watched or followed. It is.

The GM makes a vision roll for all the characters — at -4 for the darkness (except for any PCs who sensed the danger earlier; their Vision roll is only at -2). Successful rolls indicate that the party is surrounded by wolves (see p. B144). There are the same number of wolves as members in the party. If the party continues to move steadily along the road, the wolves will move with them, always keeping a distance of fifteen yards. If the party stops, or threatens the wolves in any way, they will attack. If the wolves haven't had cause to attack the party by dawn, they will lope off in search of other prey.

Continued on next page . . .

less on 3d). If a PC is struck while riding a horse, the horse also takes 2d crushing damage. Any strike within 30 yards (including direct hits) spooks the horses (see p. B136); on a 9 or less on 3d, lightning has struck nearby.

Flash Flood

The road passes through several low-lying areas that are prone to flooding. An unlucky party may find itself in the path of one. Successful Hearing and IQ roll (a PC must make both) or a successful Survival skill roll for the appropriate terrain will warn the party in time to get clear of the deluge. Otherwise, the flood hits the group, and each PC must make a Swimming roll at -2 to avoid being swept away (the current is moving at 25 mph). Those on horseback do not have to make a swimming roll as long as they can remain mounted (Riding roll at -4), but their horses are definitely spooked (see p. B136). Anyone who is swept away by the flood is drowning (see p. B91).

By nightfall, the storm dies down to a drizzle. A campfire will be difficult without magic as there is no dry wood anywhere. However, a successful Survival skill roll and perseverance will produce one. As the party settles in for sleep, talking or eating, they are visited by a stranger.

Meeting With Mazuka

A man dressed in brightly colored (although rain-soaked) carnival clothes enters the camp near nightfall. He introduces himself as Mazuka and tells the party that he got lost in the storm and separated from his troupe on its way to a festival in Calder. He is in need of warmth and food, in exchange for which he will tell the group of his adventures (a successful Detect Lies roll will reveal that he is not being truthful).

Mazuka is a master storyteller (Bard skill of 24), and if the party agrees, he rants on about extraordinary travels and strange lands. Skilled in illusion magic, Mazuka illustrates his stories with Complex Illusions (see p. M45), weaving an enthralling story that the characters cannot seem to ignore. For a PC to break his attention away from Mazuka's tale, he must win a Quick Contest of Skills between Mazuka's Bard skill and the PC's Will+2. The Danger Sense advantage

gives the party member an additional +2 to his Will roll. If someone manages to break away from the story and looks around the camp, he will see that the party is being robbed!

There are four bandits loading up anything not on someone's body. If Mazuka is challenged at any time during his tale, the bandits flee with whatever they already have (Mazuka will talk for two hours if not interrupted). If the thieves are challenged, they will fight, but only until they see an opportunity to escape. If Mazuka hasn't been challenged after two hours, he will rise and say, "I bid you a kind farewell." He invokes a blinding flash of light (as per Flash spell, p. M49) and runs to his horse to ride off.

The party may choose to pursue. The bandit's horses are 30 yards outside of the camp. Once mounted, the thieves ride full speed to their camp — two miles away. Ten bandits are waiting a mile outside of camp to ambush the party if they follow directly. If the ten are defeated, the party can proceed to the bandit camp, descibed in detail below.

The Bandit Camp

The bandit camp is a clear, flat area surrounded by a half-circle fence on one side (8' high and made of cedar logs) and a 40' cliff face on the other. There is

Night Encounters (Continued)

Bandit Patrol

The GM makes a Vision roll for the PCs. A successful roll means the PC spots a faint light in the distance. It is so far off that only a successful IQ roll will indicate that the light is some sort of small fire, probably a campfire. It is 800 yards off the road to the right.

This is the small camp of a bandit patrol. Five of Mazuka's bandits who were scouting for potential victims have settled down for the night. If the party sends someone up to the camp to spy, a successful Stealth roll will allow them to reach the outside of the camp unnoticed. The following conversation can be heard.

"What're they doing with the old lady?"

"Holdin' her for ransom, you fool."

"Ransom?" The bandit pauses. "Who is she that she's worth money?"

"You know the old wine merchant, Triedle?"

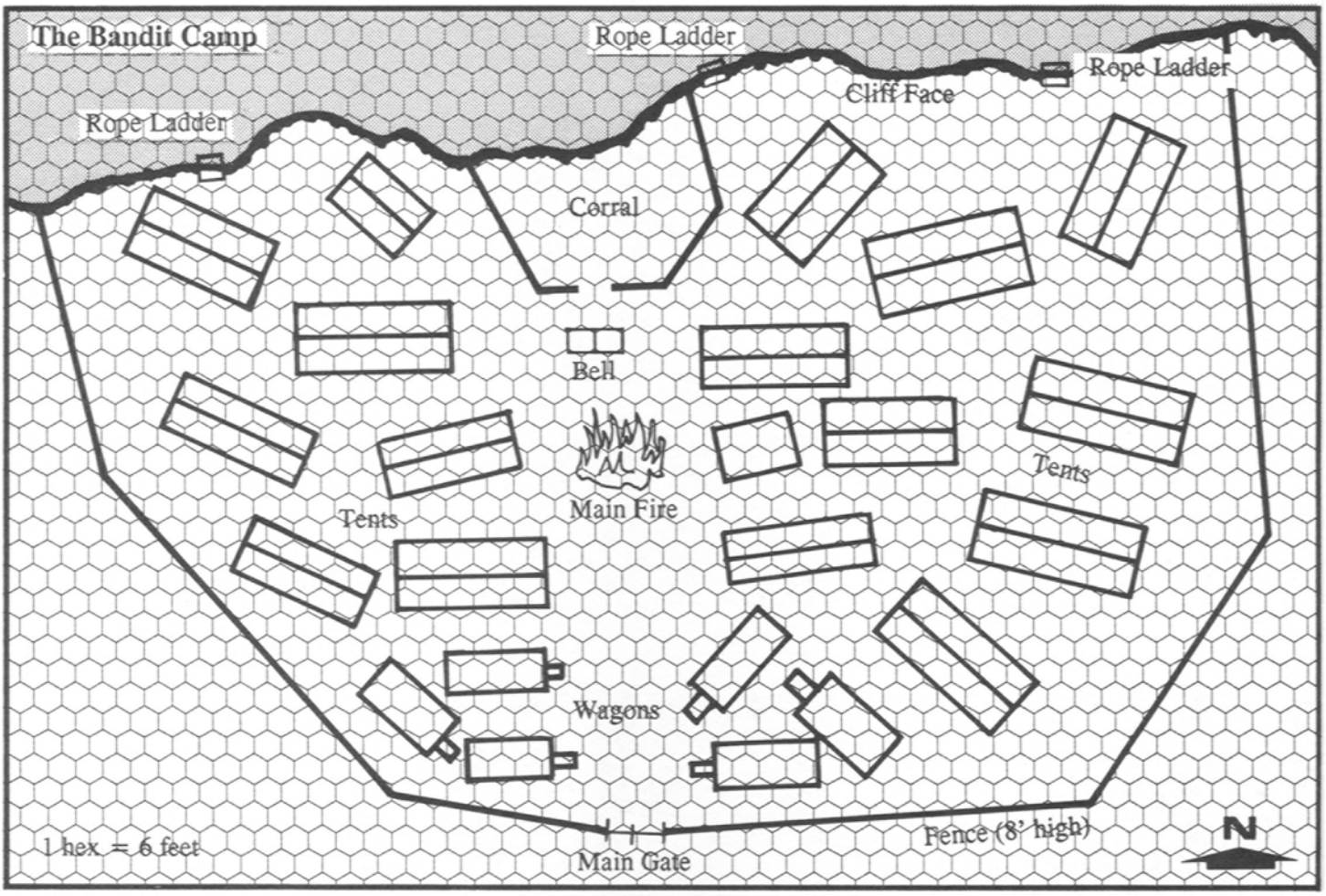
"Yeah."

"That's his wife. She should fetch a pretty pouch."

"Well, that Triedle's got the money all right, but will he pay?"

"Good question, my friend, good question. But speaking of wine — pass me the flagon . . ."

The conversation drifts into talk of wine and the merits of certain disreputable drinking establishments. The bandits go to sleep an hour later, leaving one awake as a guard. The guard changes every two hours, and the bandits leave for the main camp at dawn.



one gate that normally has four guards posted at it, but will have eight if Mazuka's bandits arrive before the party. Four more guards patrol the cliff wall, and two walk a beat on the inside of the fence. Three rope ladders hang from the cliff to the floor of the camp (see map, above).

The camp contains 100 bandits (including Mazuka, his four assistants and the ten in ambush). There are 40 horses and three large wagons full of supplies (grain, fruit, dried meat, etc.). If the party arrives at night, 70 of the bandits will be asleep; the rest, including the guards, will be up. In the center of the camp is a large brass bell, which serves as an alarm and will wake *all* the bandits. If the guards sense any serious threats (like a group of adventurers scaling the fence) they attempt to reach the bell and wake their companions.

The Merchant's Wife

Tied up in one of the tents near the center of the camp is a woman named Bathausa. She is the wife of Triedle Goodman, a prominent merchant from Calder. She is being held for a $5,000 ransom by Mazuka. If any of the PCs are members of the Merchants' Guild or are City Guardsmen, they will know that there is a $2,000 reward for her safe return.

If the party rescues Bathausa and takes her back to Calder, Triedle will pay the $2,000 and offer the party members free lodging at his house for the rest of their lives.

The Party's Equipment

If Mazuka and his four assistants get to the camp ahead of the party, they store the stolen equipment in the tent next to Mazuka's. The tent also contains the following: A suit of man-sized chainmail (covers torso and arms), a bronze

If the Players Don't Cooperate

In any adventure, there is the possibility that, for whatever reason, the party decides not to follow the plot. Creative GMs will ad-lib until they can see what direction the players are going and bring the PCs back to the plot later in the adventure.

If the group decides not to pursue the reward offer (or is turned down by Oinet), there are still many ways to get them involved in the adventure. Mazuka and his bandits can show up at any time; they can gain other information leading to the Darkland entrance; or the party can stumble upon an entrance to the Darkland completely unconnected to Oinet or Riyan.

If some PCs do not enter the Darkland once they've found the entrance, then the GM will have to come up with a good way to get Sab past those who remain behind. Perhaps he creates a distraction and slips into the portal while the searchers are occupied. Or perhaps he just attacks the remaining PCs, his frustration taking him over the edge of his sanity.

breastplate (man-sized, PD 4, DR 4), a fine saber, three jeweled daggers (worth $200 each), 200 feet of good rope, a large oak chest, four leather backpacks, and four ceramic jugs of good wine.

Captured

If the party blunders its attempt to regain the equipment or rescue Bathausa, the heroes may be captured. Mazuka's bandits are instructed not to kill unless it is unavoidable. If the intruders are rendered unconscious, they will be healed and revived. All will be bound securely and kept in a tent to await interrogation (guarded by five bandits).

Mazuka questions the party personally. He is interested in exactly where the group is headed and what they are planning to do when they get there. If the party tells him about the quest in Tin Hill, Mazuka gets very interested. He confers privately with his guards for a moment (he is commanding that ten bandits follow the party and ambush them when they secure the inheritance). Two successful Lip-Reading rolls allow a PC to understand the message. After the brief conference, Mazuka returns the prisoners' equipment to them and sets them free. They are escorted back to the road by 20 guards.

If the party lies about its reasons for being on the road, Mazuka will be trying to detect lies (his skill level is 15). If the lie is detected, Mazuka gets very irate. He has the party knocked out and left for dead in the wilderness with no equipment. If Mazuka accepts the party's story, he lets them go with personal gear, but no weapons. He tells them to hope they never run into him again because next time he won't be as lenient.

The Sayke Bridge

After the party deals with Mazuka and continues toward Tin Hill, they arrive at the Sayke river, a large, spring-fed tributary to the Lorian. Because of the storm, the river is well up over its banks and the bridge is washed out. This is a formidable obstacle — the river is 30 yards across at its narrowest and the current is flowing at 20 mph. To cross, the PCs must come up with an ingenious solution. A few possibilities are listed below.

Swim. The current is strong, the river is deep, and the water is *cold!* Because of these factors, all swimming rolls are at -4. A failed roll means that the PC is swept away by the current and is drowning (see p. B91). Remember that any armor or equipment adds to a PCs encumbrance and affects Swimming rolls.

Swim the horses. If someone tries to swim a horse across, a Riding skill roll at -2 is needed just to get the horse to enter the water (the roll can be attempted once per hour). To get across, the rider must make another successful Riding roll, and a DX roll must be made for the horse. If either of these rolls fails, the rider must make a swimming roll or be swept away (see above).

Mazuka

Age 42; ruddy complexion, balding with a cropped white beard, brown eyes; 5' 8'' 165 lbs.

ST 9, DX 17, IQ 18, HT 12.

Basic Speed 7.25, Move 7.

No armor or encumbrance.

Reaction Bonus +4.

Advantages: Literacy, Voice, Charisma +2, Magery 2.

Disadvantages: Compulsive Liar, Greed, Enemy (Calder City Guard).

Skills: Area Knowledge (Calder and countryside)-15, Bard-24, Detect Lies-15, Disguise-18, Fast-Talk-20, Horse Riding-16, Knife-16, Lockpicking-18, Performance-23, Savoir-Faire-20, Sleight of Hand-18, Stealth-15, Streetwise-17.

Spells: Bravery-17, Charm-17, Complex Illusion-21, Continual Light-17, Daze-17, Mass Daze-17, Fear-17, Flash-25, Foolishness-17, Light-17, Light Jet-17, Loyalty-17, Panic-17, Simple Illusion-17, Sleep-17, Sound-17.

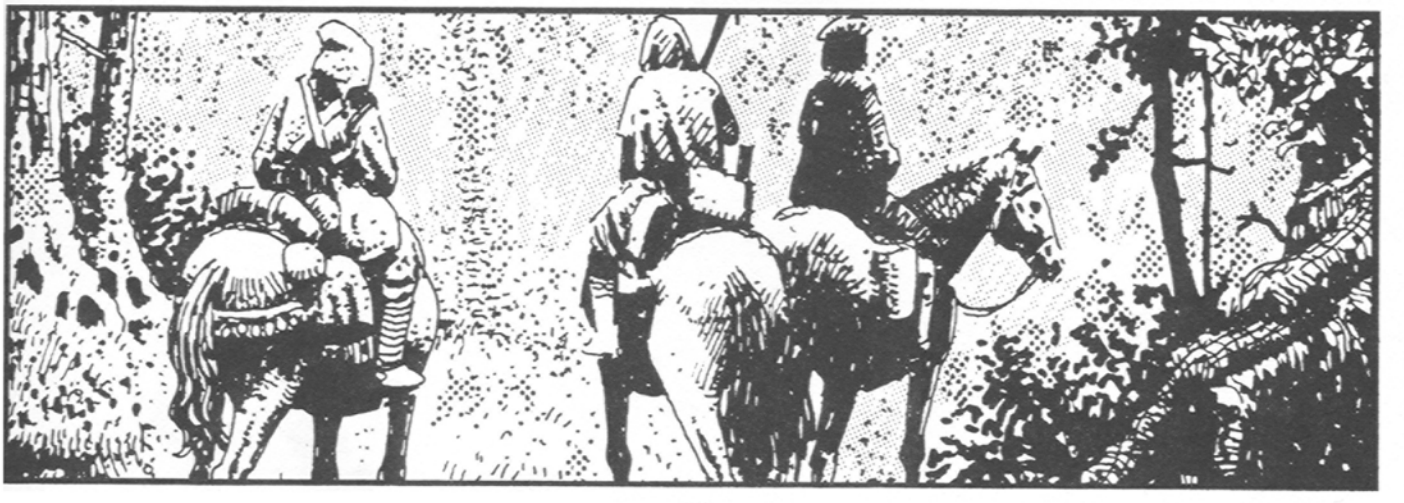
Weapons: Large Knife (hidden in his robes), 1d-3 cutting, 1d-2 impaling.

Mazuka is a tall, festively dressed entertainer and storyteller. He claims to work for the Dragon Electra Carnival Troupe. Unfortunately, he says, the storm separated him from his wagon, and he has lost his way in the confusion.

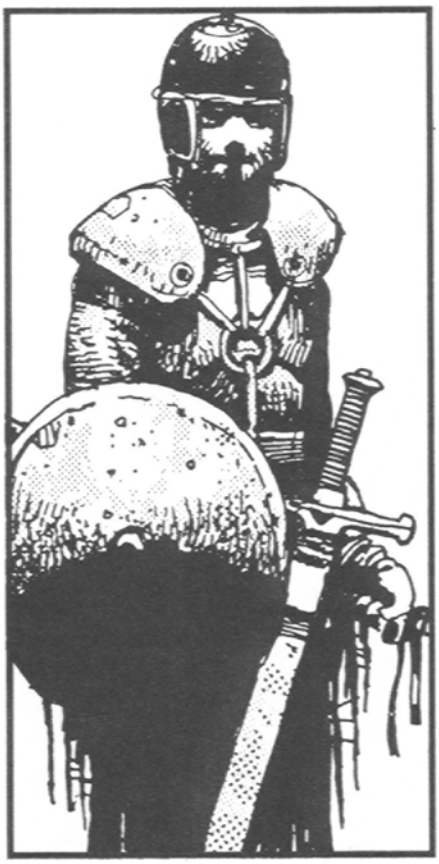
His *is* an entertainer, but he does his entertaining solely for personal gain. He is the leader of a large group of bandits who have a camp in the hills outside the city. His *modus operandi* is to surprise weary groups of travelers, offer to tell them of his adventures for food or warmth, and keep them enthralled with his stories and magic while his thieves clean the travelers out.

If Mazuka is faced with one opponent, he will attempt to charm him first and then put him to sleep with the Sleep spell.

Mazuka is wanted by the Calder City Guard for banditry. If he is captured and brought back alive, there is a $1,000 reward.



Makeshift bridge. The party could send a swimmer with a rope and construct a makeshift bridge. This way, if the swimmer fails his roll, the rest of the group can easily pull him out. If the swimmer gets across, the other characters can pull themselves across with a successful Strength roll. The GM should feel free to throw in some extra hazards to keep the PCs on their toes (logs, crocodiles, etc.).



There are many other solutions that the party may arrive at. Creative ones should be rewarded — foolish ones should meet with disaster.

After the Sayke River, the rest of the journey is uneventful. The party arrives at Tin Hill bedraggled and trail-worn. They are in need of a soft bed and some good ale. The Angry Goat Inn proves to be the perfect place for both (see the sidebar, p. 41, for a description).

Tin Hill

Tin Hill is one of the small herding towns typical to Cardiel's rolling grasslands. Its inhabitants are mostly herdsmen and craftsmen who take their goods into Calder for market. They are kind, simple folk who are very helpful when asked for information. When asked about Oinet, any of the townspeople pleasantly give directions to his shop.

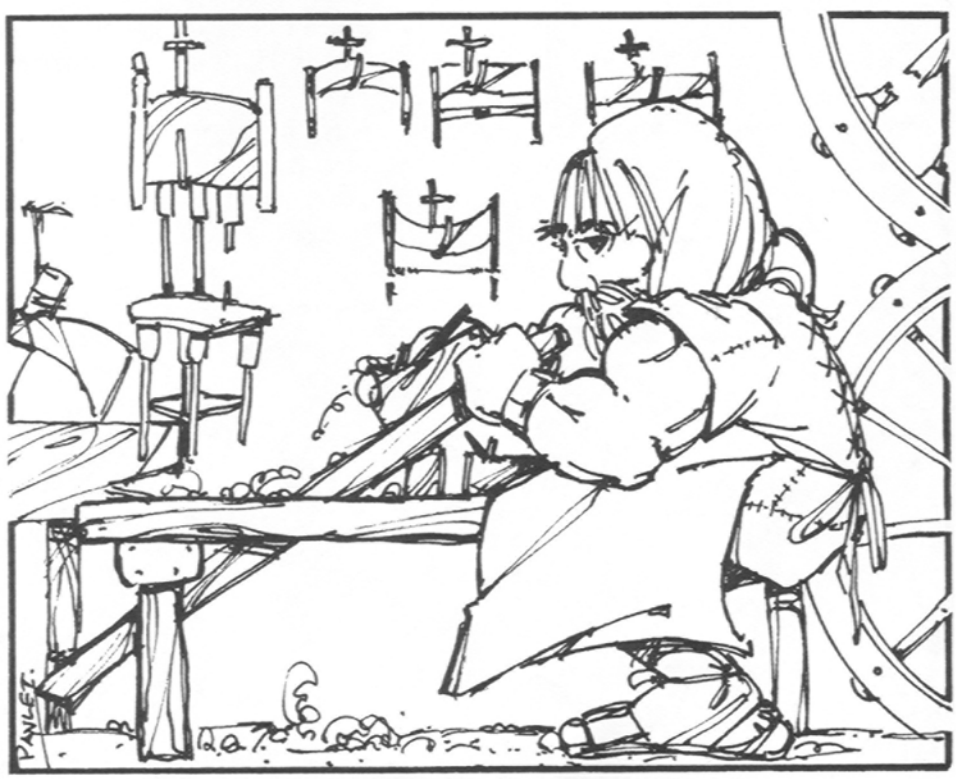
Oinet's Shop

As the party members enter the shop, they immediately notice the strong smell of sawdust and a dark-haired, burly man hammering loudly at a workbench. He is very surly-looking and responds to any questions with either a nod or a shake of the head. If asked, he will silently go into the back and return with Oinet. A successful IQ roll for the PCs will reveal that Oinet's assistant, Sab, is mute.

Oinet greets the party pleasantly, and once he knows the nature of the visit, he ushers the group into an alcove at the back of the shop, separated from the lobby by a cloth curtain. Anyone with the Woodworking skill will by extremely impressed by the quality of the finely carved wooden items that line the shelves

Typical Bandit

ST 12, DX 14, IQ 10, HT 10.
Basic Speed 6, Move 5.
Dodge 7, Parry 10.
Leather armor, PD 2, DR 2; light encumbrance.
Advantages: Patron (Mazuka), Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold.
Disadvantages: Sense of Duty (Mazuka); Social Stigma.
Skills: Area Knowledge (Calder and countryside)-14, Broadsword-16, Horse Riding-16, Pickpocket-15, Stealth-16.
Weapon: Broadsword, 2d-1 cutting.
Mazuka's bandits are a group of greedy fighters and thieves — most of them are wanted criminals from Calder. They are strongly loyal to Mazuka and will not accept bribes.



of this alcove. Even those unskilled in the art will sense the craftsmanship. As Oinet speaks to the PCs, he continues to work on his latest project, a delicate bedpost knob in the shape of a swan. Roll a reaction roll for Oinet for each of the PCs; it does not affect this initial conversation, but it will be important later.

Oinet is indeed looking for adventurers, and the questions the group closely to determine their qualifications. The GM should make this interview rigorous and sometimes intimate — Oinet wants to be sure he's got the right group. If anyone in the party says anything offensive or derogatory, either he or another PC needs to make a Diplomacy roll to smooth Oinet's ruffled feathers. If the roll fails, Oinet will politely turn the group down (they can still continue the adventure, though — see sidebar, *If the Players Don't Cooperate*, p. 38).

At one point in the interview, Oinet stops and glances mysteriously at the separating curtain. PCs who make a Hearing roll notice that Sab has not continued his work outside. Oinet then rises and says, "You seem like a fine group to me, but we can't discuss particulars on an empty stomach. Come to my house this evening for supper." He then gives the party directions to his house, and Sab begins to hammer again.

Oinet's Hut

Oinet lives in a small but pleasant hut. It doesn't seem like the home of a man offering $8,000. His wife, Nazru, is slender — in contrast to her portly husband and well-fed children. The hut is comfortably appointed with furniture of Oinet's own make. A small Christian shrine is set in one wall. In a corner hangs a cage containing a small creature about the size of a house cat; Oinet calls this a brillet.

"That's Saminota," he says. "He's harmless, so long as you treat him politely."

The brillet is a shiny black animal resembling a six-legged chihuahua with needle-sharp teeth. Its bite is painful, but not very damaging (1d-4 impaling). It will not bite unless threatened. Around the brillet's neck is a small leather collar with an identification tag. One side has Oinet's name and address, and the words, "reward for safe return." On the other side, printed in flowing archaic script, are the words, "SAMINOTA. Return me to my origin."

The inquisitive will discover that the brillet talks (or rather mimics) like a parrot. The animal stares blankly and recites in exact imitation of an aged man's baritone, "Approach the portal directly." The brillet repeats this every once in a while, but never says anything else.

"That's my uncle's voice," says Oinet. "He gave the critter to me right before he died. It was already saying that when I got it." Oinet scratches his balding head, "And never another word since. Peculiar, I call it, just peculiar." Oinet doesn't know anything more about the creature. Other questions are deferred until after dinner.

Nazru serves plentiful portions of a tasty stew, urging seconds and thirds on her guests, especially the thin ones. The children ask unending questions about Calder, adventures the PCs have had, and anything else their young minds can dream up. After the meal, the children are sent out, and Oinet gives the party his proposition.

The Particulars

"I had an uncle — Riyan was his name — who lived in a house in the woods, an easy day's walk from here. Well, he died and left a will, which leaves everything to me. I always was his favorite nephew, I guess. Anyway, the will mentions that he's hidden a darkwood chest that contains a special inheritance for me to find, but I could never find it. Riyan was always a tricky old man. I've looked all over the house and the grounds — I even dug up the garden! He hid it too well."

The Shops of Tin Hill

If visitors want to purchase weapons, armor, horses or fancy clothes, they will be disappointed with Tin Hill. There are only a few shops in the town, and most of them are craft and equipment shops. The following is a list of Tin Hill's places of purchase.

The Angry Goat Inn

Tin Hill is a small town. It has only one Inn — the Angry Goat. The price to stay at the Goat is $2 per person for a double room, or $4 per person for a single room. A successful Merchant or Fast-Talk roll can bring either price down by a copper.

The Inn is large but simple — two stories high and half a block long. It has a spacious common room with three fireplaces and well-equipped stables around the back. The owner of the inn, Zachary, tolerates no disturbances and will call the town sheriff should the PCs get rowdy.

Mardyn's Pottery

Mardyn is an elderly potter who prides herself in her unique urns and vases. Her shop is filled with both practical and decorative pottery — some of it quite expensive. Her work is not unknown among the noble houses of Calder.

The Farm Hand

The Farm Hand is an equipment shop where farmers and shepherds can purchase metal plows, wagons, and most other farm equipment. The owner, Paulus, is also the town's blacksmith. Here, one can purchase rope, shovels, axes, grappling hooks, and leather aprons and gloves (functioning as heavy leather armor for the torso and hands).

Drinny's Market

This is the local grocery, where the families of Tin Hill pick up their vegetables and dried meat, household implements, religious items, leather bags and pouches, etc.

Oinet's

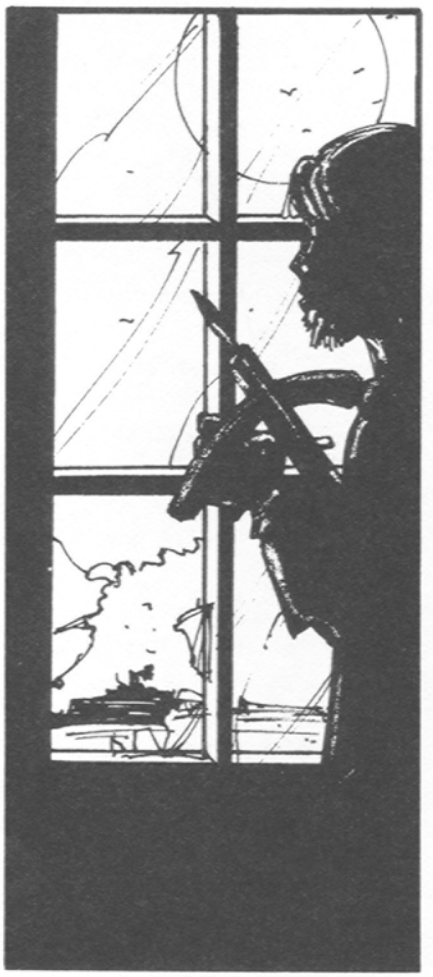
Oinet's shop is well-known in the area, as is his furniture and other woodwork. His shop stocks only finely crafted items, which are reasonably priced. He has had many of Calder's wealthy purchase his fine furniture.

Any other items that the residents of Tin Hill need, they either make themselves or travel to Calder to purchase.

At this point, Nazru interrupts, "And I say he didn't leave anything!"

"And I still say I didn't look hard enough!" replies Oinet. "At any rate, I've stayed away from my shop as long as can, but I've had no luck. So now I've started looking for treasure hunters. That's where you come in."

At this point, Oinet is ready to discuss terms. The offer of $8,000 was — as the party should have suspected — an exaggeration. In fact he is offering 25% of the inheritance upon successful completion of the search. If asked about magic items that might be part of the inheritance, Oinet scratches his head. "Well, there might be at that. But I've got no use for anything magical and Nazru wouldn't let it in the house if I did, so if there is, you can keep them too."



Lurking at the Window

Some of the PCs may be suspicious at this point that they are being followed, either by bandits or Oinet's mysterious apprentice. A careful look around the hut and a successful Vision roll will alert the searcher to the presence of someone at the window. It is Sab eavesdropping on the particulars of the quest. If Sab is noticed at any time, he will disappear immediately into the night. If no one notices him before the end of the evening, someone will hear a suspicious noise outside the window and see a figure running off. At this point, an IQ roll is needed to recognize the figure as Sab.

Haggling

The party can haggle with Oinet about the percentage. On a successful Diplomacy or Fast-Talk skill roll, Oinet goes up to 50 percent. A failed roll causes Oinet to drop to 15 percent. Any further attempts at haggling are met with a "Take it or leave it" ultimatum. If anyone discusses advance payment, Nazru firmly insists that they are not spending any more money on this wild goose chase; Oinet reluctantly agrees. Oinet assures the characters that the task is simple and that Riyan was quite a wealthy man — the payoff will be worth the effort.

More Information

Assuming the party goes for the deal (if they don't, see the sidebar entitled *If the Players Don't Cooperate*, p. 38), Oinet answers any question and provides any information he can. He knows the following:

- The current occupant of the house is his sister, Nringa. Riyan's will made no provisions for Nringa, who, to be honest, is something of a shrew.
- The search must be done without damaging the house in any way. Oinet is extremely insistent on this point.
- Riyan was an eccentric fellow. He never married, and he used to entertain "peculiar" visitors — people with bad reputations, troublemakers, purported mages, and perhaps even worse. He had done a good deal of adven-

Robbery at the Angry Goat

Nothing much happens in Tin Hill. The party beds down at the inn for a quiet evening before going to see Oinet — quiet, that is, unless the GM wants to throw a little suspense into what would otherwise be a dull night. Here is a possible scenario for a small sidetrack adventure in the town.

About an hour after the PCs get to sleep, one awakes to the sound of breaking glass coming from somewhere outside. (The GM should choose the PC with the Danger Sense advantage or the highest IQ.) A burglar who slipped quietly into one the Angry Goat's rooms, slipped noisily on the way out. He succeeded in breaking the window and rousing the occupant, a middle-aged noblewoman traveling to Calder. The robber cut his leg on the glass and is now limping off in an effort to escape. The PC who awakened glimpses the dark figure hobbling off to the north.

The noblewoman is now screaming at the top of her lungs and causing quite an uproar. In the confusion, no one else has seen where the burglar was headed. If the party acts fast, they can follow the thief and catch him.

The burglar heads north out of the town to a small shed that is his hideout. After arriving, he sits in wait with a crossbow aimed out the window. He attempts to shoot anyone who crosses in front of the window (assume this line must be crossed to reach the door of the shack). Treat this as *Opportunity Fire* (see p. B118), which reduces his Crossbow skill to 16. The thief has the following items in the hideout: the noblewoman's jewelry (worth $2,000), a bag containing $500, a dagger, a saber, and a crossbow with 40 bolts (minus whatever is fired in the battle).

The Angry Goat Burglar (Jehryn)

Age 25; dark brown hair, brown eyes; 5' 5", 125 lbs.

ST 12, DX 15, IQ 12, HT 12.

Basic Speed 6.75, Move 6 (5 because of his cut leg).

Cloth armor, PD 1, DR 1; no encumbrance.

Advantages: Night Vision, Double-Jointed.

Disadvantage: Kleptomania.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Tin Hill)-12, Climbing-20, Crossbow-18, Escape-20, Fast-Talk-15, Fencing-18, Knife-17, Pickpocket-17, Shadowing-12, Stealth-18, Streetwise-12.

Weapons: Crossbow (ST 12), 1d+3 impaling; Saber, 1d+2 cutting, 1d impaling; Dagger, 1d-2 impaling.

turing himself before settling down to grow apples. He may even have been a mage himself, or at least he claimed to be. He tried to teach some spells to Oinet, but either Oinet had no talent for it, or Riyan was not really a mage.

- A party member might ask to take the brillet along. If Oinet's initial reaction (at their first meeting) to the person who asks the question was Good or better, Oinet will reluctantly allow this.
- If asked about Sab, he will reply, "He showed up at my door not too long ago — shortly after my uncle died. I never could find out too much about him, but he's a hard worker — and the quality of his work! Remarkable . . . almost magical. I wish to Christ he could talk; he's got some explaining to do, he does. Very peculiar." (At the mild blasphemy, Nazru glares.)

After the question and answer session, Oinet gives the group directions to Riyan's house, telling them not to disturb his sister in the evenings or very early mornings; any other time is fine.

Riyan's House

Riyan's house is about a six-hour walk from Tin Hill (two and a half on horseback). It is set in a clearing in a thickly wooded area to the east. The road is fairly well-traveled, and the party has no encounters along the way. Oinet's sister, Nringa, is home, evident from the smoke rising from the chimney.

Nringa is an ordinary, middle-aged woman, who is very protective of the house and property. She does not want adventurers poking around "her" house. It was bad enough having Oinet digging up the garden. When the adventurers arrive, the GM should make a reaction roll for Nringa (for the member of the party with the highest modifiers). On anything less than Good, she will refuse the group entrance, regardless of whether Oinet told them they could search the house. On a Very Good, she is in a good mood and has taken a motherly liking to the unlucky party member. She will let them search and follow her new friend around the house, offering assistance, food, and frequent hugs (while still being nasty and suspicious to the rest of the group).

If she refuses the party entrance and they enter anyway, she demands that they leave immediately and threatens that her husband, Tumban, will take care of them when he returns from his hunting trip.

If the PCs are still there when Tumban returns three hours later, he tells them he is going to have them arrested for trespassing if they don't leave immediately. Tumban can be persuaded, however, and on a successful Fast-Talk or Diplomacy roll, Tumban indicates that he may be able to let them continue the search if he had some "incentive." For a bribe of at least $50, he will silence Nringa. If the roll fails, or the players ignore him or offer too little, Tumban rides into town to inform the authorities. This proves fruitless, however, as the house legally belongs to Oinet, and the PCs have Oinet's permission to search it.

Oinet

Age 47; slightly overweight, red-faced with sharp, dark brown eyes and gray hair; 5' 7", 190 lbs.

ST 11, DX 14, IQ 9, HT 10.

Advantages: Literacy, Reputation (+2 among merchants in Calder), Toughness.

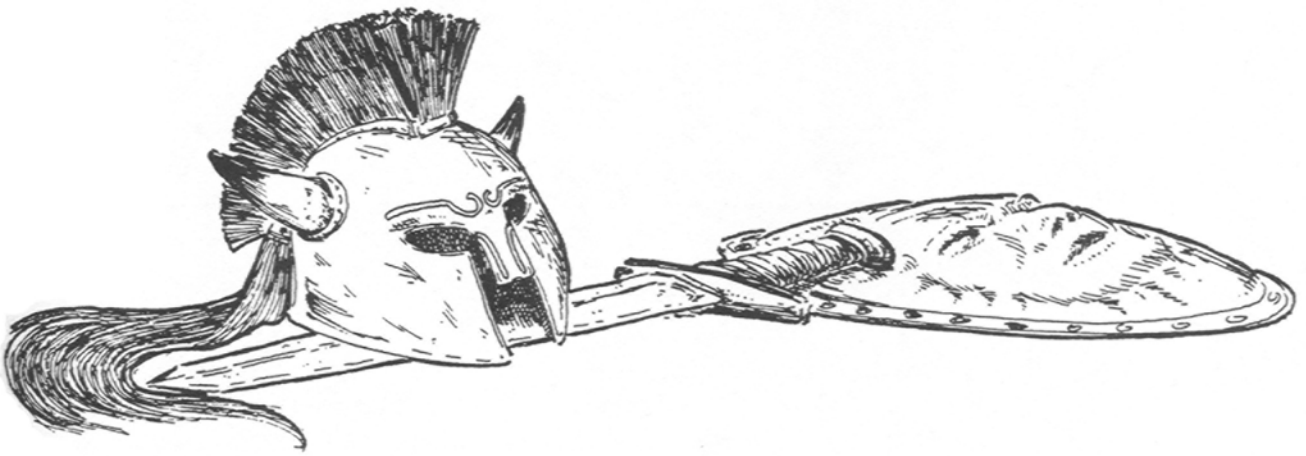
Disadvantages: Addiction (tobacco), Gluttony, Honesty.

Skills: Accounting-11, Area Knowledge (Tin Hill and Calder)-12, Carpentry-21, Driving (cart or wagon)-14, Fishing-15, Horse Riding-14, Leather Working-16, Merchant-14, Woodworking-26.

Weapons: If he needs to fight, Oinet uses a small club he keeps by the door, crushing 1d+2 (his default skill is 9).

Oinet is a simple woodcarver and furniture maker. He lives quietly in a small hut near the edge of Tin Hill. He is soft-spoken, friendly and honest. He cares most about his family and his business — his strong desire to find Riyan's treasure stems from these concerns.

As for the PCs, Oinet considers them hirelings. He is friendly toward them, but only concerning the business side of things. He does not risk himself for the PCs' benefit and will probably not want to associate with them socially after the adventure.



When the PCs finally begin their search, Nringa follows them around suspiciously. She says openly that they are up to no good and are probably here just to rob her. The GM should make her annoying and somewhat suspicious (see the sidebar, p. 44). If the party ignores Oinet's instructions about damaging the house, see the sidebar *Search and Destroy*, p. 45.

A bright PC may want to let Oinet's brillet loose in the house. If this is done, the brillet will scamper off, leading a merry chase and repeating its one phrase over and over, finally ending up at the kitchen closet door. It will wait there, jumping up and nipping at the doorknob.

The Closet

There is nothing out of ordinary in the house except for one unusual doorknob. On a successful Vision roll, a PC notices that the kitchen closet doorknob looks out of place; it is the only brass doorknob in the house, and it is ornately designed. The Detect Magic spell will indicate that it also radiates magic.

The inside of the closet looks ordinary, but it also radiates magic. Nringa uses this closet to store odds and ends from the kitchen: a butter churn, brooms, etc. Nothing the PCs do physically in or to the closet produces any effect. But if any PC casts a spell or activates a magic item while touching the doorknob or standing in the closet (bringing enchanted items into the closet also works), the inherent magic of the closet activates. The back of the closet vanishes, and in its place appears a shimmering black portal. Nringa will have nothing to do with this and backs away into another room, muttering to herself about demons and crazy mages. Meanwhile, the PCs are left to examine the glowing portal — the entrance to the Darkland.

Saegmor: The Sheriff of Tin Hill

Age 27; Red hair and green eyes; 6' 0", 185 lbs.

ST 12, DX 14, IQ 10, HT 10.

Speed/Move: 6/5.

Dodge 8, Parry 10.

Chainmail (PD/DR: 3/4), light encumbrance.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Legal Enforcement Power.

Disadvantages: Overconfidence, Intolerance ("tourists").

Quirks: Curses a lot; Hates outsiders.

Skills: Broadsword-14, Interrogation-10, Knife-12, Language (Anglish)-12, Law-10, Shadowing-10.

The sheriff of Tin Hill is really just a goat herder's son who trained with the Calder city guard for a year. He is brusque and blustery, often resorting to insults and curses when he feels like he is losing control of a situation.

He has an intense dislike for tourists (anyone not from Tin Hill is a tourist in his book), and anything that happens out of the ordinary he blames on those "damn tourists."

For the sheriff's guards, use his stats, but change the chain mail to heavy leather.

Nringa

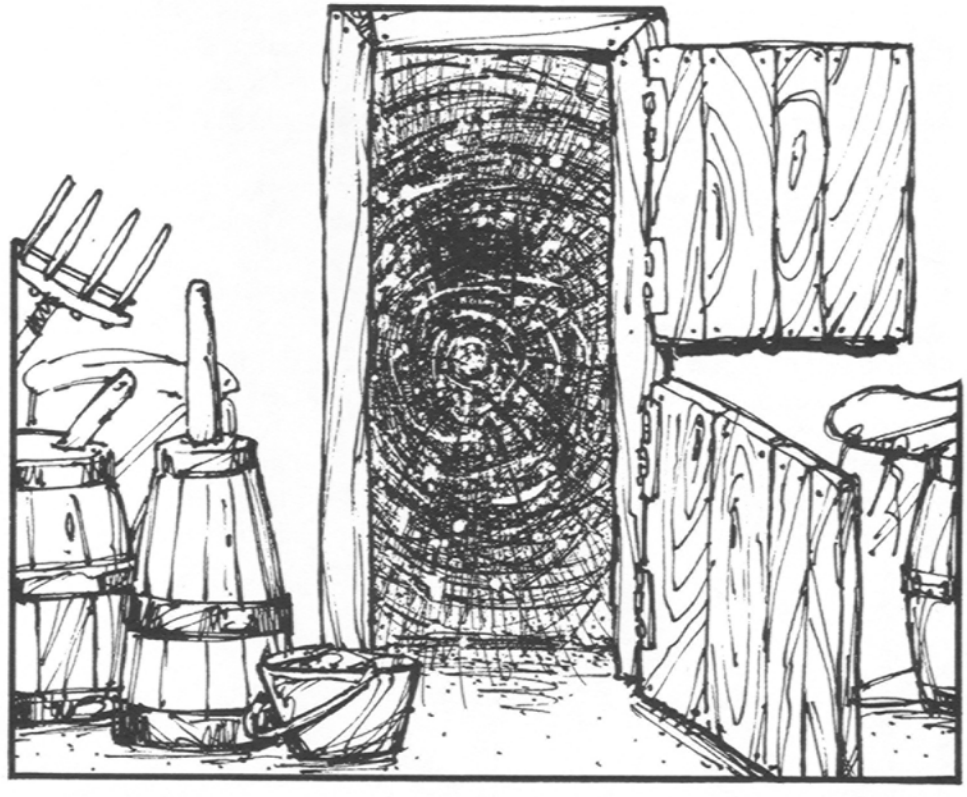
Age 42; brown hair, brown eyes; 4' 9", 115 lbs.

ST 8, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 10.

Nringa is Oinet's pesky sister. She is put into the adventure merely to annoy the PCs to the extent of their tolerance. There are two things to note about Nringa:

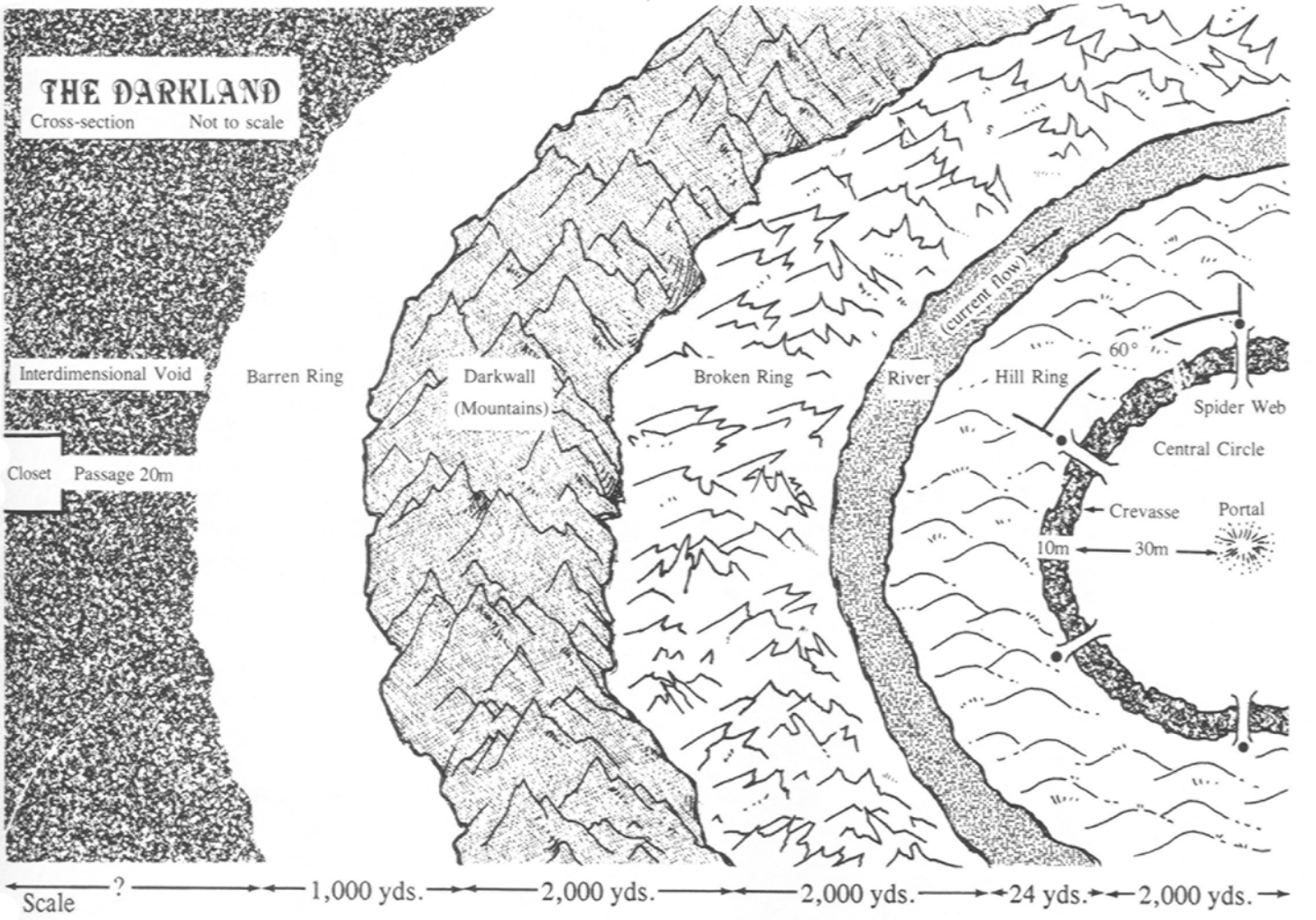
She talks constantly. She berates the PCs incessantly, threatens all sorts of punishment for their entry into "her" house, and lets them know exactly where they are going to end up if they continue.

She is suspicious of everything. Especially magic. She runs around shutting doors before the party can look in certain rooms. Then she launches into another tirade if the group searches there anyway. If the PCs cast any spell that has any sort of visible effect or requires elaborate gestures, Nringa runs around in circles screaming, "Demons, demons, demons in my house — save me!" at the top of her lungs.



The Darkland

Entering the portal at the back of the closet produces a feeling of falling, and the player character will see the portal as a diminishing rectangle of light that rapidly disappears into blackness. The PC cannot return or communicate with anyone left on the other side, though he can still hear them distantly.



Key

Black Guardians •

After the entire party has passed through, a distant female scream can be heard from the other side of the portal. If the PCs could return to investigate, they would find that Sab has attacked Nringa and bound and gagged her; he follows the party into the Darkland — for reasons that will be explained later. However, the party can't return because the closet portal can only be used to enter the Darkland. It is important for the adventure that the whole party enter the portal. If some of the PCs choose not to, see the sidebar *If the Players Don't Cooperate* on p. 38.

The party is in an area of almost palpable darkness, which restricts movement to a narrow passage, one yard wide and running away from the portal for 20 yards (see map, p. 45). Anyone in the group with a fear of darkness (Phobia disadvantage) will be at an extreme disadvantage while in the Darkland; see the sidebar *Scotophobics!*, p. 46, for how to deal with these PCs. The walls of this passage are not impenetrable, but the resistance grows and the temperature drops the farther anyone strays from the passage. If a party member persists in this route, he should be given several chances to turn back and broad hints that this is not a safe or profitable venture. Those who continue too far eventually drift off into the cold, empty void of interdimensional space.

The path becomes darker as the party follows it, ending in complete darkness as it opens up into the Darkland. The darkness of this realm is so intense that torches, lanterns, light spells, et cetera, have only half normal range. (For the effects of magic in the Darkland, see the sidebar on p. 46.) No boundaries except the ground can be detected, and the only sounds are far-off rumblings and strange howls.

After a few minutes (when the newcomers' eyes have adjusted) a faint glow appears in the distance straight ahead. This is the only visible landmark and

Search and Destroy

If for some reason the party ignores Oinet's requirement that the house not be damaged, the PCs will have to answer to Oinet, the authorities, and Nringa and her husband. Even should the party return with the inheritance, Oinet will refuse to pay the agreed-upon percentage, and, depending upon the extent of the damage, he may have the sheriff and the town guard arrest the group. Since the "vandals" will be in the Darkland for several hours, Oinet has plenty of time to gather the local guard and have them waiting for the group when they reappear.

Magic in the Darkland

The mana level in the Darkland is normal, but due to the nature of the place, the following spells in the Light and Darkness College cost twice as much to cast: Light, Continual Light, Flash, and Light Jet. And as mentioned earlier, if these spells are cast for illumination, they have only half their normal range. Spells that manipulate darkness (Darkness, Shape Darkness, Hide, Night Vision and Dark Vision) cost ½ normal cost, but have no extra range. All other spells work normally.

The Teleport spell allows the caster to teleport within the Darkland, but since the Darkland is in another dimension, the spell cannot be used to transport in and out of it — much more powerful magic is required for that. Some mages have developed spells that can perform this task (as is obvious from the wristband), but they are rare and not for public consumption — not yet, anyway . . .

Scotophobics!

PCs who have scotophobia, or fear of darkness, will find themselves in quite a predicament if they enter the Darkland. Mild scotophobics must make Will rolls every ten minutes they remain in the Darkland, regardless of how much light the rest of the party can generate. The Darkland isn't just a dark place; it is darkness itself. Severe scotophobics must make their will rolls at -4. If the roll is failed, the GM should roll on the Fright Check table (p. B94) to see the result. A successful roll means the PC can continue, but is at -2 DX and -2 IQ while he remains in the Darkland (including the lit central circle).

marks the party's goal. It is not bright enough to provide any illumination, but it does outline the silhouette of a mountain range about a half-mile away (think *Twilight Zone*). If Oinet's brillet is with the party, it scurries in a straight line toward the light, repeating, "Approach the portal directly . . . approach the portal directly." It remains within sight of the group at all times (unless, of course, the PCs neglected to bring any sources of light with them, in which case they are in serious trouble).

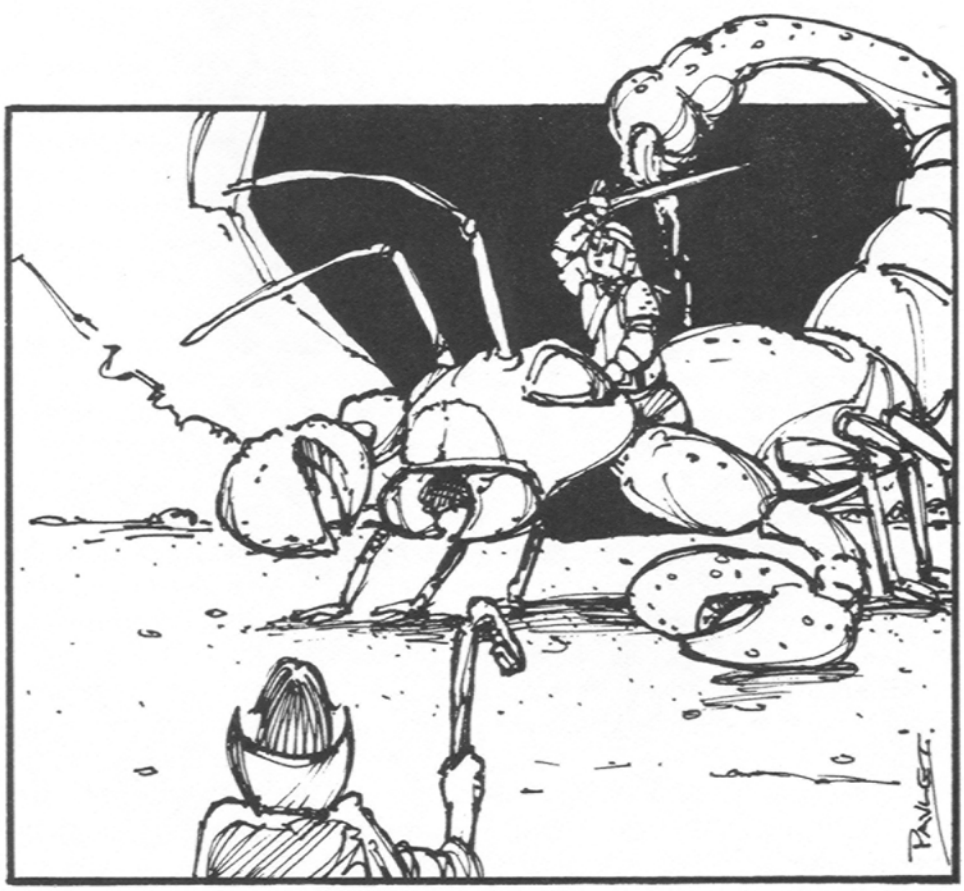
If the adventurers head off in another direction, they find that the Darkland ins roughly circular. The glow always appears in the center, and the mountain range, the Darkwall, is always between the party and the light.

The Barren Ring

The outer perimeter of the Darkland is a flat, featureless plain. It is populated by three nocturnal nuisances: Shadowcats, Giant Black Scorpions, and Crazies. Proceeding directly toward the center, the group will have one or two random encounters before the party reaches the Darkwall. If the PCs try to remain and explore the Barren Ring, there should be more and more encounters until they start toward the center. The GM can use the following table to determine the encounters, or choose them on his own.

Roll (3d)	*Encounter*
3-10	1d-2 Shadowcats
11-14	1d-4 Giant Black Scorpions
15-18	1d+1 Crazies

These creatures are described in detail in the sidebars, pp. 47-48.



The Darkwall

After traveling through the darkness for 1,000 yards, the party reaches the Darkwall. The mountains are 2,400 feet high and smooth and soft to the touch; they seem to be made of solid darkness.

The party can climb the mountains, making Climbing rolls at -1 — ropes cannot be attached to the surface in any way because the mountains are not truly solid. Climbing the range costs one point of fatigue.

Stopping while climbing the range is dangerous. A halted climber will begin to sink at a rate of 6'' per minute. Unless the climber is waist-deep or more, he can pull himself out with an ordinary Strength roll (attempted every minute, but costing a half-point of fatigue per attempt); beyond that, the victim must have another PC aid him, and both PCs must make successful Strength rolls. If more than one person attempts to help, add 2 to all ST rolls for each person helping (cumulative). If someone fails to pull free before he goes completely under, he will suffocate (see *Drowning*, p. B91) until another person or group pulls him out. Connecting everyone with ropes will prove useful in this part of the Darkland.

The range is uniform and circular, so attempting to circumvent the mountains is useless.

The Broken Ring

Beyond the Darkwall is a ring of broken terrain 2,000 yards wide. It is a rocky area, with many crags and ravines, bounded on the far edge by a circular river. As the group descends the mountains into the Broken Ring, PCs will notice small black scurrying creatures racing around the rocky ground. These are brillets, seemingly identical to the one in Oinet's hut. If Oinet's brillet is with the party, the others will cluster around it inquisitively, but it does not leave the party.

The brillets are quite harmless, and they prove to be entertaining and helpful with their mimicking ability (see the sidebar *Brillets*, p. 51).

Nightwing Attack

When the party is about halfway across the Broken Ring, a flurry of black, rag-like shapes emerges from a low, dark outcropping. These creatures, known as nightwings, are attracted to, and feed on, heat. They view the party as a source of energy. Nightwings cluster in groups of six to eight and will attack PCs carrying torches and lanterns first. The sidebar on p. 49 describes the nightwings in detail.

After dealing with the nightwings, the party can continue looking around the Broken Ring — but there is nothing of interest here, and new waves of nightwings attack every half-hour or so.

Denizens of the Darkland

The Darkland has a few indigenous creatures, which were created by the same unearthly magic that formed the Darkland itself. The dangerous ones attack visitors at random, sometimes to feed off their heat, other times for no reason at all. The individual creatures are listed below.

Shadowcats

ST: 5	**PD/DR:** 5/0
DX: 15	**Dmg:** 1d
IQ: 4	**Reach:** C
HT: 10	**Size:** 2
Speed/Dodge: 7/12	**Weight:** 0

Shadowcats appear as hazy, insubstantial cat forms. They are made of the stuff of darkness and are attracted to heat and light. Because of their ethereal quality, they are very hard to hit (PD 5). They attack by biting at their opponents in close combat. They have no actual teeth; the ''bite'' feels like an ice-cold presence which drains warmth from the victim. A successful hit causes 1d worth of damage to the victim — armor does not protect!

Normal weapons do only half damage to shadowcats; fire spells actually restore HT to the shadowcats at half the damage of the spell. Cold-based spells (Create Cold, Frost, etc.) do double damage. Shadowcats can also be distracted by creating a large heat source away from the party. Torches don't qualify as large.

Giant Black Scorpions

ST: 12	**PD/DR:** 3/5
DX: 14	**Dmg:** 2d imp (+poison)
IQ: 2	**Reach:** 3
HT: 10/15	**Size:** 5
Speed/Dodge: 5/7	**Weight:** 350

The giant black scorpions are exactly what they sound like — huge, menacing black arachnids. They are very dangerous because of their high DR and poison sting. They attack by grappling their opponents with their pincers and piercing them with large poisonous stingers.

The stingers cause 2d of impaling damage and, if the victim fails a HT roll, induce a coma-like sleep that lasts for 2d hours.

Continued on next page . . .

Darkland Denizens (Continued)

Crazies

ST: 12	**PD/DR:** 0/1
DX: 15	**Dmg:** none
IQ: 4	**Reach:** C
HT: 8/12	**Size:** 1
Speed/Dodge: 5/8	**Weight:** 100

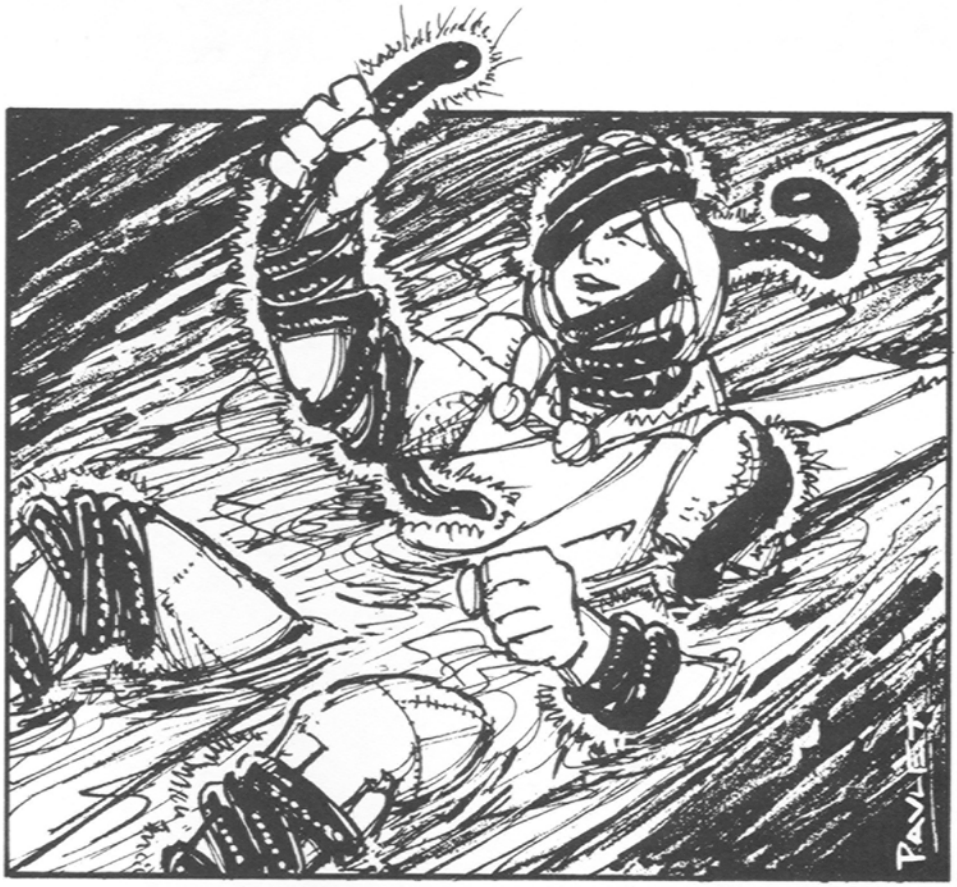
The crazies aren't very dangerous, just disconcerting. They appear to be thin, milky-white humanoid creatures. They are bald and naked, and they look as if they have been dead for a while. They attack the PCs madly, running at them and screaming loudly. The crazies then attempt to grapple the PCs and scream into their faces until the creatures are killed.

Once a crazy is brought to 0 HT, it vanishes in a puff of noxious vapor. Anyone within a one-yard radius takes 1d-2 damage from breathing the smoke (unless that PC specifies that he is holding his breath *before* the crazy is killed. Remember, it's hard to fight while holding your breath (see *Holding Your Breath*, p. B91). The vapor dissipates after three rounds.

Continued on next page . . .

The River

At the inner edge of the Broken Ring is a rapidly flowing river of inky liquid. The river is 24 yards across and quite magical; it flows continually in one direction, making a complete circle. The dark liquid is merely water, and the water is only three feet deep — the PCs can wade across. Because of the strong current (15 mph), those attempting to cross must make a successful DX roll every 8 yards to keep from slipping and falling into the river. PCs who slip are swept downstream and can make another DX roll to stand every 20 seconds. Any PC spending more than 30 seconds in the water has to deal with the Black Eels.



The Black Eels

These frightening creatures populate the river and swarm around anyone who remains in the water too long. They clamp onto any area of the body that is not covered in metal armor, sucking blood until the victim is dead or the eels removed (see sidebar, p. 50). They swarm in groups of five to ten and attack every 30 seconds as long as someone remains in the water.

The Hill Ring

Beyond the river is a ring of hilly terrain 2,000 yards wide. This area gives anyone entering it a feeling of great foreboding. Anyone with the Danger Sense advantage who makes an IQ roll gets the feeling that the party is about to be attacked. Every few minutes a low, eerie howl floats out of the darkness ahead. If the party proceeds, they will meet with two to three random encounters before arriving at the elephant carcass. A table is provided on the next page.

Roll (3d)	*Encounter*
3-5	2d Crazies
6-9	1d+6 Nightwings
10-12	1d+1 Shadowcats
13-16	1d-2 Giant Black Scorpions
17-18	1d-2 Nighthounds

Grundge and the Elephant Carcass

As the group approaches a small hill, the PCs hear the trumpeting of a bull elephant echoing loudly in the dark. The GM should roll a Fright Check for each adventurer. This is actually one of the brillets who has imprinted this sound, but with luck, it will scare the wits out of the party. When they top the hill, the PCs see a large shapeless mass absolutely covered in brillets. Closer examination shows that this is the corpse of a large elephant. The beast is freshly killed, but has already been scavenged nearly to the bone. One foreleg of the animal has been ripped away, and the skull has been crushed by a large blunt object.

Soon after, all the brillets begin to scurry directly toward the party. Regardless of the PCs' reactions, dozens and dozens of brillets continue to race at them — and past them! The brillets are not attacking, but rather fleeing in panic from something that is approaching the adventurers.

Moments after the wave of brillets passes, the party hears a loud stamping noise and catches a whiff of a noxious odor similar to that of uncleaned stables. Then, appearing from the blackness, walks a 16-foot-tall giant, waving a partly-consumed elephant leg in a manner that could be friendly — or threatening. In his other hand, he carries a club the size of a small tree. He also wears an odd bracelet around one wrist and a magic helmet that allows him to see in total darkness (as per Dark Vision spell, p. M50). The helmet was originally designed for a dwarf, and the giant wears it on his right forefinger like a thimble. He still derives the full magical benefit wearing it this way. He wears nothing else but a greasy bearskin loincloth.

Should the party attack without provocation, the giant, Grundge, fights savagely to the death. Otherwise, Grundge greets them politely in their own language in a startlingly familiar, human voice. (In fact, the PCs may have heard some of the brillets speaking a line or two in this voice — Sab's voice.) Grundge is not very smart (IQ 8), but he does know some useful information. There is, however, a condition for his cooperation.

Dancing With Grundge

Grundge will not relate any useful information until someone in the party sings for him. Grundge likes to dance, and he asks the PCs to sing something.

Darkland Denizens (Continued)

Nightwings

ST: 5	**PD/DR:** 3/0
DX: 14	**Dmg:** ½ creature's HT
IQ: 3	**Reach:** C
HT: 8 (special)	**Size:** special
Speed/Dodge: 10/12	**Weight:** 0

Nightwings are black, rag-like creatures resembling large bats. They are drawn to heat sources such as lanterns, torches, and warm bodies. They attack in much the same way as shadowcats, but their "bite" does damage equal to half of the nightwing's health (armor does not protect). As with shadowcats, fire spells feed them (half the damage from the spells adds to the nightwing's HT), and cold spells to double damage.

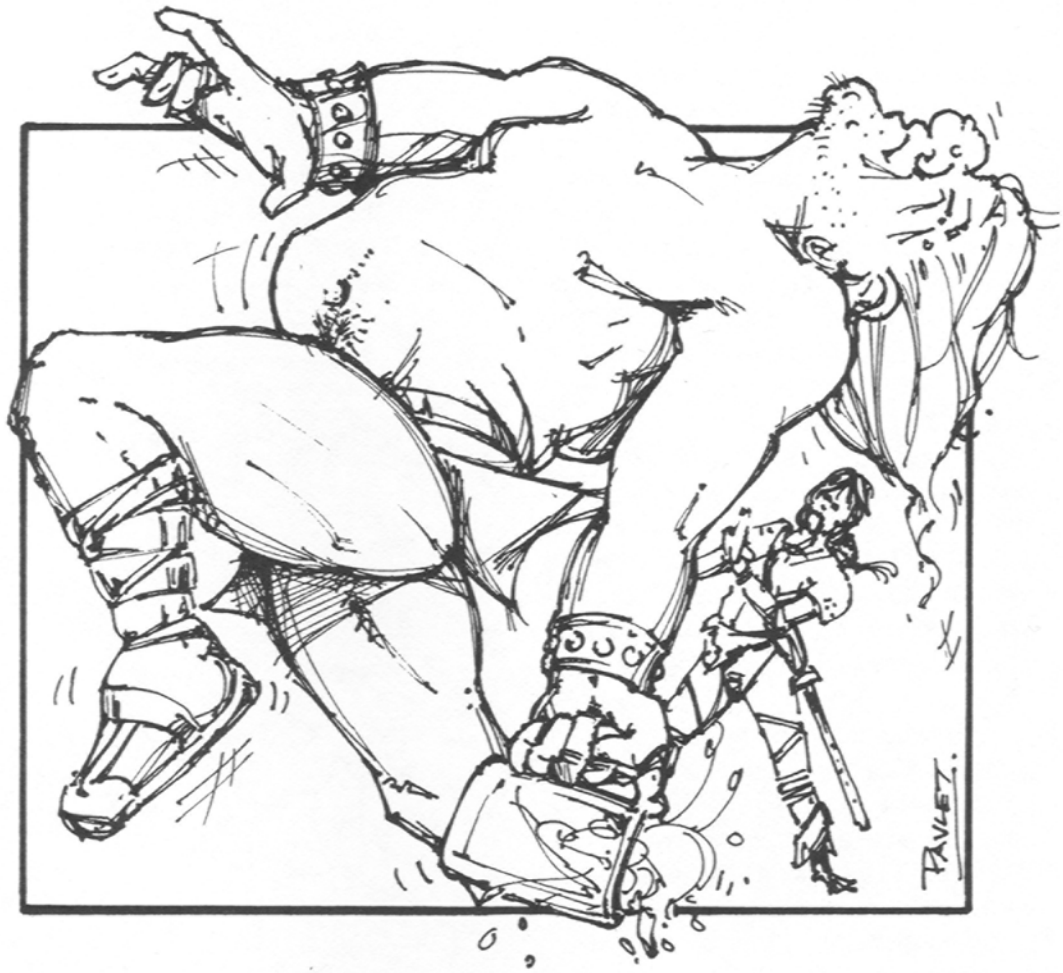
Blunt weapons have a normal effect on them, but edged weapons have a special effect. Hits from edged weapons that do less than half of the nightwing's HT are ignored completely. Hits doing half or more cause the nightwing to split into two half-nightwings, each with a HT of 4. Half-nightwings will be split again into quarter-nightwings (HT 2), and the quarter-nightwings are destroyed by any hit.

The nightwings feed on their victim's warmth until they are sated. They will be full when each has absorbed its own HT in damage to the PCs. They then fly off and do not attack again for two hours.

A successful IQ roll may reveal to a combatant that a nightwing could be tamed if offered a constant supply of heat, whether from a torch, lantern, etc. Roll against Animal Handling skill (defaults to IQ-6) to determine success. The nightwing cannot, however, leave the Darkland.

Continued on next page . . .

He gyrates clumsily to whatever tune the group can come up with (devious GMs will require their players to actually sing the songs). Grundge has no ear for music and enjoys any song, no matter how badly performed. However, the GM should base the quality of the information Grundge gives on the skill roll of the singer (Singing skill defaults to HT-4).



Grundge also asks the largest member of the party to dance with him during the second number. There is a chance that Grundge may actually inflict damage upon his partner. The GM rolls a Quick Contest of DX. If the PC loses, Grundge has caused him 1d-2 of crushing damage to the foot. Fortunately, the giant is not insulted by a polite refusal.

After two numbers, Grundge talks freely with the group, telling the PCs whatever he can. He knows about the other menaces in the Hill Ring (Crazies, Shadowcats, etc.), the crevasse and the various ways to cross it (see below), and how the elephant got here:

"Him must have fallen through dark hole in ground somewhere, like Grundge. End up here. Grundge like it here. Good food. No one around to call Grundge stupid."

He knows nothing about what lies beyond the crevasse, how to escape the Darkland, or Riyan's treasure. It turns out, however, that Grundge knew Riyan rather well. "Him nice man. Good. Him bring Quiann, the dark lady, here. Quiann — she pretty." He rambles on about Quiann for a while, obviously taken with her, but he eventually returns to the subject of Riyan. "Riyan give Grundge voice, to protect for him." Grundge fingers the chain around his wrist. For him it is a bracelet, but a normal-sized person would have to wear it as a heavy necklace. Dangling from the chain is a small, reddish amulet. If asked about the amulet, Grundge simply states that this is the voice that Riyan gave him.

Darkland Denizens (Continued)

Black Eels

ST: 10	**PD/DR:** 2/1
DX: 14	**Dmg:** 2d-2 (special)
IQ: 3	**Reach:** C
HT: 8	**Size:** 2
Speed/Dodge: 7/10	**Wt:** 5

The black eels are the denizens of the Darkland's river. They lurk in the murky shallows, waiting for anyone foolish enough to remain too long in the water. They attack by biting their opponents (2d-2 crushing) and clamping on to suck their victim's blood. If an eel succeeds in clamping on, a victim can pull it off by first making a successful DX-2 roll to grab on (those eels are slippery) and then winning a Quick Contest of Strength to remove it. If the eel stays on, it drains one point of HT per turn until the eel is removed or the prey is dead.

Darkhounds

ST: 13	**PD/DR:** 2/2
DX: 15	**Dmg:** 1d+2 (special)
IQ: 4	**Reach:** C
HT: 12/18	**Size:** 2
Speed/Dodge: 8/12	**Weight:** 250

The darkhounds are by far the most fearsome creatures native to the Darkland. They have smooth, jet-black skin and glowing red eyes. They attack for the sheer pleasure of killing and are quite deadly. Their chilling howls are heard echoing across the hills of the Darkland.

They attack in close combat by biting with their powerful jaws. The bite itself does 1d+2 damage, but any damage that get past the opponent's DR is tripled — the darkhound's saliva is acid! Once they have chosen their prey, the darkhounds take all-out attacks every round until they (or their enemy) are killed.

If questioned for any serious length of time, Grundge grows bored and leaves to see what's left of the elephant. He will not accompany the party. If the party decides to explore the Hill Ring, they meet with random encounters until they attempt the crevasse.

The Crevasse

As the explorers continue on toward the central glow, they come to a crevasse, ten yards across and apparently bottomless (it is so dark that there is no way to determine the depth). The crevasse is circular, so walking around it does the group no good.

Anyone falling into the crevasse can attempt to grab its jagged walls. A successful Climbing roll will stop the fall, but another one must be made to climb back to the edge. The GM should give the PC three chances to make the initial Climbing roll. Anyone failing all three rolls plunges into interdimensional emptiness. (GMs can, of course, save them by transporting them back to the "real world" where they can catch up with the party later.)

There is little to be seen across the crevasse save for clouds of glowing mist. The slightly glowing billows envelop the area beyond the crevasse and fall into the chasm in great rolling cascades. The source of light can be faintly perceived from the edge; it is a point of light about 30 yards beyond the inner edge of the fissure. Nothing else is visible.

The crevasse has no bottom, so climbing down is pointless (though the PCs should not be discouraged from trying). So, barring flying and jumping, the only ways to cross are using the bridges or traversing the spider web.

The Bridges

There are six bridges spanning the chasm, located at 60-degree intervals around the perimeter. The bridges are two yards wide and are built of jet-black stone. A single Black Guardian (see sidebar, p. 53) waits patiently and unmoving before each bridge. They are immobile, but they block access to the bridges completely. They will attack anyone attempting to pass them.

The Guardians can be thwarted in a variety of ways. Here are a few avenues the party might take.

Brute Force. The Black Guardians can be attacked directly, but they are indeed formidable opponents. They fight brutally to the death, taking all-out attacks each round.

Illusions. The Guardians can be tricked into fighting an illusion while the party sneaks past onto the bridge. The Guardians are rooted to the ground and cannot pursue, but each PC must make a DX roll to avoid touching the Guardian as he moves past. A failed roll means that the Black Guardian is alerted to the ploy and attacks the intruder immediately.

Bright Lights. The Black Guardians are extremely sensitive to bright light.

Brillets

The brillets are the scavengers of the Darkland. They are harmless to living things and have no natural enemies; if one is attacked for any reason, the rest run away. They are, however, very trusting by nature and return in a matter of minutes. Although brillets aren't very smart, they have the curious ability to perfectly mimic any sound they hear — but only one particular group of sounds for each billet. At one point in its life, a brillet "imprints" a sound or a line of speech. It then repeats it at random intervals, exactly and mindlessly, throughout its life.

For game purposes, the GM should use the brillets to convey information about the Darkland, Riyan, Quiann, Sab, and their mysterious network of relationships. The GM can also have some of the brillets imprint a PC's voice for comic effect. The brillets are all over the Darkland; whenever there is a lull in the action, the GM can have one drop another clue to the party. Here are a few of the voices the PCs should hear. (Remember that the PCs will not recognize most of these voices, as they haven't met the NPCs yet. However, they may know Riyan's voice from Oinet's brillet and Sab's from the giant.)

Quiann's voice: "Trapped! You've trapped me . . . to be just another ornament in your little realm!"

Sab's voice: "Will this headband help me pass these barriers?"

Riyan's voice: "Words are not enough. Enchantment also requires other elements. That which protects you also speeds you on your way."

Sab's voice: "Gad — the beast is enormous. A great breach in the continuum, to have brought such a monster here!"

Riyan's voice: "You shall be punished for this upon our return to the land of light. You shall never return here."

Quiann's voice: "You must help me, I haven't the power to escape."

Riyan's voice: "For an apprentice, your mind is too much on worldly things, Sabristus."

Riyan's voice: "Plot whatever revenge you wish, Quiann. While I wear this, nothing of the Darkland can harm me."

Grundge

ST 30, DX 15, IQ 8, HT 18/24.
Speed/Dodge: 7/7.
Parry: 9.
PD/DR: 0/3.
No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Toughness 3, High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Mute (he carries Sab's voice in an amulet).

Skills: Area Knowledge (the Darkland)-10, Brawling-17, Broadsword-18, Dancing-8, Gesture-11, Lip Reading-11, Running-20.

Weapon: Club, 6d crushing.

Size: 4.

Grundge is 16' 3'' tall and built like a very solid oak tree. He weighs 2,100 pounds and none of it is fat. Though not very intelligent, he is very fond of music and dancing and is really quite friendly, though easily bored.

His only weapon is a large club. He also has in his possession a magic helmet (dwarf-sized), which he wears on the forefinger of his right hand. This helmet allows him to see in total darkness. Around his wrist, Grundge wears the amulet containing Sab's voice.

Attacking Grundge

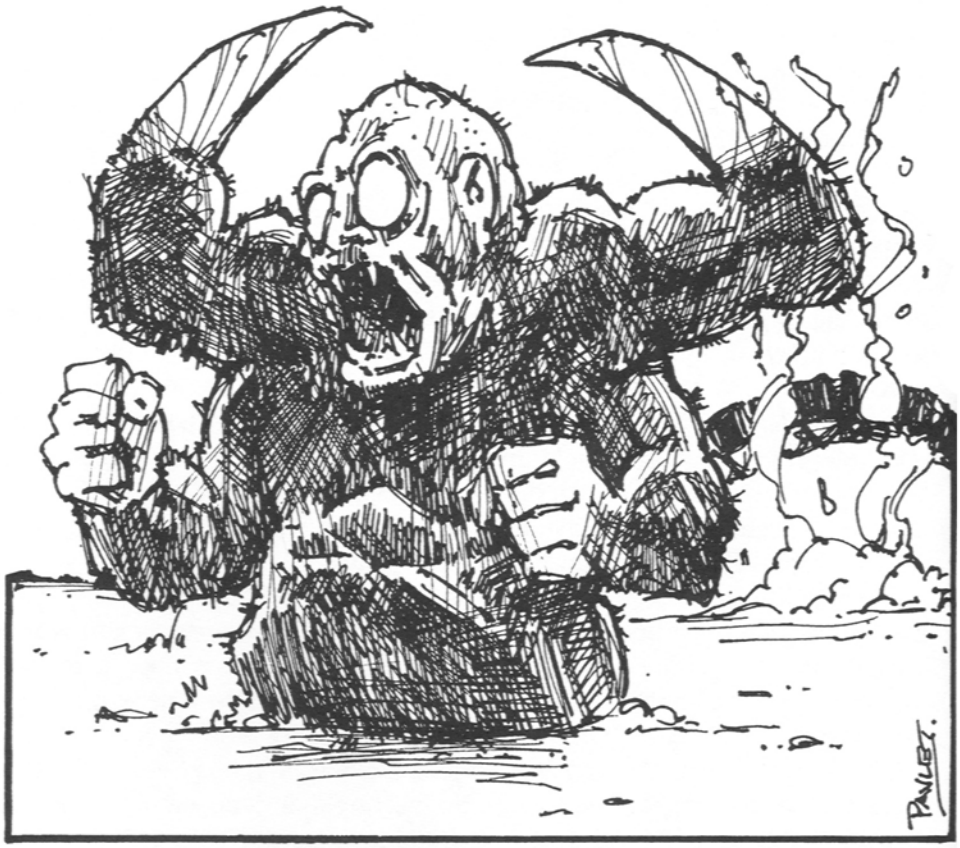
Fighting Grundge would be a mistake for the PCs, but if they choose to do so, there are some logistics that need to be mentioned. Unless any of the PCs are over seven feet tall, Grundge's legs are the only things that can be attacked with a 1-hex range weapon. 2-hex weapons can reach his abdomen, and 3-hex weapons can reach his arms and shoulders.

In battle, Grundge may also pick up PCs and toss them aside. Roll a Quick Contest of DX, with the PC at -2 (Grundge's hands are *big*). If the PC loses, he can try a Quick Contest of ST to break free, but it's not likely on anything less than a critical success. On the next turn, Grundge will toss the PC, causing him 5d-5 falling damage. Grundge will fight savagely to the death.

The Amulet

The amulet that Grundge wears around his wrist is magical; it contains the voice of Sab, Riyan's former apprentice. Grundge was mute before Riyan entrusted the amulet to him. Anyone wearing the amulet can automatically speak in Sab's voice and language, though the wearer gains no knowledge or abilities of the person whose voice has been captured.

Grundge only parts with the amulet if asked by Quiann.



Spells which dazzle victims or feature bright pyrotechnic effects disable the guardians long enough for the party to get past. Viable spells include Flash (p. M49), Light Jet (p. M49), Lightning (p. M32), or others at the GM's discretion.

Guardians who are defeated or dazzled will melt into the ground, giving the party time to cross the bridge safely. But if any intruder tarries more than a minute, a ring of five Black Guardians springs up around him . . . and attacks!

Any ingenious solutions should be considered and played out — the more ingenious, the better.

The Spider Web

Another way to traverse the chasm is by crossing a giant spider web that extends across. This lies to the left of the point where the explorers approach the crevasse (see map, p. 45). The web is a chaotic mass of sticky strands, punctuated by shapeless cocoons of webbing marking the spider's previous kills. There is no sign of the spider.

The strands of the web are 4'' thick and have the consistency of strong rope. It takes one minute to saw through one with a sharp sword. At least 12 strands must be cut before it weakens to the point of collapse. The web is not very flammable; when ignited, it only smokes and smolders, giving off a noxious odor that causes light-headedness to anyone breathing it. (The GM makes a HT roll for the PC. A failed roll indicates that the victim is disoriented: IQ and DX at -2 for ten minutes.)

If a PC tries to cross the web, it takes four minutes to get completely across. Because of the stickiness of the strands, each PC must make a Strength roll each minute to avoid getting stuck. Once stuck, the victim is stranded and must make a ST-2 roll to break free (he can attempt one every ten seconds, but each successive attempt costs a point of fatigue). If he has not broken free after 30 seconds, the spider senses the adventurer's peril and attacks.

The spider will only attack those trapped in the web. It defends itself from other attacks, but all attacks are toward trapped victims. Anyone stuck in the web

is at -6 DX until he can break free. (Note: Those stuck in the web cannot attempt to break free and fight at the same time, so seconds spent in combat do not count toward the ten-second rule for breaking free.) Anyone on the web, but not stuck, can attack and defend at -2 DX. If the party destroys the spider, the PCs can search the web without danger.

The Cocoon

There is one previous kill of interest in the web. A successful Vision roll will show that one cocoon is noticeably larger than the rest. It can be cut open to reveal a bloodless corpse clad in wizard's robes. On the right hand of the late mage's body is a gauntlet of woven gold cloth. This glove is magical; it gives the wearer a "radar sense," functioning as an extended sense of touch. This allows normal movement and perception in total darkness. It has a range of 30 feet. The body also carries a non-magical scroll in an unknown language. The PCs can, when they return to their world, have it translated. The scroll contains instructions and a password that, when spoken in the glowing mist of the portal, will transport the speaker to another world/land/dimension (the GM can use this later to move the players into another adventure). Of course, the party will have to return to the Darkland to use it . . .

The Central Circle

Beyond the crevasse, all is shrouded in cool, glowing mist. Vision is reduced to an arm's length, even with bright light. The party must be very careful; random wandering could result in a PC stumbling into the chasm. The only thing the group can make out is a strong glow 30 yards away. This is the glowing portal at the center of the Darkland. It appears as a luminous sphere, four yards in diameter.

As the party moves toward the light, the sound of a female voice raised in anger drifts toward them from directly ahead. They also smell a sweet, spicy odor and feel a warm, humid breeze. The warmth has created a pocket of visibility in the mist, and the group can see four braziers burning on tall posts. This is the source of the heat.

As they enter the clearing, the PCs see two figures. One is Quiann, a tall willowy woman with pitch-black skin and hair, and reddish eyes. She is clad in a dark red wrap. On her forehead she wears a rust-colored metal band. She is speaking loudly and rather stridently to the man cowering before her.

"You worm," Quiann yells. "What use have I for the likes of you, now that Riyan is dead? Can you send me home? Can you tell me the password? Why, you can't even help yourself! We are trapped here forever . . . together. How romantic!"

The man on the ground is none other than Sab, Oinet's mute apprentice. A successful IQ roll will reveal to a PC that Sab wears a headband identical to Quiann's. Sab is weeping openly and gesturing pitifully in an attempt to express his love for Quiann. He appears to be no threat to anyone.

Upon noticing the party, Quiann's tone changes instantly. She directs her attention solely to the group. Sab takes this opportunity to stumble off into the mist.

Wrapping It All Up

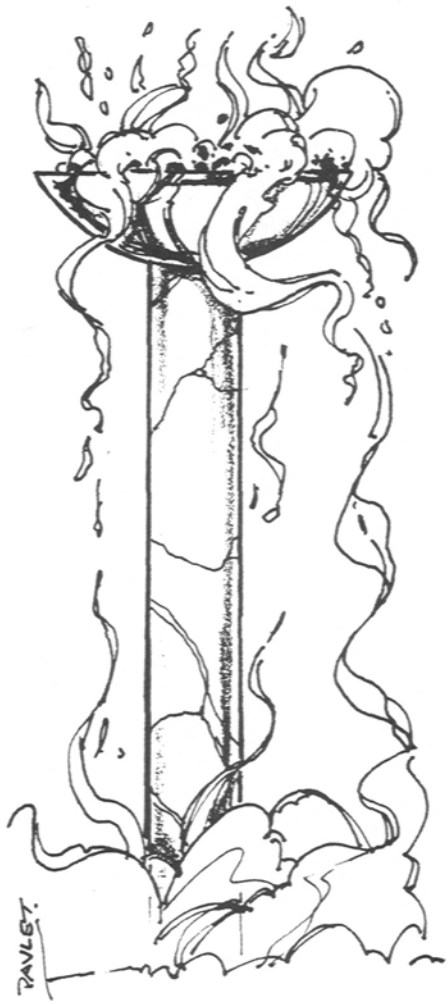
Depending on the party's reaction to this unusual spectacle, this climactic encounter can be resolved in a number of ways. The group can charge immediately after Sab; they can wait and talk to Quiann; or they can split up and divide the two tasks. Quiann, however, insists on making contact with the party.

The Black Guardians

ST: 20	**PD/DR:** 3/7
DX: 20	**Dmg:** Top arms 4d-1 cutting
IQ: 0	Bottom arms 3d+2 crushing
HT: 12/28	
Speed/Dodge: 0/0	
Reach: 2	**Size:** 1

Each Black Guardian is a being of solid darkness, hard as a rock, and embedded in the floor of the Darkland up to the waist. They have four enormous arms, the top two of which end in broadsword-like blades.

The Guardians' only job in the Darkland is to guard the bridges across the crevasse. Once a Guardian is destroyed, if any PCs remain, five more Guardians appear, in a ring around each intruder, one minute later. The Guardians can see perfectly in total darkness, but they cannot detect invisibility and can be fooled by a complex illusion or better. They are extremely sensitive to bright light, and any bright pyrotechnic spell successfully destroys them. Guardians are also completely deaf.



The Spider

ST: 12	**PD/DR:** 2/2
DX: 14	**Dmg:** 1d-1 (+sleep)
IQ: 6	**Reach:** C
HT: 10/15	**Size:** 5
Speed/Dodge: 8/10	**Weight:** 500

The spider who inhabits the web across the crevasse is huge, black and hideous. It lies in wait for anything to get trapped in the sticky strands of its web. The spider then skitters toward the helpless victims and attempts to bite them with its poisonous mandibles. If the bite penetrates a victim's Damage Resistance, he must make a successful HT roll or fall into a deep sleep for 1d hours.

Once a person has succumbed to the sleep, the spider attempts to entrap him in a cocoon of webbing. This process takes ten minutes. The spider comes back three hours later to suck the blood from the victim. Someone who has been completely trapped in a cocoon is not able to break out by himself; the rest of the party must cut him out.

Sabristus

Age 28; tall and stocky, reddish-brown hair, hazel eyes, and dark brown skin; 6' 2", 195 lbs.

ST 15, DX 10, IQ 14, HT 12.

Basic Speed 6.25, Move 6.

No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Magery 3, Acute Hearing +2.

Disadvantages: Mute (temporary), Gullibility, Compulsive Behavior.

Skills: Brawling-12, Gesture-14, Shadowing-16, Stealth-15, Woodworking-12.

Weapons: none.

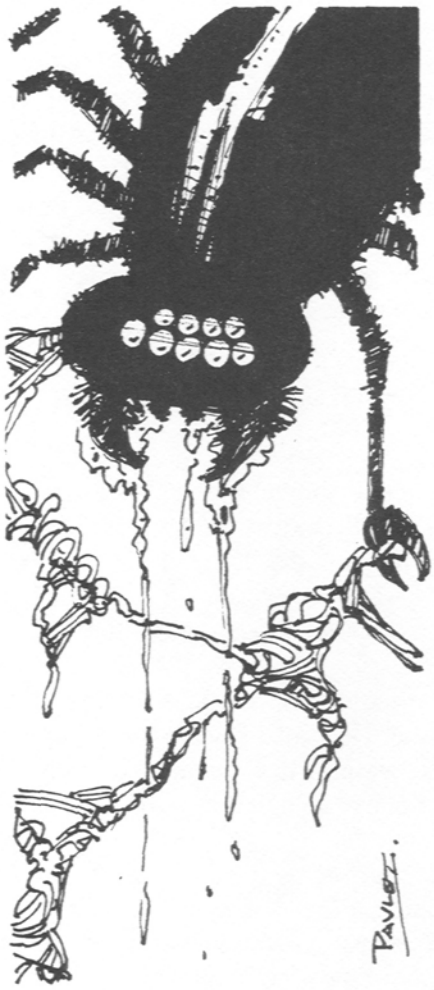
Spells: Seek Plant-12, Identify Plant-12, Shape Plant-15, Light-12, Ignite Fire-13, Create Fire-12.

Sabristus, or "Sab," is Oinet's apprentice woodcarver. Although Oinet doesn't know it, Sab uses his skill in plant magic to aid his work. He is actually Riyan's former apprentice who turned against him. He infiltrated Oinet's shop to regain entrance to the Darkland. Riyan stole Sab's voice and secured it in the Darkland (with Grundge) — Sab wants it back.

Sab has not had much success with the magical arts, so upon returning from the Darkland, if he can avoid the dungeons of Calder, he may take up woodworking for a living.

The Missing Pieces

Here are the events that led to the current situation. Quiann is a sorceress from another dimension — a dimension of total darkness. Riyan lured her into the Darkland and trapped her there; he was a lonely mage who craved human — or near-human — company. However innocent Riyan's intentions might have been, Quiann would have no part of it. She would accept nothing less than to be returned to her own dimension. In an attempt to earn her freedom, she seduced Riyan's apprentice, Sab, to help her in her struggle against Riyan.



Sab was no match for Riyan — in either magery or intellect. Riyan, dismayed by Quiann's rejection and the duplicitous nature of his apprentice, dismissed Sab upon returning to the outside world. The deceitful apprentice would never again come under Riyan's tutelage, nor would he reenter the Darkland to be reunited with his lover, Quiann. Riyan assured this by stealing Sab's voice and storing it in an amulet (which he entrusted to the giant Grundge). Unable to utter the words to cast the simplest spell, Sab was forced to wait until someone managed to gain entrance to the Darkland and then follow behind. (Since Sab possessed a protective headband, he was able to make much better time through the Darkland than the party, reaching the Central Circle well ahead of them.)

Sab's motivations for following the party into the Darkland were, first, to regain his voice and, second, to return to Quiann. If contacted by the group, he attempts to communicate with the PCs and enlist their aid in retrieving his voice. Though he cannot speak, he has a Gesture skill of 14. He can also write a note if anyone thought to bring paper and a writing instrument. (The ground in the central circle is rocky and letters cannot be traced in it.)

Though Quiann holds Sab in contempt, and her presence causes Sab almost unbearable grief, it is possible for them both to attain their goals. Furthermore, the party cannot succeed in its mission without the aid of one of these NPCs. If the PCs work this properly, they can generate a solution that makes everyone happy (except that Sab will never have Quiann).

How The Pieces Fit

Quiann wants to go home. In order to do this, she needs a password. The PCs have it (whether they know it or not). It is "Saminota. Return me to my origin." This is a master password, which returns anyone who uses it to the place where they first entered the Darkland. Riyan put it on the collar tag of Oinet's brillet as a clue for his nephew. (If the PCs can't remember it, or never thought to look at the tag, the GM can use Quiann or Sab to give hints and suggest possibilities.)

Sab wants his voice back. Now that Riyan is dead, only Quiann can get Grundge to relinquish it. Ideally, the party persuades Quiann to return with them to Grundge and get the voice — before they tell her the password. If Sab puts the amulet around his neck, it vanishes, and he is again able to speak. Before he gives the amulet to Quiann, Grundge says, "Grundge not need voice. Nobody here to talk to anyway."

If the password is revealed to Quiann before Sab gets his voice back, the GM should make a Will roll for Quiann. If the roll fails, she will use the password immediately (causing the party to be transported — with or without the inheritance).

The party needs to find the inheritance. If asked about this, Quiann shows the group an inconspicuous mound near the crevasse. Buried in the mound is a cloth sack containing $1,000 and a seamless, but intricately carved, darkwood box. "That's the old wizard's great wealth, I assume," Quiann says. "I have no need for such trifles."

The Portal

The glowing mist is, as it turns out, a portal to the party's dimension, as well as to Quiann's, Grundge's, and an infinity of others — but only for those who know the proper passwords to the given destination (or a master password like "Saminota. Return me to my origin.").

If the PCs try to use the portal without Quiann or Sab, nothing happens. The magic of the portal does not function unless the speaker of the password is wearing one of the protective headbands. If either Quiann or Sab is with the party and one of them speaks the password, every living thing within a ten-foot radius (including unconscious people) is transported, suddenly feeling a falling sensation which ceases abruptly after a few moments. (Everything the PCs are carrying is also transported.)

Quiann

Age appears 25; extremely attractive, jet-black skin, flowing black hair, orange eyes; 5' 10", 145 lbs.

ST 11, DX 11, IQ 16, HT 13.

Basic Speed 6, Move 6.

No armor or encumbrance.

Reaction Bonus: +4 to females, +8 to males.

Advantages: Extremely Beautiful (+2/+6 reaction bonus), Charisma +2, Magic Resistance (+3).

Disadvantages: Overconfidence.

Skills: Diplomacy-16, Fast-Talk-17, Hypnotism-18, Karate-16, Psychology-16, Savoir-Faire-20, Sex Appeal-18.

Quiann is a sorceress from a realm of total darkness. She is ordinarily unable to see in any light, but Riyan has cast a permanent spell on her that allows her to see in light as if it were total darkness. Her skin is jet-black and gives off a pleasant, spicy aroma which has a subtle hypnotic effect on human beings (treat as Hypnotism skill at 18). She has no qualms about using her allure and sex appeal to achieve her own ends.

Quiann is essentially powerless in the Darkland. She does, however, have great knowledge and sensitivity to magic. By dropping a few choice phrases, she can convince those unschooled in the magic arts that she has some real power.

Although she carries no weapons, she is proficient in hand-to-hand combat (treat as Karate skill). She is wearing the headband given to her by Riyan, which protects her from all the dangers of the Darkland.

The Protective Headbands

These enchanted headbands, made of a strange reddish metal, were enchanted by Riyan to protect their wearers from the dangers of the Darkland. When worn, they automatically grow or shrink to fit the wearer's head comfortably. The headbands cannot be broken or damaged in the Darkland, but outside, they have the strength of weak bronze.

Wearing the headbands protects anyone from any non-sentient creatures of the Darkland (IQ 7 or less). In fact, these creatures won't even attack. Wearers are also protected from sinking or falling into the interdimensional void, and from falling while climbing the Darkwall.

The Wristband

This device allows the wearer and up to six other people within a four-hex radius to magically transport into the central circle of the Darkland. It also transports any equipment or clothing that the individuals have on their bodies. This is a useful escape device, but it carries a high cost.

Each time someone is transported by the wristband, he suffers 8 points of fatigue. Furthermore, he loses one point of Health — permanently! The lost HT can only be recovered by spending character points.

The wristband will not transport someone *out* of the Darkland. Speaking a password in the portal is the only way to exit.

Welcome Home

The party finds that the mist has vanished; the PCs are in total darkness. Somebody stumbles on something underfoot — it's Nringa's butter churn. The PCs are back in the kitchen closet in Riyan's house. If Quiann entered the portal with them, she is gone, returned to her own dimension.

If Sab returned with the group, he is arrested immediately by the sheriff and two guards from Tin Hill. Tumban, Nringa's husband, returned to find her bound and gagged. After he released her, she told him that Sab had disappeared into the closet after the adventurers. He immediately rode to town and got the sheriff.

The party is congratulated by the sheriff for capturing the "damn tourist" and invited to stay for dinner by Nringa.

The Inheritance

The chest that the group finds in the sack is one foot wide by one foot deep by 8" tall. It is delicately made of darkwood, and the top and sides are carved with images of night creatures and strange symbols. (At the GM's discretion, these symbols could be translated into passwords for the Darkland portal.) The chest is so perfectly constructed that it appears seamless.

The chest has no apparent lock or opening mechanism; it requires a person with a Woodworking skill of 25 or better to open it. Oinet is more than happy to oblige when the party returns to the cottage with the inheritance. Upon viewing it, he regards the chest itself as a great treasure, prizing its unequalled workmanship. Inside the chest are six of the protective headbands like those worn by Sab and Quiann, a cache of gems and jewels worth $25,000, and a wristband fashioned of a strange, black material — flat black, cold to the touch and radiating magic.

Also in the chest is a rolled piece of parchment. On it, written in a spidery script, is the following message:

To my favorite nephew, Oinet,

I congratulate you on achieving your inheritance, which is nothing less than the entire world. The Darkland is dangerous, true, but for those of spirit and ability — both of which I know you possess in full measure — the land can bring tremendous rewards.

With the wristband in this chest, you will be able to enter the Darkland at will, from wherever you may be in your own world of light and life. Use this power with caution. Even I, with all my research, was unable to save myself from the debilitating effects of its use. Beware of it — you will grow steadily weaker the more you use it.

Only three in the outside world have ever known of the Darkland's existence: myself, now you, and my former apprentice, Sabristus. Be wary of this man, Oinet. Though not especially suited to the study of the mystical arts, Sabristus is single-minded, devious, and he has reason to return to the Darkland. You may be his only means of entrance. I will not elaborate on the circumstances, but Sabristus has suffered — through his own unethical actions — a great loss. He may yet attempt to recover it, and avenge himself on the Darkland in the bargain.

My last request concerns your sister. Nringa is suspicious by nature and, I must admit, hard to love; but she means no harm to you or anyone. Her blood is your blood. Do not forget her. She, too, should share in your inheritance.

Riyan

Finishing Up

Oinet gives the group the agreed-upon percentage of the gold and the seven magical items in the chest. Though he is frankly curious about the Darkland, and

the party's adventure, Nazru positively refuses to let him have anything to do with anything magical (it's against her religion).

If for some reason the party decides to cheat Oinet and keep the treasure, Oinet will alert the city guard of Calder, spread rumors about the deceitful group (giving the party members a -1 reputation in Calder upon recognition), and finally hire a new group of adventurers to track the party down, leading to some interesting adventure possibilities . . .

The brillet stays with Oinet and his family.

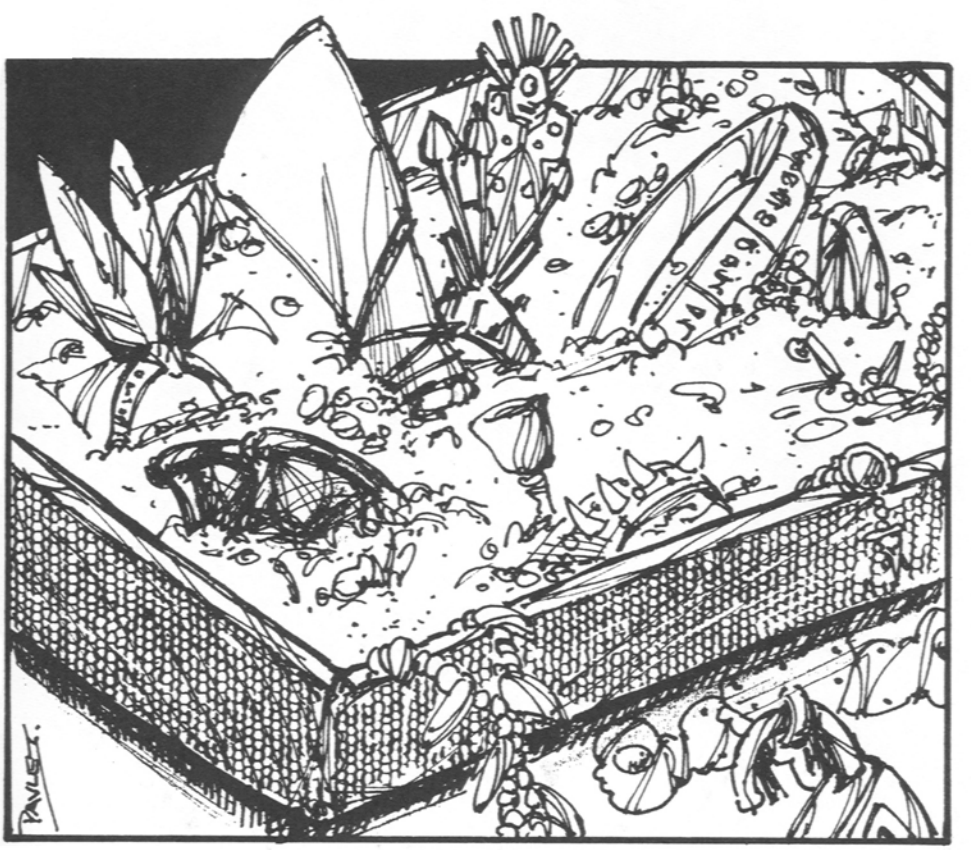
Other Adventures

The Return of Sab

Sab is still desperate to return to the Darkland and Quiann. If he manages to escape from the guard (not too difficult to do in Tin Hill), he will shadow the party, looking for the right chance to steal the wristband. He should prove very persistent, perhaps even getting a group together by promising them great rewards if they help him get to the Darkland.

Darkland II

The party discovers that one of the passwords — either on the scroll they found in the spider's web or on the chest — leads to a mythical land of great adventure and riches; to reach it, they must return to the Darkland. They can use the wristband, but they pay the debilitating costs associated with its use. However, if Oinet and Nringa are on good terms with the adventurers, they will allow them to use the closet entrance for occasional excursions at reasonable hours. Oinet might even agree to sell the house to a wealthy adventurer, assuming adequate provisions are made for Nringa and her husband.



The Nature of the Darkland

The Darkland is basically a "terminal" for magical arrivals and departures between dimensions. No one knows who created it, but the obstacles and creatures that are in it were put there to keep random elements, like Grundge and the elephant, from getting to the central circle. Riyan discovered the Darkland by accident, and he is not the only one who knows about it. Other powerful mages use the Darkland as well.

There are other ways to enter than Riyan's closet and the wristband. Many users have their own methods. Other creatures got there through random "holes" in the fabric of the universe, which open up occasionally for no apparent reason.

PCs who enter the Darkland on a regular basis may well encounter other travelers using the Darkland and the portal.

Character Points

The PCs should get two points each for making it out of the Darkland with the inheritance and their lives. They should also get one bonus point for successfully completing any of the following:

Rescuing Bathausa from the bandits.

Capturing Mazuka and turning him in.

Retrieving the stolen goods from the Angry Goat burglar.

Bonus points can also be awarded for exceptional roleplaying. Subtract one point for each PC captured by Mazuka and one point if they tried to run off with the inheritance (unless it was in character to do so).

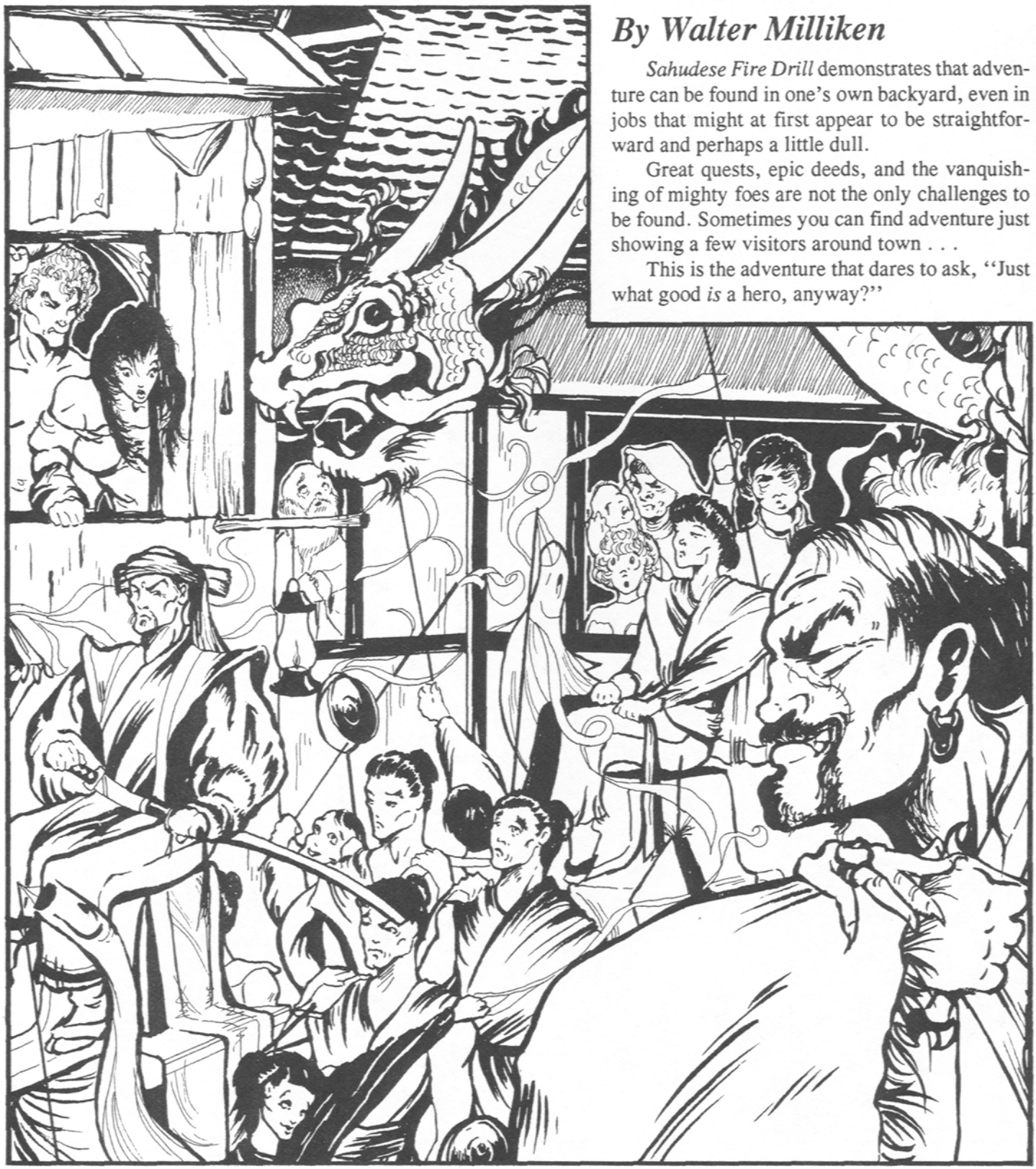
3 SAHUDESE FIRE DRILL

By Walter Milliken

Sahudese Fire Drill demonstrates that adventure can be found in one's own backyard, even in jobs that might at first appear to be straightforward and perhaps a little dull.

Great quests, epic deeds, and the vanquishing of mighty foes are not the only challenges to be found. Sometimes you can find adventure just showing a few visitors around town . . .

This is the adventure that dares to ask, "Just what good *is* a hero, anyway?"



Introduction

This scenario is designed as a change-of-pace adventure for those who are finding life a little bit too easy. It can be used with just about any party, whether they are green adventurers just getting started, or an experienced and well-coordinated group.

When the players are beginning to say, "Ho-hum, another dragon/evil wizard/Orc army" — it's time to spring this one on them.

Setting Up the Scenario

The adventure takes place in Megalos (the city), although it could be run in any city on Yrth, or for that matter any large city in a medieval-type world. For best effect, though, there should be a large number of people about, including some of high status whom it would be better not to annoy . . .

Since the scenario depends on surprising the party with the behavior of the Sahudese, it's best if the PCs have had no previous contact with inhabitants of that nation, and have little idea what to expect. Likewise, they should not know the Sahudese language to any useful extent. Characters from Sahud would spoil the effect, and should not be permitted.

Additionally, it is helpful if the party is unfamiliar with the city of Megalos, so they will be uncertain of the reactions of the city-dwellers, guardsmen, and officials to some of the events which occur. This isn't necessary, but will help maintain an atmosphere of tension — the basic theme of this adventure is treading the fine line between displeasing one's guests and incurring the wrath of the local powers.

Running the Adventure

The whole point of this plot is to run the characters around in circles until they either give up or the GM takes pity on them and lets things end. It's not *quite* a no-win situation, but PCs should regret ever getting involved. On the other hand, the *players* should be having a good time. If they aren't, the Game Master should end things quickly and go on to something else.

This scenario will require a lot of improvisation on the part of the GM. To get in the proper mood, a steady diet of Monty Python, Abbott and Costello, or *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* will prove inspirational. ***Paranoia*** adventures may also be helpful, but can leave the GM with a taste for blood . . .

Summary

This section is a basic outline of *Sahudese Fire Drill*, covering the important information the GM needs to understand while reading the rest of the adventure. The GM should read the rest of the sections carefully before running the adventure, of course. The most important information about the plot and characters is summarized in the chart on p. 79.

The Cast

To make the following sections clearer, the major characters in this adventure are summarized here. More detail on each can be found in the sidebars on the following pages. So without further ado, let us meet . . .

Marcus Aurifactus, a Megalan merchant with, if not a heart of gold, at least a lot of it stashed away elsewhere. He hires the characters to escort . . .

Yarohito Shimota, the head of the Yarohito clan in Sahud, who wishes to arrange a silk trade with Marcus. Along with Shimota comes an army of servants and his son . . .

About the Author

Walter Milliken has lived most of his life in southern New Hampshire, with brief interruptions for schooling in St. Louis, Missouri and Palo Alto, California. He makes his living as a senior computer scientist at a large high-tech company in Cambridge, Mass., and is still somewhat confused about how he wound up writing a fantasy adventure. It seems to have started when he ran "Sahudese Fire Drill" at the local gaming convention, Dovercon IV, in 1988. Combined with the fact that he often playtests for Steve Jackson Games, and occasionally writes articles for *Roleplayer*, it probably all makes sense, somehow. Walter is currently planning to have his sense of humor repaired after completing this adventure.

A Word of Warning

This adventure is — to put it bluntly — a hose job. While the PCs' lives won't be at stake (probably), the same cannot be said for their sanity . . .

Wise GMs will divest their players of potential weapons before running this scenario, or should at least invest in a good Missile Shield spell to ward off thrown dice and the like.

Yarohito Najimatsu, a 12-year-old boy with all the finesse of Godzilla, the intelligence of Professor Moriarty, and the morals of Jack the Ripper. But this juvenile disaster area is only a minor threat compared to . . .

Ah Manchu, the worst enemy of the Yarohito clan. He works through his henchman . . .

The Master of Spring Mud, the head of the Sahudese ninja in Megalos, and the man with the best fried squid in the city. His plans often run at cross purposes to those of . . .

Master Trader Kroveth, a somewhat paranoid competitor of Marcus'.

The Plot, Such As It Is

The adventurers are in the city of Megalos, and are approached, individually or as a group, to perform a little job for an up-and-coming trading concern, the House of Marcus. Marcus is trying to establish a trading connection with a family of Sahudese silk merchants, and has invited the clan head to visit Megalos to close the deal. He hires the adventurers to escort the Sahudese: to keep them out of trouble, keep them happy and guard them from harm. (Marcus fears that both Megalan and Sahudese silk interests will attempt to interfere with the deal.)

There are three plot threads that weave through this adventure. In addition to these threads, a number of individual mini-scenarios are provided. These are self-contained events that don't advance any of the plot lines, but serve merely to highlight the odd behavior of the Sahudese, and sometimes to give the PCs an outlet for their mounting frustrations.

Two of the major plot lines are directly related to Marcus' well-founded fear that interests in both Sahud and Megalos will try to interfere with his deal. The other plot thread concerns the Sahudese merchant's son, and should come as a total surprise to nearly everyone.

The Competitor

Among Marcus' major competitors is Master Trader Kroveth. Although he is not in the silk business himself, he fears Marcus' growing fortunes will soon enable the House of Marcus to squeeze Kroveth Trading out of business. While Marcus is aware of this rival, he does not feel Kroveth worth mentioning to the PCs, since his own goals are leading him away from the markets that Kroveth Trading services, and the Sahudese deal should be of no concern to this competitor.

The party's employer is much more concerned about those merchants already involved with the silk trade. If asked about his competition, Marcus will mention the two major silk merchants in Megalos: Imperial Traders (actually part of the Emperor's own personal holdings), and the Northwinds Company, which trades primarily with the Nomad Lands and Sahud. Kroveth Trading will not come up in conversation with Marcus unless the PCs specifically ask about it.

Throughout this adventure, the paranoid Kroveth will attempt to disrupt the deal between Marcus and the Yarohito clan through whatever means possible.

The Ninja

Like the House of Marcus, the Yarohito clan has rivals and enemies. Chief among these is the powerful Ah clan, which currently has a virtual monopoly on the silk trade in Sahud. Leading this enemy clan is the heartless Ah Manchu, a master of devious plots and reputedly a wizard of great power.

Naturally, the evil Ah Manchu doesn't do his own dirty work. For that, he has henchmen — in Megalos, these are the Master of Spring Mud and his nearly-deadly practical-joking ninja. Their attempts to harass Shimota should at first puzzle, and then annoy his "escorts."

Adapting This Adventure

As written, this adventure is intended for use with the magical world of Yrth, described in ***GURPS Fantasy***. With a bit of work, the situation can be adapted to other fantasy worlds, or even other genres.

If the GM doesn't wish to introduce the rather warped Sahudese culture intact into his game world, he can still have a group of important travelers from mysterious, far-off lands. They may not even be human, which will help explain their customs.

Specific details of Sahudese society will have to be changed, if the foreign culture isn't derived from Oriental origins. The Sahudese concept of honor and the existence of ninja as martial artists may need to be scrapped. The silly accent should also be changed, and the GM should select some suitable animal to replace the stigmatic fox (see p. 89).

The PCs as Walk-Ons

Another way this adventure can be used is to have the characters participate in a few of the events, from the outside. Kroveth hires them to kidnap Najimatsu, or they find themselves in the path of the Sahudese New Year parade. Or Marcus approaches them to handle one of the Sahudese requests.

The events here can also serve as part of the background of the campaign, occasionally interfering with the party as they pursue their own goals.

Playing It Straight

This scenario can be played without the gags, in which case the ninja will be either assassins or thieves after some Yarohito clan treasure. The ninja will have to be toned down in power, since they won't be trying to avoid killing. The ninja resolution scene (p. 95) will need to be rewritten to get rid of the *seppuku* scene. One way is to have Shimota resist the impulse to suicide, attack the Master, and get wounded.

The Brat

The heir-apparent of the Yarohito clan, and the pride of his father, Yarohito Najimatsu is the typical spoiled brat from next door. Assuming, of course, that your neighbor has a boy genius with a sadistic turn of mind and an amazing talent for nasty magical spells . . .

Najimatsu will appear on the surface to be a somewhat bored, not too bright, but well-behaved child. Below the surface, he uses his remarkable talent for magic to cause as much trouble for everyone as he can manage. The unwitting PCs may mistake his "playful" activities for enemy action.

Running Gags

This adventure is intended to be a comedy, with the players enjoying the predicaments of each others' characters as they muddle from one outrageous situation to the next. Like all good comedies, the humor of the situations can be enhanced by running gags — minor, predictable events woven into the adventure as "color." They can also be used by the GM to stir things up when the action seems to be slowing down.

The sidebars on pp. 73-78 contain suggestions for running gags to use in this adventure.

Structure of the Adventure

Following this section are the opening scenes: the player character introduction (*There's One Born Every Minute*), possible PC activities prior to the Sahudese visitors' arrival (*Preparations*), and the initial encounter with the PCs' charges (*Arrival*).

After the initial phases are over, the GM should pick some of the mini-scenarios from the *Events* section to bedevil the characters. Various running gags should be included as appropriate. There is no fixed order to the scenes in the *Events* section.

As plot threads come to an end, the wrap-up scenes can be found in the *Resolutions* section. Finally, the exhausted heroes get to bid the Sahudese a fond — or at least fervent — farewell in *All's Well That Ends in 'Farewell.'*

For the truly sadistic Game Master, some suggestions for follow-up adventures can be found at the end, in the *Further Adventures* section.

There's One Born Every Minute . . .

The PCs should be hungry when this job turns up — this will give them incentive to stick with what will rapidly become a nightmare of confusion. Create a reason why the PCs are short of cash and jobs. Maybe an investment goes bad, or a room is robbed, or a character is accused of a crime by a noble, and a substantial bribe is needed.

The Bait

Through the usual methods — criers, posted notices, barkeeps, and the like — the characters learn that the House of Marcus, a substantial new trading concern, is looking for a team to perform a week-long diplomatic escort job. More details are only available on application for the job at the offices of the trading house, but the pay is reported to be "well above average."

The PCs Give Up

If the players (or their characters) get *really* frustrated with the situation, they may try to quit the job. In this situation, the GM should judge the *players'* attitudes.

If the players seem to be having a good time, and are simply roleplaying their characters' reactions well, try to prolong the situation. Have Marcus offer to double their fee, or threaten to blacklist them — whichever he would think more effective.

On the other hand, the players may simply get tired of the whole mess, and want to bail out. In this case, let them. There's no point in prolonging the situation if it isn't fun. The PCs might simply walk off the job, or they may want to confront Marcus and quit in a huff.

If the characters do stage a final confrontation with Marcus, let him regretfully pay them off for the time and effort they've given him. Play Marcus as very sympathetic:

"I had hoped *you* would be able to cope with them. I'd heard rumors they were difficult to deal with, but discounted them as exaggeration. I'll pay you what I promised, and I hope you won't hold this against me if I need your help in the future."

Marcus Aurifactus

Age 38; brown hair, graying at the temples, brown eyes; 5' 10", 175 lbs.

ST 11, DX 12, IQ 15, HT 11.

Advantages: Very Wealthy; Status 2; Intuition; Charisma +2; Literacy.

Disadvantage: Enemy (Kroveth).

Skills: Accounting-15; Acting-17; Administration-17; Area Knowledge (Megalos)-17; Area Knowledge (Ytarria)-16; Brawling-13; Broadsword-13; Carousing-13; Crossbow-13; Cyphering-14; Diplomacy-16; Economics-14; Fast-Talk-15; Heraldry-15; Knife-13; Arabic-14; Latin-13; Law-14; Leadership-14; Merchant-20; Politics-14; Riding-14; Savoir-Faire-17; Streetwise-14; Tactics-12.

Motivations: Marcus genuinely enjoys business dealings and watching his business grow. He is a fair employer, but demands competence from others to match his own.

Tactics: open new markets, make deals whenever the opportunity offers.

Sample dialogue: "If you sell your goods through me, I guarantee to double your volume in a year."

Marcus has built up the House of Marcus from a one-man operation selling rare woods to a large concern with dozens of employees and several ships. He is justifiably proud of his achievement.

The trader is not politically ambitious, realizing that this would worry some of the paranoid landed lords and also waste more of his time in protocol. He does keep track of political currents in Megalos, though, since they affect his business.

The Interview

After a preliminary meeting with a clerkish flunky at the trader's headquarters, the PCs as a group are invited back the next morning for a final interview with Marcus himself.

The meeting is held in a luxuriously furnished office. The trader is dressed in colorful silks and seated in an armchair made of dark exotic woods from the southern islands. To one side is a beautifully-finished desk, with numerous scrolls and pieces of parchment jammed into pigeonholes in the back, or arranged in loose piles on the desk top. Next to the trader stands a colorless little man with a balding head and ink-stained fingers, holding a wax slate and stylus.

Marcus will first discuss each applicant's skills and previous experience, with special attention to any trading or diplomatic missions they've accompanied.

After this interrogation, he leans back in his chair and thinks for a minute, then speaks. "Very well . . . I think you will be suitable for the task I have in mind. Some of you know that the silk trade with Sahud is very profitable. But only a few traders are involved, and they have exclusive agreements with the Sahudese clans who govern the production of silk in that country. I have been negotiating with one such clan which has recently started producing enough silk for export. The head of this clan, Yarohito Shimota, is on his way here to Megalos to make a deal with me.

"What I need you to do is to escort my visitors while they're here — show them around town, guard them, and keep them happy and out of trouble. Normally, I would have my own staff do this, but I fear that there are those who will try to stop this deal, since there are hundreds of thousands in gold at stake in controlling the silk market. I'm also uncertain about why the Yarohitos are coming here at this time. The Sahudese are a bit strange, but I sense something may be wrong on their end as well. In any case, the rewards are worth a few risks.

"I have assigned my aide Cicero here," the trader gestures with a hand, and the colorless man inclines his head, "to assist you and to handle your expenses. He is a good man, and has my complete trust. He has instructions to provide whatever you or our visitors require."

Marcus sits back and waits for questions. Most issues the PCs bring up will be covered in the next section. Anything else will have to be handled by the GM using the information given about the people involved.

Payment

The merchant will pay the PCs 20% more than a typical rate for their characters (whatever type of job they would normally have). He will go no higher. If the adventurers like to haggle, the GM should initially offer them normal wages. Since they will also get room and board covered, Marcus considers this a more-than-fair rate. They can get up to 10% of a week's pay in advance, if they ask for it.

The job is expected to last about a week. If it lasts longer, the group will be paid for an additional whole week. At the end of the visit, Marcus will pay each of the escorts a $500 bonus — if he succeeds in making a deal with the Sahudese clan.

Preparations

The party is told that the Sahudese delegation is expected sometime in the next two or three days. Until they arrive, the characters are free to pursue any course of action they like. But they should think of several problems facing them, and make preparations.

Logistics

The merchant has made a few arrangements for the care and feeding of the Sahudese group. But there was little warning of their coming — he was engaged in long-range negotiations with the Yarohito clan when they suddenly announced that Yarohito Shimota and a few members of his household were on their way to Megalos to close a deal. Marcus has no idea why the sudden enthusiasm for an immediate contract, but he isn't one to waste an opportunity.

Unfortunately, the message was a little vague about the number of people coming. The merchant expects Shimota and a small entourage of guards and clerks — possibly as many as 20 people. This is the number he gives to the escorts for planning purposes.

Housing

Marcus has rented a large walled house in a city district catering to the more prosperous merchants and the lesser nobility. The main building is for the Yarohito household. An adjacent servants' quarters is to be a base of operations for the PCs, and will also house any extra servants if there isn't enough room in the main house.

The Villa has only one gate set into its 10' high walls, giving it a fortress-like appearance and making it seem very sturdy and secure.

Food

What do the Sahudese eat? In a word, *sushi*. However, finding raw octopus in Megalos may be a bit of a problem. It's all right, though — the ever-helpful Sahudese will invite the characters on board their junk for a fishing expedition.

GM's note: a 90-foot giant squid would make a year's supply of sushi. Just a thought . . .

The visitors will also sample the local cuisine. As a rule, they will find it unpalatable, and they will have difficulty eating slabs of roast beef or fowl with chopsticks. They will also find the local table manners barbaric, and much staring at the locals will take place during meals. The GM may find this useful in making the player characters paranoid, since the Sahudese will mutter to each other during meals when they think they are unobserved, and will refuse to discuss these conversations. (It would be impolite to mention the hosts' shortcomings.) Sahudese culinary customs are detailed in the sidebar, p. 88.

Transportation

Upper-class Sahudese normally travel on foot or by litter. The Yarohitos will expect separate litters to be provided for the clan elder and his son. A horse-drawn carriage may be acceptable, also, if it looks impressive . . . except on alternate Tuesdays and the last week of the month, when horses are unlucky. Really creative characters might find alternative forms of transport, such as an

Cicero Tenax

Age 42; balding with a fringe of white hair, gray eyes; 5'7", 135 lbs.

ST 8, DX 9, IQ 10, HT 9.

Advantages: Eidetic Memory (60 pts.), Lightning Calculator, Literacy.

Disadvantages: Miserliness, Sense of Duty (to Marcus), Cowardice, Bad Sight (nearsighted), Unattractive Appearance.

Skills: Accounting-19; Administration-15; Heraldry-15; Law-16.

Motivations: count the pretty coins. Save Marcus' money. Keep characters from spending money. Make sure the last copper is squeezed from any deal. Count the pretty coins again.

Tactics: complain a lot any time anyone wants to spend money.

Sample dialogue: "It costs *how* much? Do we *really* need an elephant?"

Poor Cicero Tenax has a problem. He wants this deal as badly as his employer does. But he *hates* spending money, even if it's not his. So he is constantly torn between making sure that the Sahudese get everything they need to make them happy, and keeping Marcus from being bankrupted in the process.

Cicero's favorite phrase to the PC's is "Are you *certain* you need that?" Second place goes to "I'm sure we can get a better price somewhere else." Shopping with Cicero will be a long, arduous experience.

The clerk can be manipulated by playing on his fear that the failure of this project will be blamed on him. Direct physical force will also intimidate him, but any character who lays hands on him will find the little man becomes twice as irritating afterward. His reaction to the offending character will automatically become Bad, and he will get even later, in his own way. (See *Payday*, p. 96.)

elephant and howdah. Camels are not recommended, however — they have more Odious Personal Habits than any score of adventurers combined.

On official journeys, such as arrival and departure, the foreigners will expect a procession of Marcus' retainers to accompany them. The size of the parade reflects the status of Marcus, and the regard in which he holds the Yarohito clan. A small group of retainers — a dozen or fewer — to greet them or see them off will be interpreted as a snub. Twenty or more is acceptable, 50 or more will be interpreted as a high honor.

Special elements in the formal processions will add to the prestige. Acrobats, musicians, dancers and guards in dress uniforms will all impress the visitors.

Communication

Much of this adventure assumes that there is great difficulty talking with the Sahudese. Given the various means of communication open to characters with access to magic, the GM will have to come up with reasons to limit unwanted clarity in conveying information.

Knowing the language. PCs who actually know the language above skill level 8 shouldn't be used in this adventure. If absolutely necessary, the GM can allow a character to have the language, but decree that he learned *Low* Sahudese, which would be an insult to use with the noble guests, who must be addressed in the totally different *High* Sahudese.

Learning the language. The characters will not have enough time to learn the language before the Sahudese arrive, and the teachers available only know the written language. Learning to speak the language requires heavy exposure to native speakers in order to learn the tonal nuances. *After* the visit, any character trying to learn Sahudese has had enough exposure to put a half-point into the language skill. Unlike most human tongues, Sahudese is a M/H skill for non-natives.

Translators. Very few people in Megalos speak Sahudese, and fewer still are professional translators. Marcus can find a single translator with Sahudese-8 to hire to accompany the party. (There are better translators, but they all know better than to come into direct contact with the foreigners — they normally translate written material, or handle a short business meeting.)

Entertainment

The Sahudese are eager to sample the various forms of entertainment in Megalos. They will request entertainment every evening, with at least three different acts. There may be a bit of culture shock, though — see *The Show Must Go On,* p. 84.

Brave GMs may want to consider what would happen if the foreigners encounter a Megalan brothel . . .

Information-gathering

Smart characters will attempt to do research on the Sahudese before they arrive. Unfortunately, what information is available is unreliable, contradictory, and vaguely disquieting. The one bit of data that seems to be common to all sources is that the inhabitants of Sahud are all very polite and fond of ceremony and spectacle. Usually.

The Friendly Neighborhood Library

Anyone with Status 1 or better may use the Imperial Library. A $20 bribe to the librarians will also be accepted as evidence of sufficient status. The Library contains tens of thousands of scrolls and books on a wide variety of subjects.

There is no such thing as a card catalog — the assistance of one of the librarians is required. Each librarian has a specialty. The players need one knowledgeable about foreign lands and customs. (There is no librarian specializing in Sahud since there isn't enough call for it, and what material there is on the subject makes no sense.) The assisting librarian will expect a fee of $20 per day, unless the requesting character is Status 4 or higher, in which case there will be a mob of over-helpful staff members fawning over the noble, and making unsubtle inquiries about the possible need for a librarian for his private collection.

The librarian will find several scrolls by travelers to Sahud, none of which agree about anything. (None of the writers have actually been there themselves — all the information is second-or third-hand. No one who's actually *been* in Sahud for any length of time is in any condition to write about the experience, even if they wanted to remember it!)

The GM should feel free to invent any "information" he sees fit. Descriptions of monstrous creatures, tales of cannibalism, worship of demons and dark gods, hints of strange and terrible magics and other fabrications can all be found in this material.

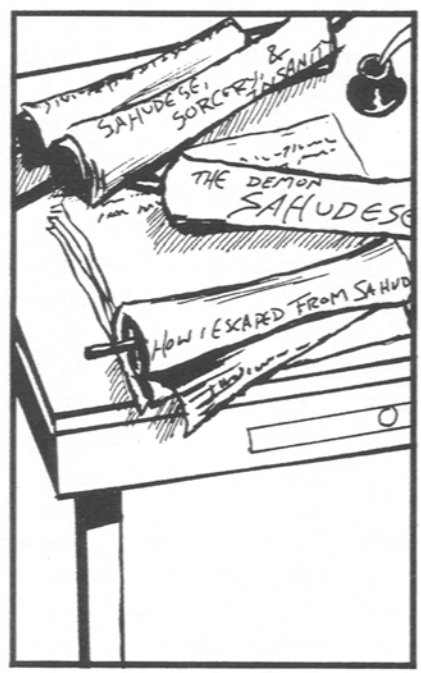
One commonly reported tale is that all the Sahudese are shapeshifters. They aren't, of course, but their customs and attitudes seem to change without warning, which leads outsiders to thoughts of demonic possession or the dual nature of lycanthropes.

The Mages' Guild Library

Members in good standing of any of the Megalan magic guilds can peruse the contents of their guild's reference library. Outsiders are not permitted to use the library.

The guild librarian will be able to find a few scrolls about the practice of magic in Sahud. Several of these mention that some Sahudese schools of magic draw mana from sexual energies. None of the visitors use this form of magic, but it should make the PCs nervous around Sahudese females.

One scroll in Sahudese is nevertheless well-worn — it's a treatise on Tantric magic, with pictures. Very popular with the apprentices . . . The Church would heartily disapprove of the continued existence of this text, if it were aware of it.



Rumors

The party may decide to ask the "man on the street" about the Sahudese, or try for even shadier contacts. Make a Streetwise roll for any PC looking for information.

On a critical failure, they meet the Master of Spring Mud (see sidebar, p. 90), who sets some of his followers on the trail of the PCs, to find out what they are up to. If this happens, the ninja encountered later (see p. 82) will have a very good idea of the party's abilities, and will plan accordingly. The shadowers are expert, and can be detected by a Contest of Vision against their Shadowing skill of 20, and only if someone is specifically looking for a tail.

An ordinary failure produces misinformation: "The Sahudese? Aren't they demon-worshippers?" "I heard they'll only talk to you if you sing everything

Magical Communication

Borrow Language. This spell may be known by one or more PCs, or they may try to hire a Communication and Empathy mage. However, the Sahudese will be mortally affronted at any attempt to cast spells on them, even to aid communications. And they don't have any mages capable of casting either Lend or Borrow Language, or at least won't admit to having any.

Gift of Tongues. This spell isn't much problem, since it's so hard to learn and expensive to maintain. Because it isn't cast on the visitors, they won't have reason to complain about it. One magic item with this spell is available. This headband gives the wearer the Sahudese language at IQ level. Normal energy costs for the spell are required of the user. The item also has a quirk — the wearer speaks Anglish with a Sahudese accent, mixing up "l" and "r." This effect is "always on."

Mind-Reading, Mind-Sending, Mind-Search and Telepathy. The Sahudese believe these spells are not honorable, and will object strongly to their use. If the PCs use them anyway, the first time they get caught, Marcus will chew out the responsible character. A repeat occurrence will result in the offender being fired without pay. Mind-Sending is permissible under certain circumstances, but only when the receiver is expecting a "call."

If the GM permits the use of mind-reading spells, assess the -4 penalty for very alien thought patterns. At the Game Master's option, these spells let the PC read the character's mind — in Sahudese! He loses knowledge of Anglish (and Megalan customs) for the spell duration. When the spell wears off, he retains only a general idea of what the NPC is thinking about.

Alternatively, any successful attempt to mind-read a Sahudese can result in the caster being mentally stunned (see p. B127) as the alien thought-patterns conflict with his. The wizard must make an additional IQ roll at -4 to "snap out of it" and get the information he wants before the spell ends.

you say." "Whatever you do, don't wear anything red — they go berserk if they see that color."

A success locates someone who's actually met a Sahudese before. Make a reaction roll at -4. If the reaction is Poor or worse, the person merely shudders and walks quickly away. A Neutral or Good reaction elicits the comment, "No. You don't want to know. Really you don't." On a Very Good or better reaction, their source advises in a whisper, "You don't want to have anything to do with them. I'd leave town quickly, if I were you."

A First-Hand Account

The party may attempt to locate someone personally familiar with Sahudese culture and customs. This is a good idea, but there's just this one little snag . . .

Inquiry among the various knowledge-peddlers in the city, or a discussion with the Culture librarian at the Imperial Library, will produce the name of a sage who recently visited Sahud.

Malakor is an expert on foreign cultures. He successfully posed as a Moslem in Al-Haz, and even managed to see the holy city of Geb'al-Din. Later, he infiltrated an Orc tribe and observed their barbarous customs. Two years ago, he ventured to Sahud. Their informant knows nothing of his return, but tells the party that he was expected back about now, and gives them the address of his house in the city.

At Malakor's house, the visitors are told by his housekeeper that he's back, but unavailable at present. A small bribe or a successful Fast-Talk roll will elicit the information that "He's still at the Mind Mage's Guild, poor man."

When they inquire at the Mind Mage's Guild, the party is told "The patient is as well as can be expected at this time." A bribe, the use of connections with the guild, or a show of status will produce more information. "We can't seem to counter the spell he's under. At first, he merely stayed curled in a ball and refused to do anything. Recently, we've had some success, but he strikes out at anyone who comes near, screaming something about 'slant-eyed demons in human guise who invade your dreams and steal your soul.'"

The mage shrugs. "Sometimes he stands on his head and chatters in an incomprehensible tongue. We've tried counterspells, memory restoration spells, and even an exorcism. So far, nothing has had much effect. The strange thing is that we can't even detect the spell that did this to him." He shakes his head. "Powerful magic, indeed!"

If the PCs ask to see Malakor anyway, he refuses. "Visitors upset him. He either flies into a rage and attacks them, or he ignores them completely."

All this may cause the party to suspect deep, dark plots. But everything they were told is true — Malakor is simply suffering from coming very close to actually understanding Sahudese customs. The result was severe mental aberrations, of a non-magical nature — sometimes called a nervous breakdown.

Arrival

Mid-morning of the second day on the job, the soon-to-be escorts are found by a runner from Marcus. The merchant has received word (by magical communication from the Yarohito ship) that the junk is somewhat less than a day from the harbor.

Their employer's message requests them to make things ready for an early arrival tomorrow morning, since no one in their right minds travels near a coastline at night — there's too much chance of running the ship aground.

Meanwhile, Back at the Junk . . .

Yarohito Shimota has a small problem — his son. Najimatsu is not the best

Yarohito Shimota

Age 51; black hair, brown eyes; 5'5", 130 lbs.

ST 11, DX 12, IQ 13, HT 10.

Advantages: Status 4 (clan head); Filthy Rich; Literacy.

Disadvantages: Enemy (Ah Manchu); Stubbornness; Sense of Duty (to clan); Code of Honor (noble's code).

Skills: Acting-16; Administration-14; Appreciate Beauty-15 (see p. J30); Bow-13; Calligraphy-13; Detect Lies-15; Diplomacy-14; History-12; Judo-12; Karate-11; Katana (Sahudese broadsword)-13; English-10; Leadership-13; Poetry-13; Politics-14; Savoir-Faire-17; Strategy-13; Tactics-13; Writing-14.

Motivations: Stay out of Sahud for a while, to avoid Ah Manchu and keep son out of trouble. Gain Megalan ally for the clan (House of Marcus). Keep anyone from finding out about Najimatsu's trouble-making until he grows out of it.

Tactics: Drag out negotiations. Try to keep Najimatsu from getting bored. Misunderstand things.

Sample dialogue: "Wourd be gleat honol to meet today, but must pelfolm Lituar of Gakimaju filst."

Shimota dotes on his number-one son, and is secretly dismayed at his wild tendencies. The need to conceal these, and the hope that travel might have a beneficial effect on Najimatsu, is one of the major reasons for the trip. The other was the need to spoil Ah Manchu's plans to decimate the Yarohito clan, as revealed by a Divination spell.

of sailors; the seas are a bit rough, and are getting rougher. Shimota has the mages among his retainers work to speed up the ship using a number of methods — summoning air and water elementals to push the ship, using divination to find the best air and water currents, using Shape Water to smooth the flow of water around the ship, and similar tricks.

At sunset, Najimatsu is still getting greener, so Shimota orders the ship to continue traveling, using Night Vision spells on the lookouts and helmsman. A couple of hours later, the navigator tells Shimota that the ship will arrive in Megalos harbor around midnight. The Sahudese clan head asks his communication mage to notify Marcus of this new arrival time.

If asked why they arrived at such a time, Shimota will quote, "The North Wind brows the bamboo," and ask why his hosts weren't ready for his arrival. He will politely ignore any further questions on this subject.

A successful use of the Psychology skill, or a Diplomacy roll at -3, will reveal he's uncomfortable with this line of questioning. Anyone with the Empathy advantage, or who uses the Detect Lies skill successfully, will discover that he's lying about the reason for the odd arrival time. If a PC mage tries Mind-Reading or something similar, see the sidebar on p. 65.

Docking Maneuvers

Three hours before midnight, another messenger from Marcus finds the head of the PC group (hopefully arriving at an inconvenient time) and relays the news that the Sahudese are now expected in the harbor at midnight. The group has three hours to rearrange whatever preparations they've made for the arrival and greeting. They are also told that Marcus will not be at the dock, but will meet with Yarohito Shimota in the morning. A tired-looking Cicero Tenax arrives a few minutes later, to join the group in the frantic preparations for the early arrival.

The PCs will have to chase down any hirelings they've arranged for — guards, carters, litter-bearers, and the like. Naturally, these people will be scattered around taverns and other favored night-time haunts of the lower classes, and will resent being torn away from their pleasures to meet a bunch of foreigners who are crazy enough to bring a ship into harbor at night. Extra compensation will be demanded for services outside normal hours — in advance.

Finally, a few minutes short of midnight, the PCs will have rounded up all their hirelings and herded them down to the docks to await the arrival of the Sahudese. All this activity at such an unusual hour will draw the attention of the late-night crowd at the dockside taverns. The group's hirelings mix with an assortment of drunken sailors, dock workers, and streetwalkers working the dock. Alert observers (Vision rolls for everybody) will note considerable betting action on whether the PCs are just plain crazy, or a ship really is coming in at midnight. (The odds given are 6 to 1 in favor of the adventurers being crazy.)

Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dock Gone?

As the tension mounts and the characters slowly freeze in the chill wind blowing in from the harbor, Cicero approaches the party leader and points out that there are no docking facilities for the Sahudese ship. Marcus was going to use one of his docks, but they are all full at the moment, and the ship crews dismissed for shore leave. The accountant suggests that the PCs need to find the Harbormaster and arrange for alternate facilities.

Fortunately for the adventurers, the Harbormaster's house is only three blocks back from the quayside and is easily found. (Cicero knows where it is, if nobody thinks of a more creative way to find it.) Finding the house is the only bit of luck the party will have this evening — the Harbormaster has just gotten to sleep after a long day. (There was a warehouse fire at 3 a.m the previous

Yarohito Najimatsu

Age 12; black hair, brown eyes, rather cute; 4'8", 75 lbs.

ST 8, DX 10, IQ 19, HT 9.

Advantages: Literacy; Magical Aptitude 3; Attractive Appearance; Status 3 (clan heir).

Disadvantages: Youth (12 years old); Compulsive Behavior (nasty practical jokes); Sense of Duty (to clan); StuSBornness; Enemy (Ah Manchu).

Skills: Acting-17; Appreciate Beauty-14; Calligraphy-10; Fast-Talk-17; History-13; Judo-9; Anglish-16; Savoir-Faire-21; Spell Throwing (Fireball)-12; Stealth-14; Tactics-13.

Spells (all at 21): Itch; Spasm; Pain; Clumsiness; Tanglefoot; Sense Foes; Sense Emotion; Persuasion; Ignite Fire; Create Fire; Shape Fire; Fireball; Lend Strength; Recover Strength; Simple Illusion; Light; Foolishness; Drunkenness; Sickness; Madness; Fear; Panic; Terror; Forgetfulness; Suggestion; Bravery; Loyalty; Emotion Control; False Memory; Apportation; Locksmith; Undo; Sound.

Motivations: cause trouble. Don't get caught causing trouble.

Tactics: Cast entertaining spells once in a while, from a significant distance (about 5 hexes).

Sample dialogue: None (He doesn't talk to PCs except once).

morning. This has absolutely nothing to do with the adventure, but have the Harbormaster mention it anyway — paranoid players might try to extract significance from this.)

The Harbormaster is *not* happy about being wakened after a half-hour's sleep, especially by some group of idiots who think a ship is going to arrive in the dark of night. He will make this abundantly clear to his visitors, and anyone else in hearing range — about half a mile, in this case. He will be totally uncooperative until someone thinks to offer him a substantial bribe. Something on the order of $100 will do. (Have Cicero offer him $20 if the party doesn't think of bribing him. The Harbormaster will be affronted, but the characters should get the idea. "A lousy 20 silvers? I get more than that for telling sailors which way the ocean is!")

Eventually the PCs should gain the man's grudging cooperation. "Well, let me think . . . there aren't too many docks open tonight — lot of ships came in today to beat the storm the weathermages have predicted for tomorrow. Ah! I've got just the thing! You can use Ruddy Harring's dock. He deals in food staples, and he just emptied his warehouse yesterday. Just ask anyone quayside to direct you to the Pea King's dock."

The Yarohito Women

One of the anonymous well-dressed women in the party is Shimota's wife, Kubihime, and another is his daughter Zurihime (age 17). In accordance with Sahudese custom, neither of these women will talk much in public, nor will they display any significant skills. The other women in their group are attendants.

Thar She Blows!

Finally, an hour after midnight, characters with Acute Vision or Night Vision will notice a dark silhouette enter the harbor. This odd-shaped craft is about the size of a small merchant ship, but unlike any Megalan design. (The Sahudese ship is similar to a Chinese junk.) The peculiar ship coasts to a stop out in the harbor, then begins to circle aimlessly, like a bird looking for a place to roost.

Going Down?

As the Sahudese junk maneuvers in the harbor seeking a place to rest, have the dockside watchers make a Vision roll (Streetwise may be substituted). On a successful roll, the PC notices several scurvy-looking dockworkers talking to a small, clerkish man. The group seems unusually interested in the junk and also has a furtive air about them.

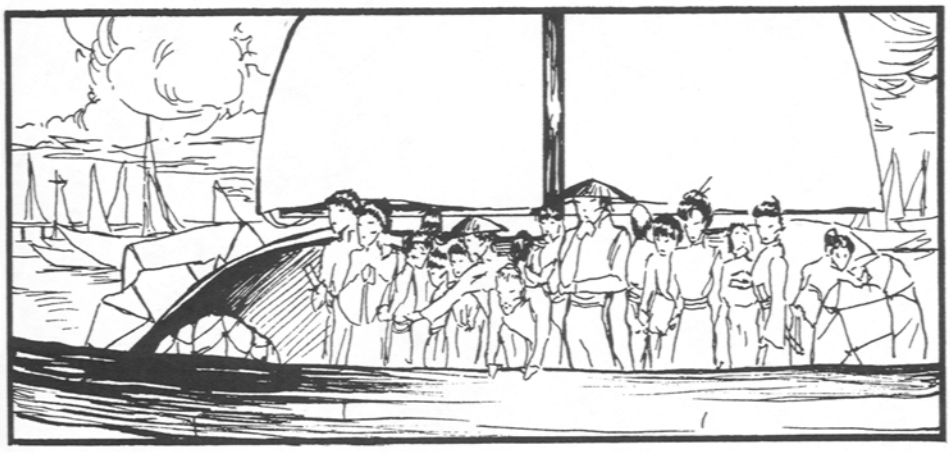
The clerkish man is actually a mage, and is in the process of hiring the men to row him out to the junk, unobserved (he doesn't tell them why he wants to go there). If the group is left alone, the crew will row him out near the junk in a small boat. There the mage will cast Breathe Water on himself, swim down under the junk's keel, and use the Ruin spell on the keel until it rots and breaks.

Things shouldn't get that far, however. The GM should make the whole situation obvious enough that the heroes will interfere with the plan. If all else fails, one of the myriad Sahudese retainers on the ship will use a Repair spell to fix the broken keel, and Shimota will mention the incident to the PCs shortly after he disembarks.

If the adventurers capture the dockworkers, they know nothing other than what is mentioned above — the small man paid them quite handsomely to sneak him near the Sahudese merchant ship. Unfortunately for the questioners, the mage doesn't know much more.

Jordan is a small-time Making & Breaking college specialist who frequents the docks doing minor repair jobs. He was hired in a harborside tavern by a nondescript man dressed like a low-level clerk or warehouse supervisor. The trail will end there for the PCs, since this man was under an Illusion Disguise spell, and there's no physical evidence they can trace him by. The dock mage can be persuaded to tell all this by a modest bribe ($10 or more), or any reasonable threat — he was paid in advance, and has no feeling of loyalty to his employer.

This encounter shouldn't be difficult for the PCs — it serves mostly to put them on alert that someone *is* trying to cause trouble. (The mysterious employer is one of Kroveth's people.) If someone wants to start a fight, the dock scum will oblige with a brawl, and maybe a little knife-waving, but no one here is going to risk getting seriously injured over a job paying a few silvers. Jordan has no real combat abilities, though he might use a Shatter or Disintegrate spell (both at level 16) if threatened with a weapon.



Over Here!

The heroes should realize that the junk is still meandering about the harbor, and that the Sahudese are looking for a parking space, or someone to tell them where to go. The PCs can try any reasonable plan to attract the attention of the Sahudese, or indicate the correct dock.

If they come up with anything halfway entertaining, like a display by a Light or Illusion mage, or a chorus of people singing, "Welcome to Megalos," the Sahudese will respond by all crowding to the rail of the ship to watch the show. The junk will list dangerously to that side, and drift aimlessly as the steersman abandons his post to enjoy the show.

If the entertainment lasts too long, the Sahudese ship will run down and crush several small fishing boats, whose owners immediately appear to demand compensation. Naturally, they will decide the PCs are at fault. If this happens, a group of irate fishermen will plague the group for the next 20 minutes or so, waving knives or dead halibut under their noses to punctuate their complaints.

A Hard Night's Day

Eventually, the junk slides gently up to the dock, and ropes snake off the deck and tie themselves firmly to the dock pilings. PCs who make Vision rolls will notice Sahudese sailors gesturing at the ropes to control them. They might also notice a figure climbing the mast . . .

Suddenly, the entire area around the ship — indeed, the entire harbor and dockside part of the city — is lit by a brilliant white light streaming from the top of the junk's mast. (Think of this like a scene from a UFO movie.)

The Sahudese wizard on the mast critically failed his Continual Light spell. The spell worked — but it's totally out of his control, and also drained his powerstone and all his Fatigue, so he's unconscious. Turning off this spell will require a Counterspell or Dispel Magic, and the mast top is 15 yards above the deck, well out of easy spell range. In addition, the actual source of the spell is impossible to see, due to the blinding light, so Counterspell attempts are at -5.

Naturally, this unnatural day-bright light has attracted the attention of everyone near the docks. There are sounds of shutters being thrown open and lots of shouting and cursing at the keel-slime who are responsible for the light.

Jordan the Mage

Age 27; reddish hair, green eyes; 5'5", 140 lbs.

ST 11, DX 10, IQ 12, HT 11.

Advantages: Literacy; Magical Aptitude 2.

Disadvantages: Greed.

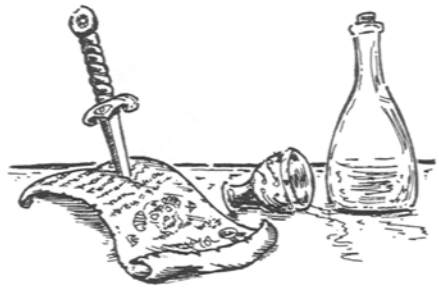
Skills: Brawling-11; Fast-Talk-14; Merchant-13; Shipbuilding-13; Staff-10; Streetwise-12.

Spells: Seek Earth-12; Purify Air-12; Create Air-12; Breathe Water-15; Ignite Fire-12; Extinguish Fire-12; Seek Water-12; Purify Water-12; Create Water-12; Shape Water-12; Destroy Water-12; Water Vision-12; Test Food-12; Decay-12; Find Weakness-12; Weaken-12; Ruin-12; Shatter-12; Rejoin-12; Repair-15.

Motivations: make money, any way possible. Loyalty to employers is strictly optional.

Tactics: stay out of fights, look for opportunities to sell his services (or anything else he can lay his hands on).

Sample dialogue: "You want that hull repaired? Well, it's a tricky job, and I'm busy right now, but I'll give you a special deal because I like you."



"Tiny" the Thug

Age 29; dark hair, brown eyes, cauliflower ears; 7'6", 300 lbs.

ST 18, DX 11, IQ 9, HT 13.

Advantages: Magic Resistance 4; Toughness 2.

Disadvantages: Gigantism; Bad Temper; and Lecherousness.

Skills: Brawling-14.

Motivations: Eat, sleep, work, carouse, have fun in bar fights.

Tactics: Tiny wants to teach the characters a lesson, not kill them. He'll crack a few ribs, or break an arm or two. He won't concentrate his attacks on any one person, but whirl around and bash at a random opponent. Knocking his adversaries off the dock into the cold, scummy harbor is a favorite tactic.

The giant dockworker will not attack a woman with the bench, but try to Grapple her and carry her off "to work off her debt." Hopefully, the PCs won't let him get away with this.

Sample dialogue: "You wimp — I'm gonna knock you to Cardiel."

"Tiny" is a bigger version of Max the Guard from the ***Basic Set*** solo adventure.

The bench is a rather poor, if intimidating, weapon. Even Tiny has to ready it for a turn between attacks, and it does relatively little damage because he hits with the flat top. The bench's basic damage is 4d, but *halve* the damage after DR. The total effect is a lot of Knockback, and rather less real harm to the target.

Keelhauling is the most popular treatment mentioned, with boiling in tar a close second. Sympathetic voices call merely for whipping the miscreants to death, followed by being thrown to the sharks. People pour onto the quayside, shouting and pointing. The Sahudese crowd the rail of the ship and all repeatedly bow in synchrony, acknowledging this enthusiastic greeting.

The shouting and commotion off to the left changes . . . the people there quiet down, and cheers can be heard. Characters making a Hearing roll can catch some of the docksiders shouting, "Way to go, Tiny!" and, "Tiny will show 'em!" A burly dockworker dressed only in dirty underclothes emerges from the crowd, waving an improvised weapon for emphasis — a tavern bench. He steams up to the PCs and swings the bench at the biggest one. See the sidebar (p. 70) for Tiny's description and tactics.

The party shouldn't have any real problem with Tiny, but they need to keep in mind that they're also surrounded by a large crowd in an ugly mood. This mob won't enjoy seeing their champion defeated, and some Fast-Talk or Diplomacy rolls at -2 should be called for before the crowd begins to disperse.

If they do something egregiously stupid like killing Tiny, the mob will turn ugly and attack. Let the PCs get battered to a bloody pulp, and then have the City Guard show up and save them from floating to sea on the outgoing tide.

If the Guard hasn't shown up already, they now do so, telling the leader of the PC group to "get rid of that damn sun-spell" and fining them $200 for disturbing the peace. (Bribery won't help — this offense has too much, ah, visibility for the Guard sergeant to ignore.) The guard detachment then herds most of the spectators back into the taverns, rooming houses, and other structures that clutter the dockside, leaving the adventurers to cope with their own problems.

Up on the ship deck, the Sahudese enjoy the show, alternately bowing and applauding by beating on small gongs.

What Are They Waiting For?

Direct the players' attention to what the Sahudese on the ship are doing — nothing. They're just standing there expectantly at the rail. The observers can now take in the details of the people on the ship. There appear to be at least a hundred people on the deck, as well as various sailors moving about to secure the ship at dock.

Most of the foreigners at the rail look nearly identical: short, sallow-skinned men with short black hair, and slightly slanted eyes, wearing brown robes. Mixed in with them are a few women in similar garb, also with short black hair.

The PCs can glimpse other women standing farther back. They have elaborately-painted robes with colorful flower patterns, and long hair piled up on the tops of their heads. They hide their faces behind expensive-looking fans.

In the center of the rail, four people stand out. A short man wearing an iridescent green silk robe with a golden dragon embroidered around it seems to be the center of attention. On his left side stands a small boy, perhaps about 12 years old, wearing a red silk robe with a smaller golden dragon. Flanking them stand two short, but impressive warriors in brightly-shining red armor and flaring helmets. The warriors stare impassively at the crowd on the dock, and seem motionless. Have the PCs make IQ rolls at -5, if the player states the character is specifically studying the warriors, -8 otherwise. On a success, tell the player that the smaller of the two warriors appears to be female.

The PCs need to find out why the Sahudese are waiting. A number of methods would suffice, the simplest being eavesdropping on the whispered conversations (in Sahudese, of course) on the ship. Various forms of magic will work too, though the GM should see the sidebar on p. 65 if anyone attempts to perform some sort of mind-reading spell on the visitors. Attempts to shout questions at the people on deck will be met with silent bows by the well-dressed man, but no reply.

What the Sahudese are waiting for is the "ritual dragon greeting." The GM should pass these three words to the players somehow when they try to figure out what's going on. They should get no more information than this unless they think of something outrageously clever, or get very lucky.

It's up to the unfortunate heroes to figure out what constitutes a "ritual dragon greeting" — none of their information sources mentioned it, and Cicero has never heard of it. Actually, just about anything the group tries will work, as long as the Sahudese can see a literal or symbolic image of a dragon in the adventurers' actions.

As soon as the "dragon" appears to approach anywhere along the wharf near the ship, there is suddenly activity on the deck. The two samurai break out of their statue imitation, face each other, and bow. The one on the left bows a bit more deeply. Both face the rail again for a moment, then the right samurai releases a bloodcurdling yell and leaps over the side.

The warrior lands gracefully on the dock, drawing his long sword in the process, then charges the "dragon," screaming Sahudese war-cries all the while. When he closes with the "enemy," he attacks it with brilliant swordwork. If there are people involved as part of the "dragon," they will be hit, but only with very light taps with the flat of the blade — the samurai is pulling the blows at the last instant. (This should be good for a Fright Check, at least.)

The Sahudese swordsman will continue to "attack" the "dragon" until it "dies" or surrenders. An inanimate dragon (such as a tavern sign, or a wall-hanging) will be chopped to pieces. An illusion will be attacked until it vanishes,

The Second Housemaster

Age 41; black hair, brown eyes; 5'2", 170 lbs.

ST 10, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 10.

Advantages: Status 1.

Disadvantages: Sense of Duty (to Shimota); Fat (-10 pts.); Stubbornness.

Skills: Administration-12; Anglish-7.

Motivations: keep household operating smoothly.

Tactics: shout a lot at other servants.

Sample dialogue: "Excuse prease. Must stand on one foot, ol offend spilits."

The housemaster is the one Sahudese who really tries to help the party — Shimota is usually busy, and no one else speaks the language. But he can't be talked into doing anything against Sahudese custom (any such Fast-Talk or Diplomacy attempts are at -4).

Prince Chu-Chu

Small gray dog, similar to Earth Pekinese.

ST 3, DX 12, IQ 5 (10 if spirit resident), HT 14/5

Motivations: protect clan. Mark territory. Eat. Get attention.

Tactics: bark at anyone who might be an enemy. Bite their ankles. Mark unattended personal possessions. Yap a lot and run around underfoot.

Prince Chu-Chu is one of a line of dogs bred exclusively by the Heavenking's household and given to others as a sign of favor. The entire breed serves as a repository for the spirit of an ancient warrior of the Heavenking's house, Prince Chu.

The actual characteristics of the spirit are unimportant here, since he only makes a cameo appearance. If the GM wishes, he can be built as a 175-point samurai, including Status 6 (ancestral spirit of a noble). The spirit is unable to do much in dog form, and cannot assume human form under normal conditions.

or acts dead or submissive. A dragon involving real people will have to "play dead" or something similar.

With a flashy gesture, the now-triumphant samurai turns to the ship and bows deeply to the man in green — the dragon is vanquished, and it's safe to come ashore. A gangplank is dropped from the ship and people start scurrying around on deck.

Splitting the Group

Yes, the adventure is likely to split the group here, with some PCs going with the servants and the rest accompanying the procession about the city. This is not as much of a problem as it sounds — the uninvolved players will serve nicely as an audience for the trials of their hapless teammates.

The GM should switch back and forth between groups every few minutes, preferably at a nice "cliffhanger" for the newly-idle group of players to worry about.

If the GM absolutely doesn't want to break up the party, have Cicero handle the group at the house, and send all the player characters go with the procession. Give them occasional hints that all is not well in the city: a glimpse of a column of smoke and sparks, patrols of Guardsman trotting off in the direction of the upper-class district where the house is, Fire and Water mages running about in bedclothes, and similar alarums and excursions.

When the PCs rejoin Cicero at the end of the "tour," he will be worn to a frazzle, and have little tolerance left for any additional problems the group may try to dump on him, such as expenditures for bribes, fines, or general property damage.

All Ashore!

The samurai on the dock moves over to stand at the side of the gangplank, and the other one comes down and stands at attention on the other side. Both freeze back into immobility. Twenty servants disembark and form up in two lines on either side of the ramp. Two more servants roll a bright yellow carpet down the center of the gangplank and out onto the dock.

Someone in the bow of the junk strikes a very loud gong, which is answered ten seconds later by one in the stern. Everyone stands around for a minute. The gongs are repeated. Another minute of silence. The bow gong again, followed this time by the sound of breaking glass in the stern.

Finally, the man in green silk appears at the head of the ramp. He bows to those ashore. The small boy moves up beside him and bows. (If anyone on shore bows back, the bows will be repeated until those on the ship bow without any response from shore.)

The man walks down the ramp, carefully avoiding stepping on the yellow rug by treading only on the three-inch strip of bare wood along the edge of the plank. The boy does likewise on the other side of the ramp. Unlike the man, he wobbles a little, but both make it to the dock safely. Another bow. (And another bowing contest if someone is crazy enough to start one.)

The man approaches the most likely leader of the group on the dock and says in Anglish, "Herro. You all Malcus peeper? Humber serf is Yarohito Shimota." Bow. "My peeper unship now." He turns to face the ship and makes hand signals like a major-league catcher. Much scurrying about on deck results, and a stream of peeper . . . excuse prease, *people* . . . swarm down the gangplank carrying various bundles ranging in size from a fist-sized lump wrapped in red silk to an object the size and shape of a grand piano protected by what appears to be a priceless carpet. They make no effort to avoid the yellow carpet.

The servants mass on the dock with their packages in hand until the PCs show them where to put everything. (Hopefully someone thought to get a wagon for the luggage. Unfortunately, they need about six wagons.) After releasing their burdens, the servants mill about, crowding the dock. The characters will estimate the mob at about a hundred people, and more keep coming from the ship.

This is all an illusion, though — think of the circus act where what seems like 20 clowns get out of a tiny little car. One of the anonymous servants is a Movement college mage, who is sending his fellows back into the ship for more luggage. With all the swarming about, he's hard to spot — have the observers make a Vision roll. The PCs may also get suspicious when they realize that even with all the additions from the ship, the crowd on the dock is getting no denser.

Eventually the stream of bearers from the ship slows to a trickle and then stops. One last servant (the Second Housemaster) comes down the ramp with what appears to be a dirty gray rag on a blue silk cushion. When the man approaches Shimota, the "rag" stirs and begins yapping at the adventurers. This is one of those obnoxious little yappy dogs that seem to spend their life either making noise or lifting their legs next to your favorite pair of boots. Needless to say, "Prince Chu-Chu" will make an indelible impression on the PCs. And their boots. And any other equipment they leave lying around unattended . . .

On the dock now is a mountain of household goods and 103 servants. (Though the observers won't easily be able to get an accurate count!) The PCs now have to figure out a way to get all the junk to the house safely, and without losing any of the army of servants. But the night's headaches aren't over yet.

The Grand Tour

Shimota approaches the leader of the PCs, bows, and states, "Iss time fol to cilcer city now. Yull housemastell wirr show selvants to house now, yess?" Some discussion with the clan head will clarify this somewhat cryptic pronouncement.

The group of Sahudese will split into two parts. Most of the servants and all the well-dressed women will go with the PCs' "housemaster" to the house to get everything ready for Shimota's arrival there. The escorts will have to decide who the "housemaster" is. One of them can perform the role, or they can shove the job off onto Cicero, who will *not* appreciate this honor. By this time, the party should have gotten the idea that leaving the Sahudese on their own is a *bad* idea, and will send some of their number along with the servants, to keep them out of trouble . . . or at least try to (see sidebar *Splitting the Group,* p. 72).

The rest of the Sahudese — about two dozen, including the two samurai, Shimota, and the kid — will circle the city walls along with the remaining adventurers and whatever they've laid on for an honor procession. The Sahudese will not forgo this ritual. "Demons come into city with ship at night . . . velly bad. Cilcering walls wirr chase away."

The hosts should get the idea that there are real demons involved, and that this is some sort of magical ritual to banish them. Shimota will agree to this explanation if anyone offers it while trying to clarify exactly what's going on here. The clan head will emphasize that the demons aren't *his* — they just followed the ship into the harbor at night. "Ship? No demons. Come *with* ship." Naturally, there aren't any demons; this is just Sahudese folklore and ritual. Unless the GM decides otherwise . . .

Let's Get This Sideshow on the Road!

Once the servants have been packed off with the baggage, the remaining Sahudese will start bustling about among a few parcels left behind by the exodus. From these they will produce a wide assortment of noise-making devices: gongs, bells, bull-roarers, and ratchets. Shimota himself takes a very ornate golden gong in a beautiful wooden frame inlaid with ivory and studded with gems. (IQ rolls for characters with Greed are appropriate here.) A group of eight servants unroll a large bundle, revealing it to be a Chinese dragon, of the sort used on Earth in Chinese New Year festivals.

The idea of these people wandering around the city at midnight with lots of noisemakers should be making the PCs uneasy about now. Attempts to persuade Shimota to put away the paraphernalia will be useless. "Demons, they not rike noise. Need to chase away. No othell way."

If the guides protest that *they* can't detect any demons, he will reply, "Solly, Sahudese demons . . . velly tlicky. No see. All . . . you say . . . invisiber. No plobrem. We fix good." He holds up the ornate gong for emphasis. "Gong of Yarohito Higa. Keep demons away velly good." The gong, by the way, is magical — but not demon-repellent. Instead, it's enchanted with a variant of the Great Voice spell, making it easily heard over an area of several city blocks.

Finally, the procession gets moving (unless the guides have found some really clever way of stopping the Sahudese plan). The foreigners will stay to the middle of whatever honor guard their guides have supplied, with the eight-man dragon leading their contingent, dancing from side to side, jingling with small bells sewn to its skirts. Behind it walk a half-dozen of the servants, bearing

Running Gags

Sahudese Customs

The culture of Sahud is *very* strange. Many actions should be odd, and if explanations are requested, they should make no sense to non-Sahudese.

Examples: One Sahudese NPC makes strange hand gestures at anyone he sees wearing a green cloak. Is he a spy, passing information by gestures? Casting a spell? Or is it only that certain ritual warding gestures must be made at anyone wearing the color green, which is unlucky during the morning of the third day of the moon in the Year of the Tiger?

Entering a roomful of Sahudese, the party finds all the servants standing on their heads. They are only honoring the memory of an ancient philosopher, who found this position conducive to meditation. This would be an appropriate setting to quote a few *aphorisms* (see p. 78).

On another day, the PCs arrive for breakfast and notice that all of the Sahudes are wearing black. If questioned, the Second Housmaster explains, "We weah brack ful molning. Iss dislespecfir not weah brack ful molning." The PCs will undoubtedly conclude that an important Sahudese has died, and they'd better change into something black. But as soon as afternoon rolls around, the Sahudese change back to their traditional brown, and the characters are told "Prease to change. Iss bad ruck weah brack in aftelnoon."

The GM should invent other customs as needed to harass the characters. After a while, the players should lose their natural tendency to believe every event is of significance — that's when the *real* clues should start appearing. The ***GURPS Japan*** sourcebook is an excellent starting point for inventing Sahudese customs. Simply pick a Japanese custom and distort it beyond all reason or recognition.

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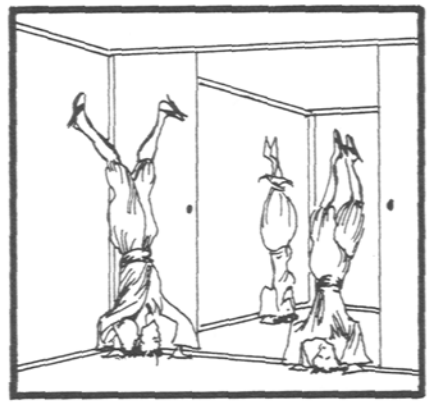

Running Gags (Continued)

Fright Checks

A good running gag is to have occasional Megalan passers-by notice the Sahudese, stop dead in their tracks, and then run away as though pursued by demons. What's happening, of course, is that these are people who've had personal experiences with the Sahudese before . . . poor souls! They've just failed a Fright Check, and are fleeing in mindless panic. This should make the PCs curious about why they are being treated as though they had the plague. Eventually they will understand, all too well.

The City Guard

City guardsmen, who show up from time to time in response to various disasters, react somewhat differently than most citizens. They will carefully avoid any contact with the Sahudese, and insist that their escorts — the adventurers — are responsible for whatever is going on.

Tales in the guardhouse about Sahudese behavior have shown them that it's bad luck to get involved with the foreigners. Being made of sterner stuff than the average citizen, they have evolved a perfect method of coping with the problem — pass the buck!

Squads of guards responding to the current disaster area will be eager to accept a bribe, or a round of free drinks in the nearest tavern, and ignore the problem. If the PCs aren't smart enough to think of this themselves, the guards will make very pointed suggestions until they catch on.

Translation Problems

Most of the Sahudese don't speak Anglish, and those that do, don't speak it very well (at most Anglish-10). And none of the PCs understands Sahudese. So the party needs a translator. Fortunately, the House of Marcus has supplied one. Unfortunately, he's not very good (Sahudese-8). And the Sahudese language is just *full* of idioms and flowery phrases that are very hard (-3 to skill) to translate . . .

Likewise, any time a player uses an English idiom while his character is attempting to communicate with a Sahudese NPC, the GM should roll the NPC's Anglish skill at -3, to see how mangled the translation is.

Given the generally low skill levels involved, misunderstandings should abound. As a special dispensation from the GM, Sahudese NPCs can misunderstand any mangled translation in an immediately applicable way: "But, honolaber sil, youl honolaber serf tord humber me to thlow guald in duck pond."

Continued on next page . . .

gongs and ratchets, which they use with great enthusiasm. Shimota's litter (or whatever alternative transportation has been provided) comes next, flanked by the two samurai.

Following him are two servants with bull-roarers, who occasionally whirl around like dervishes (making a noise that might just wake the dead), stop, and point in a random direction. (Nothing interesting is ever visible where they're pointing, but the PCs will be told that these are the "demon-findels," if they're unwise enough to inquire.) The young boy comes next in another litter (or whatever), with the remaining servants bringing up the rear with assorted instruments of musical torture.

The player characters and their hirelings can be posted around or within this formation as desired (though anyone too close runs the risk of being sideswiped by the dragon dancers — treat as a Slam attack with a DX of 13 and an ST of 12 — or hit in the head with a bull-roarer for 1 point of crushing damage).

The Longest Distance Between Two Points

Now the characters get to guide their charges around the city walls. If the PCs are smart, they'll go around the *Old Wall* — the one that circles the original part of the city by the harbor. This is about a four-mile trek, and will take about an hour and a half, not counting interruptions . . .

If the PCs are *not* smart, they'll circle the *New Wall* — the one that surrounds most of the present city. This one is longer . . . much longer. If they herd their charges along this wall, they'll still be walking well into morning; the New Wall is about 20 miles in length! Area Knowledge or Common Sense will give the PCs an advantage in making the decision. Telling Shimota about the New Wall would be a bad idea. He'll insist on taking that route, if he finds out about it.

Full of Sound and Fury . . .

Naturally, all this noise and commotion is going to attract attention. The residents of the neighborhoods which the parade passes are *not* going to be happy about the eerie wailing, booming gongs, and tinkling bells. Fortunately for the lucky guides, nearly everybody is asleep this time of night, so most of the potential complainants won't make it to the street before the show is over and gone. Many of those who are awake will simply cower in their houses, convinced the city has been invaded by demons — or something worse. (Make sure the PCs get to hear the rumors this incident starts over the next few days.)

A small number of brave souls will venture into the street in time to catch the group, and a few more will be encountered already on the street. Most of the neighborhoods along the Old Wall are part of the low-rent district around the docks, so there's not much chance of annoying someone *really* important. The GM should pick some of the following encounters to liven up the trip (and give the group on tour something to do while the house party is in progress). The Guard one should *always* be used — it's not reasonable for such a major commotion to be ignored for long. This meeting should take place early in the tour.

Townsfolk — a few of the bravest locals will come out and chase after the parade for a few blocks, shouting threats, curses, or prayers for divine wrath. The y can be ignored — they're no threat to such a large group, and they'll give up following after a few blocks.

City Guard — Megalos' finest will respond to citizen complaints. Once the Guard finds out what's going on, they will appear somewhat nervous (see the sidebar on p. 74). The sergeant leading the Guard troop will spot the PCs and inquire who is in charge. He will then tell the group leader, "Ya can't have a parade witout a permit. Gotta permit?" Unless the leader comes up with a good alternative, quickly, he will be escorted to the nearby guardpost to get a permit from the night guard captain. This permit will cost $500, cash. (This may be a

problem unless Cicero is with the group. The GM should permit the characters to talk the captain into accepting a higher value in goods — say, a really nice broadsword.)

The "permit" isn't really required — this is simply a bribe to the Guard to compensate them for all the flack they're going to get in the morning. PCs with Common Sense will realize this. They will also realize that they will have to bribe the Guard in each sector of the city that they pass through, otherwise this encounter will be repeated. However, for an additional $200, the Guard captain will send runners to the remaining sectors to tell them that the parade is "authorized" and should be left alone.

Nobleman — Lord Cargus is heading home from a night out slumming in the seedier part of town. He is somewhat the worse for wear, and has taken an intense dislike to the Gong of Yarohito Higa, which Shimota strikes about once a block. He orders his bodyguard (six burly goon-types) to take the gong away from "that yellow demon" and smash it to pieces . . . quietly. Fortunately, the bodyguard, equipped only with heavy leather armor and shortswords, can recognize when they're outnumbered. They seem quite reluctant to carry out Cargus' order. The escorts can undoubtedly reach some accommodation with them. The GM should point out, if necessary, that violence against a noble — even a minor one — is *not* a good idea in status-riddled Megalos. However, Cargus is too intoxicated to notice a subtle assault with magic or a quick sap to the head. Offering Cargus a wineskin of really good wine will earn them a Very Good reaction, and he will promptly pass out.

Town wizard — working late on some spell research, which is interrupted at a bad moment by the Gong of Yarohito Higa. Robe smouldering, he runs along a street parallel to the party and casts a 4-hex radius Ice Slick on the next intersection (using a small Powerstone to cover half the cost). He then sticks around to watch the fun, but will flee if confronted.

A real demon — but only a small one. The Gong distracts a necromancer just as he attempts to control a demon he has summoned. The caster is protected by a Pentagram spell, so the demon seeks the nearest place to cause trouble — the parade outside. The demon is ST 10, DX 12, IQ 8, HT 12, attacks with long claws for 1d cutting damage, has Magic Resistance +5, wings (Speed 8 in the air), and the Madness spell at level 25. If someone uses the Gong on it, it just giggles maniacally for a turn as nothing happens. It will attack members of the parade at random using its Madness spell until it falls to three hit points or less, at which point it will fly off in search of easier prey. The Sahudese will do nothing about the demon, unless it threatens either Yarohito, in which case the samurai will attack it, or it happens to fly into the path of one of the bull-roarers (which will knock it out of the air and do 1 hit of crushing damage to it).

Wizards Anonymous

After about an hour of traipsing around in the city, Yarohito Najimatsu (the brat) gets bored of watching the sights and the antics of the escort, and decides to stir things up a little. Picking one of the player characters — preferably a well-armored one — who is about 10 to 15 feet from his litter, he casts an Itch spell at level 21. He will lie low during any ensuing commotion, then attempt something else about ten minutes later. The Pain spell on a passing PC's horse might be entertaining, or perhaps Drunkenness or Sickness on a hired guard.

The GM should keep clues about this to a minimum, and provide some red herrings for the escorts to chase. They should believe this to be the preliminary to an enemy attack, not a juvenile delinquent in action. Remember that the brat is a genius, and will take care not to expose himself. There will always be other candidates for the source of any attack, and he will only cast spells at sufficient

Running Gags (Continued)

"They All Look Alike to Me"

There are *lots* of Sahudese retainers with the Yarohitos. And Megalans aren't familiar with their facial features, so the PCs will have trouble telling various of the foreigners apart. Shimota and Najimatsu can always be distinguished by their expensive dress, and the samurai are obvious, though they can't be easily told apart from each other.

To complicate things, all the other retainers wear the same sort of clothing. The characters will be able to distinguish male from female, but that's about all. A PC momentarily distracted from a conversation with the Second Housemaster may turn back to him to continue, only to find the uncomprehending smile of the equally-chubby assistant cook.

Recognizing a specific Sahudese character requires an IQ roll at -3. First-level Eidetic Memory reduces the penalty to -1, and second-level eidetics roll against IQ+2.

To make things even worse, the Sahudese — especially Shimota and the Second Housemaster — cannot seem to tell Megalans from one another unless there is some overwhelming distinctive mark like bright red hair or Gigantism. To solve this, they seize upon people's clothes as distinguishing features, which means that as soon as the PCs change clothes, the Sahudese begin learning everyone's names — *again*.

Because of their difficulties in telling apart the "round eyes," the Sahudese are fooled by the simplest of disguises, even accidental ones like ladies' cosmetics. This will help the PCs later in the adventure if they have to set up a phony audience with the "Emperor." None of this applies, of course, to the ninja, who are accustomed to Caucasian features and are themselves masters of disguise.

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Running Gags (Continued)

Silly Accents

Naturally, when Sahudese characters speak Anglish, they do it with a horrible accent. Study 1940s and 1950s movies with Oriental characters as a model. Several Monty Python episodes also feature extremely phony-sounding Japanese accents. Try to emulate them.

Use very broken English. Mix up 'l' and 'r' a lot — suitably bad examples are scattered throughout this adventure. With practice, you can probably do lots worse. Your players will appreciate it.

Whatever you do, don't be too consistent about it — consistency is *not* characteristic of anything Sahudese. That way, the players will never be sure whether "gord root" is something to do with pirates or some ugly brown vegetable matter in an alchemist's shop.

Even more sadistic (and typically Sahudese) is the Totally Incomprehensible Statement. The PCs will never get it — because it's gibberish. The GM, playing the NPC, repeats the phrase over and over, enunciating very clearly, with slight variations, louder and louder, and finally gives up in total frustration. But it never gets any better than "Impoltant we clabber the ring gow more tea. Clatter! Ring gow! Ling GOW, more TEA!! Impoltant clabber more tea! Ling gow! Prease?" If the GM makes some secret die rolls, shakes his head and giggles before going back to the game, the players will lose their minds wondering what they are missing. (If a translator is brought in, he will listen carefully and say "Nevel mind, iss too rate. Iss not impoltant now." Possibly while looking desperately worried.)

Politeness

The Sahudese are polite — to a fault. They will always appear cool and calm, and expect others to do so. They are also trying to be good guests, to do what their hosts ask of them and to follow their hosts' customs as much as possible. Given the translation difficulties, this eagerness to please may not produce *quite* the results the PCs would like . . .

The GM should inject "prease," "honolaber sil" and "thank you velly much" as often as he can when speaking as one of the Sahudese NPCs. After a while, the characters ought to get thoroughly sick of politeness.

Continued on next page . . .

range that he will not be a likely suspect. After the second "attack," he will resist the temptation to cause any more trouble until the house is reached.

Meanwhile, Back at the Villa . . .

Whoever is shepherding the 80-odd Sahudese servants and the several wagon-loads of baggage manages to get them to the rented villa without major incident. (Shepherding is perhaps an all too accurate term . . . the servants mill about like sheep on the trip, with little groups breaking off on their own as something attracts their attention.) Directing them is difficult, due to the fact that none of the Sahudese in the group except the Second Housemaster speak any Anglish. Since they are trying to be cooperative, though, and the streets are rather dead at this time of night, there are no significant problems.

The GM should run the first encounter or two of the Grand Tour group during the period of time it takes the baggage train to reach the house. The players are running the house group will probably be happy that all the major misfortunes are befalling the others. This is about to change . . .

Cleaning House

When the baggage train reaches the villa, the milling group of servants suddenly breaks up into a confusing melee of purposeful activity: some of the Sahudese head for the house bearing cleaning implements, while others unpack wall screens, low tables, floor mats and other bits of furniture and carry them into the house. The large piano-shaped object is carefully unwrapped to reveal a number of dwarf trees warped into peculiar shapes. A servant with a sharp knife starts carefully pruning the shrubs near the house.

In the general confusion, several more Sahudese come *out* of the house bearing Megalan furniture, which they carry out to the street and stack carefully. Have the any PCs present make a Vision roll to notice a servant gesture at the pile and set it aflame with a 3-hex Create Fire spell. (Actually, it's an Essential Fire spell, but the PCs won't know this unless they include a Fire mage in their number, or until they discover that water won't put out the blaze.)

While the PCs are attempting to deal with the furniture fire, have them make a Hearing roll at -3. On a success, they notice hammering sounds from the house. Otherwise, they don't realize the Sahudese are removing the walls as well as the furniture until a group of them toss chunks of lath, plaster and small wooden beams onto the growing bonfire.

The party may try to stop the destruction of the obviously expensive furniture, and try even harder to stop the unauthorized architectural modifications. All such attempts are doomed from the start for two reasons: the servants greatly outnumber the PCs, and stopping one physically means a dozen more are working unchecked. In addition, the characters can't communicate any orders to the Sahudese, due to the language barrier. Smart escorts will try Gesture skill, which will fall flat due to cultural differences — the addressed servant will bow, repeat the gesture back to the PC, and proceed with whatever he was doing.

In executing this scene, the GM should strive for the sense of inevitable doom found in the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" segment of Disney's *Fantasia*. In fact, Dukas' "Sorcerer's Apprentice" would make ideal background music here. At this point, truly sadistic GMs will switch back to the Grand Tour group.

Bringing Down the House

By this time, the escorts should be frantically seeking the one Sahudese they can talk with — the Second Housemaster. Unfortunately, this is difficult, since the servants are hard to tell apart (see sidebar, p. 75), and no one appears to be giving orders. Eventually, the GM should have him turn up at the elbow of one of the player characters in the house. He bows, smiles beatifically, and announces, "See? Fix house fol Yarohito-sama." He seems quite proud of the industry of his cadre as more beams are toted out and the ceiling creaks alarmingly.

Two of the bulkier servants pass by carrying a large portion of stairway, while others start chopping a main support beam with axes. A female servant unrolls woven mats on the floor, and two men nearby seem to be arguing over the exact placement of one of the painted paper screens that have replaced the walls, alternately moving it an inch to the right or left, and bowing aggressively at each other.

A few exchanges of broken Anglish with the Second Housemaster will suffice to get everyone to stop until the PCs have a chance to straighten things out. If asked, the head servant will explain about the All-Out Redecorating maneuver. "Must thlow out ord fulnitule — velly bad ruck keep plevious ownel's. Anscetol's spilits might hang alound. Buln to honol them."

The carpentry work has a different origin: "Buird big heavy house of stlong mateliars — angel ealth spilits. Make glound shake, house farr down. We fix house so ealth spilits not angly." The guides should explain to him that the heavy

Running Gags (Continued)

Imitation

Since the Sahudese are trying to emulate their host country's customs, they will observe what is going on around them very carefully, and attempt to imitate it. The customs of Megalos are very strange to them, and they will be very unselective in applying what they observe. Do they see a pickpocket plying his trade in the marketplace? . . .

Inconsistency

After the characters have seen some of the Sahudese customs in action, they may feel that they understand them. Not likely! Every custom is hedged around with conditions and modifiers. The time of day, the phase of the moon, and the number of people present in a room are all good reasons to change the way a custom is applied. An honor in the morning may be an insult in the afternoon.

If PCs inquire about the rules governing their charges' customs, they should get an explanation that would make the U.S. tax code sound simple. Many Sahudese will gather around the questioner, each adding a phrase or two to the explanation.

Should the characters pursue the matter further, let them converse with the household Ritual Master of the Northwest Sea, Fourth Degree. He will prove to be an inexhaustible — and unstoppable — source of information about any custom the PCs inquire about. After listening to his three-hour explanation of the proper ways to position the handles of teacups at various times of day, they'll probably give up. Of course, none of the visitor's teacups have handles . . . but won't the escorts be happy to know what to do if they run across any that do?

Continued on next page . . .

slate roof is likely to fall in if any more beams are removed, and that there aren't any earthquakes in Megalos (there aren't — at least not natural ones). The Housemaster will look at the groaning roof, and call off further removal of load-bearing walls. He will not back down on the furniture removal and barbecue, however — this is a religious issue with the Sahudese.

Just Call 9-1-1

With the house safe, for the moment, the player characters are now free to do something about the fire. The one thing they *can't* do is put it out. If they succeed in this, Yarohito's staff will simply start another one elsewhere. At least the bonfire in the street is well-controlled, burning in the middle of the cobblestone street, with nothing flammable nearby. However, a new complication arrives in the form of a troop of City Guards, investigating the pillar of smoke and flame shooting from the blaze. With the Guard comes an apprentice Water mage to help put out the fire.

The sergeant glares at the busy Sahudese, without effect, and then spots the PCs. Putting on his best "What's all this, then?" manner, he stomps over to confront anyone Megalan who seems to be in authority. Meanwhile, the poor Water mage tries — unsuccessfully — to put out the fire. (He doesn't have the Essential Water spell. What can be expected from the lowly apprentice who drew the graveyard shift?)

The group will have to find some way of dealing with the Guard. Bribery will work well. ("Can you give us a fire permit, Sergeant?") Offering the guard troop free drinks in the nearest tavern will also work. The sergeant can see that the fire is actually under control, so he's not going to worry about his beat burning down on *his* watch. Thus he will feel free to indulge himself in extorting the maximum benefit from the situation. Sergeant of the Guard Roric has a Merchant skill of 16, if anyone tries to bargain with him. He is also Greedy, and will keep an eye out for further opportunities for profit in the Sahudese presence here.

I Love It When a Plot Comes Together

Eventually, the "Grand Tour" group arrives at the house, which has been thoroughly renovated, and now resembles a swanky Japanese restaurant inside. (Don't forget to make the adventurers remove their boots on entering the house. The foreigners will politely refrain from making comments about the resulting odor.) Now let everyone get a good night's rest — at least the three hours left of it.

Hmmm . . . just one little detail left to solve. There are about 70 more servants than can be accommodated in the main house. These will have to share the auxiliary servant's quarters with the party. Unfortunately, it is only designed to sleep about 20. Nighty-night . . .

Events

After the Sahudese arrive and are settled in, no fixed set of events takes place. Instead, this section contains a number of mini-scenarios with which the GM can harass the player characters. Some of the incidents are tied into the plot threads mentioned in the plot summary above. If the GM uses one of these plot threads, he should plan on inserting the appropriate final scene from the *Resolutions* section (p. 92).

The quick-reference table below lists all the events in this section, along with their locations, participants and resolution scene (if any). The GM should read all the encounters in this section, and pick a few favorites, using the table to guide him on how and when to drop in one of these scenes. Most players

Running Gags (Continued)

Aphorisms

No Oriental character is complete without a few phrases of Oriental wisdom. Except the Sahudese — they have plenty of *sayings*, but it's very hard to extract *wisdom* from them. A few examples are in order:

"The fox may defeat the dragon, but he cannot teach him to sing."

"The wise man knows when he is dead. So does the fool."

"It is said that the leaves are green in the forest."

"The ox is like the bamboo floating on the ocean."

"If a tree claps in the forest, does it fall?"

"The katana has two sides, do not confuse them."

"A woman with her wig askew is very like a man whose garments do not match."

"The carp is wise and beautiful, but the trout tastes better when fried with lemon."

"The monkey chatters loudly and scratches itself in public."

"The wise man seldom smites himself upon the head."

"If your day becomes tedious, you may always seek an honorable death."

"If you can count to four, you are indeed wise and knowledgeable."

"The Round-Eyes do not trample and gore their visitors, but the rhino will bathe."

"To be devoured by swine is not an honorable death."

"The toad may laugh at the dragon — but only once."

"Observe the fall of the leaf and the flight of the crane, then eat a light meal and go to bed."

Of course, the GM should feel free to invent his own aphorisms. Old Charlie Chan movies can be extremely helpful here. Some aphorisms might actually have some bearing on the plot, but they should be well-buried in meaningless verbiage.

probably won't sit through *all* the scenes given here, so the GM should choose those that will best suit the group's playing style.

Event Quick-Reference Chart

Section Title	*Page*	*Plotline*	*Location*	*NPCs*
Ninja Attacks	79	ninja	anywhere	Shimota, Najimatsu
Brat Attacks	80	brat	anywhere	Najimatsu, crowd
Shopping Expeditions	81	—	marketplace	Sahudese, merchants, Megalans
Night of the Ninja	82	ninja	villa	Sahudese, lots of ninja
They Want to Visit *Who*?	83	—	"palace"	Shimota, Chu-Chu, "Emperor"
The Show Must Go On	84	—	villa, city	Sahudese, entertainers
Duelling Woks	86	—	villa	samurai, Shimota, Housemaster
Captured!	87	Kroveth	city street	Najimatsu, thugs
Cupid's Shuriken	88	—	villa	female samurai
Let's Make a Deal	89	Kroveth	city	Kroveth, middleman
Sahudese New Year	90	ninja	city	Sahudese, Megalans, ninja
Reigning Cats	92	—	city, villa	Shimota, Sahudese, lots of cats
The Pipes are Calling	92	—	city	Shimota, piper

When the players start showing signs of boredom — or threaten the GM with bodily harm — wrap up any dangling plot elements by inserting scenes from the *Resolutions* section. Then skip to the epilogue (*All's Well That Ends in 'Farewell,'* p. 96). If the PCs get really annoyed, they may try to quit before finishing the job. In this case, see the sidebar on p. 61.

During all these events, the PCs will be escorting Shimota back and forth for talks with Marcus in his offices. While he and one or two of his servants and advisors negotiate, they will be asked to guide other members of the household on sightseeing expeditions and shopping trips.

Mysterious Accidents?

Various trivial, but embarrassing, things happen to PCs and their charges over the next few days. These should be minor incidents, like someone getting a hotfoot, or suddenly tripping for no obvious reason, or having a laxative slipped into the food.

To add to the party's confusion, there are actually two independent sources for these mishaps. One is the dreaded Sahudese practical-joking ninja stalking the party and putting increasing psychological pressure on Yarohito Shimota. The other is his son, Najimatsu, who has a remarkable talent for magic, and an equal talent for finding nasty ways to practice it.

Ninja Attacks

These should average one or two a day. They will generally be directed at Shimota or Najimatsu, though other members of the household may be involved, including the PCs. The intent of these attacks is to embarrass the clan (proving that it is really defenseless), and to demoralize individuals. Typical ninja operations fall into two classes: *fake assassinations*, and *practical jokes* that embarrass the victim. See the sidebars (pp. 79-80) for details on ninja abilities.

All the assassination attempts are made against Shimota or Najimatsu. Such attacks are always non-lethal, and involve fake weapons (a rubber shuriken from out of the darkness), harmless "poisons" (tea mixed with pepper, or horse urine instead of *sake*), or non-damaging spells (Pain, Strike Dumb, Panic).

Practical jokes may be directed at anyone. These can involve physical traps like tripwires, buckets of whitewash above doors, or greased floors. Chemical

Sahudese Ninja

Yrth ninja differ somewhat from their Earth counterparts. While they *do* wear flashy black clothes, perform amazing acrobatic feats, and sneak around in groups to confound Our Heroes with their martial arts skills, they're just a trifle . . . well . . . silly.

Why? Well, they *are* from Sahud. But if that isn't enough explanation, there is a somewhat logical reason for all this silliness. Far back in the history of Sahud, the clans decided that ninja assassins were too dangerous, and banned them. Usually. Except maybe in a *low war* (where anything goes).

To get around this prohibition, the current customs evolved. All Sahudese set a great value on personal honor, and if they feel sufficiently dishonored, they will commit *seppuku* (honorable suicide). So the ninja developed the tactic of driving their victims to suicide.

Various methods are used to make the victim feel incompetent, or endure personal humiliation. One who holds up under these attacks can gain honor, but it isn't easy — the ninja leaders are masters of Sahudese psychology.

Continued on next page . . .

Sahudese Fire Drill

Sahudese Ninja (Continued)

Typical Ninja

Age 23; black hair, brown eyes, black clothes; 5'5", 125 lbs.

ST 11, DX 14, IQ 11, HT 12.

Advantages: Alertness +2; Combat Reflexes; Double-Jointed; High Pain Threshold.

Disadvantages: Duty (to ninja clan); Pacifism (Cannot kill).

Skills: Acting-13; Acrobatics-16; Blowpipe-15; Breath Control-12; Bow-14; Climbing-17; Disguise-14; Holdout-12; Judo-15; Jumping-15; Karate-15; Knife-15; Running-12; Savoir-Faire-13; Shortsword-15; Staff-13; Stealth-18; Swimming-13; Throwing-15. Individual ninja will have additional useful skills, including Lockpicking, Traps, and other combat skills.

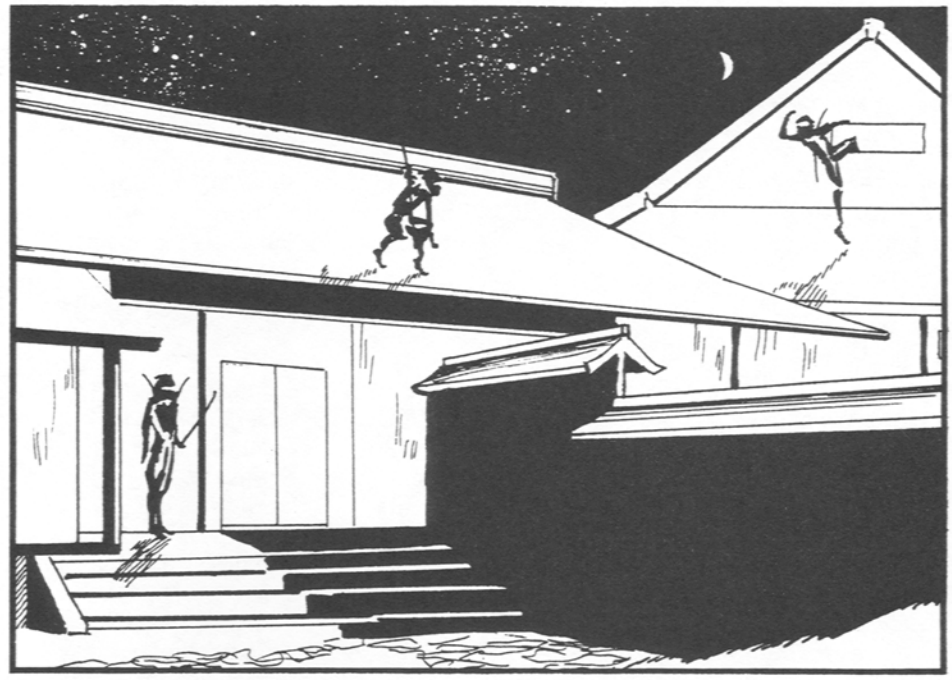
Motivations: Do the job and get out safely.

Tactics: Sneak around and leave nasty practical jokes behind. Sneak up to people and scream in their ears. It is against the ninja code to kill, but if threatened with deadly force, they will be happy to *injure* a foe severely!

Sample dialogue: "HYyyyy-YAH!"

Ninja will be well-equipped with odd weapons and gadgets, and often have unusual alchemical elixirs.

A few ninja are mages, and have spells useful for sneaking around or for humiliating victims. These normally have a higher IQ and a lower DX, and may not have as many martial skills.



attacks might be used: mild contact poisons smeared on personal possessions, or non-magical "potions" that cause the drinker to turn green or develop severe body odor. Or the attack may involve spells or alchemical potions, usually something that will either cause a physical effect that makes the victim look incompetent, or a mental attack that causes the person to appear crazy.

Shimota's response to all successful ninja attacks is to ignore them, "That iss of no impoltance." An averted attack will be noted, "This humber one iss glatefur." Captured ninja will "suicide" if possible, using a special potion that causes simulated death (similar to the Elixir of Long Slumber, but of limited duration). Servants will toss them unceremoniously on the garbage heap behind the house, where they will eventually wake up and leave. A captured ninja who fails to suicide will be "beheaded" — a line of indelible red dye is drawn in a ring around the neck. No captured ninja will return to the house as part of another attack — they are "dead."

The PCs may wish to interrogate the ninja. This will not be permitted by the visitors (nor will *really* killing the ninja — at least not after an attack is over). If the characters violate this rule, Shimota will get *very* angry, and threaten to "make dear with someone who hass honol." They may, however, find ways around this. In this event, they can discover that the head of the ninja in Megalos is called "The Master of Spring Mud," the location of the safehouse where a wizard teleported them from Sahud, and the fact that they got their instructions from a local ninja who worked for the Master, but they never saw the Master himself. The safehouse, if visited, will prove to have been vacated within a few minutes of the failed attack that the informer was part of.

If the ninja make a successful attack, those observing the Yarohito clan head immediately afterward should make a Psychology roll (or an IQ roll if they have Empathy) to notice that he is deeply disturbed by the attack. There is a +1 bonus to skill for each successful attack the ninja have made during the Sahudese visit.

Brat Attacks

Najimatsu will cause problems similar to some of the ninja's "jokes," but his attacks can be distinguished by several characteristics: they never occur against himself or his father, they're always magical in nature, and there is never any obvious spellcaster involved. In addition, the kid is always nearby, of course, but usually not *close* to the victim.

The GM should remember that the boy is *very* bright. He will not indulge himself unless he's confident that he can't be pinpointed as the cause of the problem. Typically this means he'll do something when there are a lot of people around, especially during periods of confusion. If anyone seems to be getting suspicious of him, he'll lie low for a while, until their attention turns elsewhere. (Remember that he can understand Anglish quite well!)

The son will *not* help the ninja in any way — he's quite loyal to the clan, and will use his abilities to hinder outside attackers if he can. The spells he uses will generally be embarrassing. They are mostly from the Mind and Body colleges, with a few other spells thrown in for good measure. The GM should pick spells that are likely to make someone jump (though a sleep spell while a PC is trying to negotiate with a guardsman is not unlikely).

"Brat attacks" should be used sparingly, especially if the GM wishes to wrap up all three plot threads in a single grand finale. This thread is the easiest for the PCs to terminate early, if they catch on to the boy's activities.

Mini-Scenarios

Shopping Expeditions

Several times during the adventure, groups of the visitors will want to go to the marketplace. For some reason, they call this "Going to marr." (See the *Cultural Contamination* sidebar, p. 81.) The composition of the groups will vary, but will include Najimatsu at least once or twice, and often one or more of the ornately-dressed women. (The escorts will never be able to find out their

Cultural Contamination

Like the rest of Yrth, Sahud gets its share of involuntary immigrants, via the echoes of the Banestorm. How they handle the dimensional travelers isn't known, but they haven't caused any significant change to Sahudese society, as far as outside observers can tell. Of course, it's very hard to tell what's *normal* in Sahud . . .

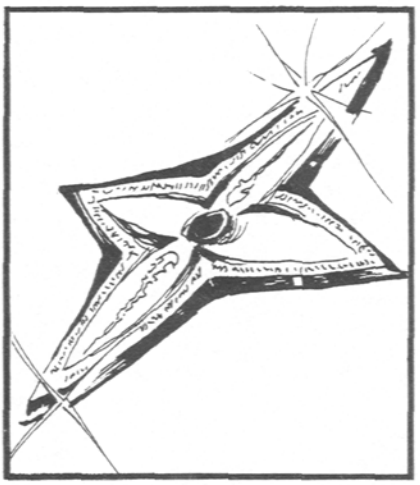
However, there are some signs of contamination from Earth. Most notably, the Sahudese sometimes use *American* slang phrases when speaking Anglish. These should be puzzling to Megalans, and the visitors think that English and Anglish are the same tongue, adding to the confusion. "Arr sound arike to me . . . "

The GM may wish to introduce other adopted culture. Imagine what the Sahudese would pick up from a group of transported Valley Girls . . .

exact status in the household, though it appears that at least one of them is Shimota's wife, and another might be his daughter.)

As usual, the escorts will have to ride herd on the Sahudese, keeping Megalan riffraff from bothering them, stopping the foreigners from causing trouble with citizens, and trying to keep track of six bargaining sessions at once.

Mostly, the visitors will buy food and small curiosities, spending Sahudese coins of good gold and silver. But other purchases will be puzzling, or even troublesome. For example, why did the Second Housemaster want to buy a dozen used horseshoes, or one of the women purchase a 10-foot constrictor snake imported from the Ring Islands?



Sahudese Equipment

Katana: the Sahudese equivalent of a broadsword. It does swing+2 cutting or thrust+2 impaling damage, weighs 5 lbs., and requires a minimum ST of 11.

Wakizashi: a shortsword doing swing+1 cutting or thrust+1 impaling damage. It weighs 2 lbs. and requires an ST of 7.

Shuriken: the "throwing stars" used by ninja. They do thrust-1 cutting damage, and have SS 12, Acc 0, ½ Damage at ST-5, and maximum range of ST. Nine of them weigh 1/10 lb.

Armor: the armor worn by the samurai is PD 3, DR 4, and is made of steel plates laced with silk.

Night of the Ninja

After a number of individual ninja attacks, Ah Manchu will order a all-out invasion of the villa, partly to scare off the Megalan locals guiding the group, but also to demoralize the household. All the participants in this attack have been teleported in from Sahud by ninja mages, and have had no direct contact with the Master of Spring Mud, though his people have supplied them with information on the villa and its inhabitants.

Unless the PCs have been extremely paranoid and clever in setting up guard watches and magical wards around the house and grounds, the attackers will have countermeasures. These include Mage-Stealth and Hide spells; ninja who know Counterspell and various common Protection and Warning spells, or Dispel Magic; and their highly-trained skills at sneaking around. If PCs are on watch, roll Contests of Vision or Hearing (as appropriate) against the ninjas' Stealth skill, modified by any magic the GM has seen fit to give the invaders. In the case where no player characters are on watch, the contest is between the ninjas' Stealth skill of 18 and the average perception roll of the household — a 10. If the household wins, one of the servants spotted a ninja and raised a brief cry, which was choked off when the ninja throttled him into unconsciousness. Give the PCs an IQ roll to wake up if they are asleep when this alarm is given.

Otherwise, the first the characters will know of this invasion of black-clad strangers with an overabundance of sharp, pointy objects is when the ninja sneak into their rooms in the pre-dawn darkness. Fortunately, the attackers are not out to kill, and while they're good at sneaking up unseen, they have a code of honor about attacking without giving the victim a chance. So they always announce themselves before they attack by unleashing a blood-curdling scream in the potential victim's ear. Make a Fright Check at +2 the first time this happens to each PC. Each scream gives still-sleeping characters another IQ roll to wake up, of course.

There are twice as many ninja as there are player characters, so there are plenty to go around. Normally only one will attack a given PC at a time — the others are off terrorizing the servants, fighting the samurai, or looking for new opponents. However, if a character manages to down a ninja, he's likely to hear a scream in his ear as another attacks him from behind immediately afterward.

Eventually, the household will be filled with screaming ninja, panicking servants, and slashing samurai, not to mention whatever the PCs are doing. The ninja weapons are all non-lethal: rubber shuriken, trick knives (where the blade collapses into the hilt), staves made of bamboo rather than hardwood, etc. They may also attempt to suffocate their foes using various holds in close combat (see the sidebar on p. B122), though only until the victim goes unconscious. Tossing people around using Judo skill is also a popular tactic. In addition to various attacks, the ninja will sow confusion using alchemical smoke bombs and flash bombs, especially if they are losing ground. Eventually they will make their way back out of the house and leave as silently as they came. Any captured ninja should be handled as described in the section on individual ninja attacks (p. 77).

If anyone in the party happens to kill one of the ninjas during the attack (whether in self-defense or a fit of frustration), the Sahudese will look upon it as an "unfoltunate accident." However, for the remainder of their visit, the Sahudese retainers will whisper, snicker, and sometimes outright laugh at the "hero" for killing a ninja armed with a rubber katana. If threatened in any way, these teasing Sahudese will feign terror, begging, "Prease no kirr me, humber sil. Prease no kirr me."

"They Want to Visit Who*?"*

Shortly after the Sahudese arrive, the clan head approaches the leader of his escort. "We go visit Empelol. Have gift." He calls out something in his own language. The characters will catch "Chu-Chu" from the gabble of syllables. The little rag-mop dog scampers around a corner and sits, panting, at Shimota's feet. "Plince Chu-Chu is gualdian dog — spilit of honolaber ancestol rives in him. Velly gleat honol, have one of Chu-Chu. Onry may get flom oul Heavenking. Gift flom him to youl Empelol."

Presumably, the characters will have become acquainted with Chu-Chu's more irritating habits by this time, and will have second thoughts about giving this creature to Emperor Diophrates. On the other hand, offending the Sahudese Heavenking might not be such a good idea, either.

There's absolutely no chance that the party can get to see the Emperor on such short notice — audiences are scheduled months in advance, and require lots of string-pulling, calling in of favors, and major bribes to half the bureaucrats in the palace. Marcus himself can't get an audience without long delays and major outlays, and he will not help the Sahudese with this — he needs the Emperor's goodwill a *lot* more than this deal for silk. Unfortunately, Shimota is insistent on meeting the Emperor and handing over his gift in person.

The easiest way to resolve this problem is to set up a meeting with a fake Emperor. If the characters don't think of this, Marcus can suggest it if the PCs ask him for help. The trader can also find a suitably impressive location to hold

Sahudese Magic Items

The Sahudese brought several magic items with them. While the uses of some are obvious, like the Gong of Yarohito Higa, the uses of others seem, well . . . a little eccentric by Megalan standards. A Sahudese mage would frown on having a staff with Continual Light cast on it — "Right on wood offend eyes of spilits. Carr demons." But the same mage might possess the Candle of Eternal Wax. Other Sahudese magic artifacts are even more bizarre. If one of the escorts casts Detect Magic in the Villa, he will notice that several of the visitors' household implements radiate magic. Following is a list of some of the items the Sahudese brought with them. The GM is encouraged to have the adventurers discover these, preferably in some embarrassing way.

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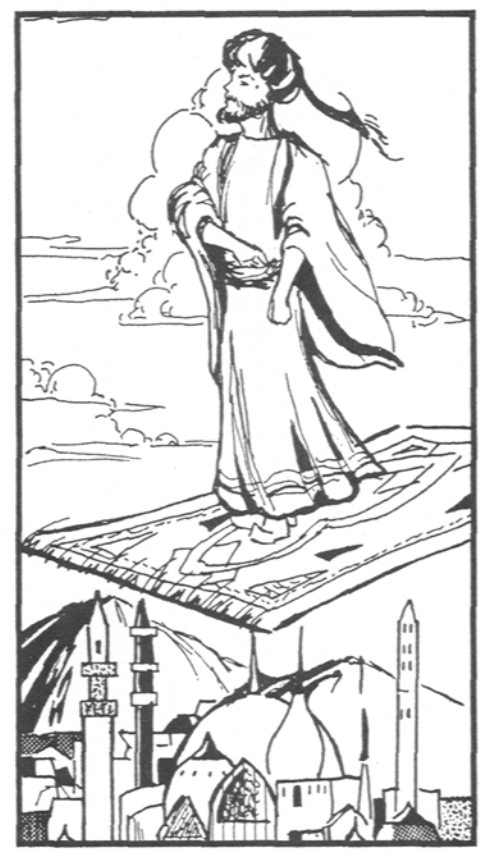


the meeting. Note that impersonating the Emperor is considered "mockery of the throne" and is a *serious* crime in Megalos. However, if they are caught in this somehow, a explanation of the facts (and a $1,000 bribe) will result in a sympathetic hearing and release of all concerned.

Amazingly enough, the meeting with the fake ruler will go smoothly. Shimota will make a lengthy speech in Sahudese, concluding with a translation. "Heavenking give you gualdian spilit dog fol plotection." He will bow deeply, and leave with his samurai escort.

The characters may rejoice that they've gotten rid of the pesky little dog. However, there are two problems. First, they can't just get rid of it after it's turned over to the "Emperor" — there's some chance that the guardian spirit is real, and it might be able to communicate any mistreatment to Shimota, the Heavenking, or someone else who might cause trouble. Indeed, if they think to check the dog with the Aura spell, it will appear to be possessed by *something*. If the PCs are smart, they'll make sure the dog is eventually given into the keeping of the real Emperor's household.

Even if they make arrangements for the Emperor's new dog, they'll discover that Prince Chu-Chu is still back at the villa. This may be a shock to them — "Did it get away and return here?" The foreigners will eventually explain that there are *many* "Prince Chu-Chus," each animated by the same guardian spirit. Shimota brought two with him, only one of which was for the Megalan Emperor. The other one was a gift to the Yarohito clan, and always stays with the clan head. So the party will get to enjoy his attentions for the rest of the visit . . .

The Show Must Go On

Yarohito Shimota tells the head of his escort that he wishes to sample traditional Megalan entertainment in the evenings. He requests singers, dancers, storytellers, jugglers, and anything else the PCs feel might be interesting to him. He also asks to see "tladitionar Mosrem halem dance."

The escorts can hire whatever players they wish — there are plenty of underemployed performers in the city. The Job Table on p. F115 (or p. B194) explains the pay scales. See the section on Hirelings (pp. B194-195) to determine availability. After the first two days, apply a -4 modifier to hiring entertainers if the employer mentions who the audience will be. (The reason for this will become clear shortly.) If they fail to find three acts for an evening, they will have to fill in themselves, or Shimota will become upset. "You plomised enteltainment. No enteltainment, no honol."

The first evening, the players may get nervous when the second cook distributes bowls of spoiled fruit to the audience. They will not be disappointed. The Sahudese applaud in a peculiarly Sahudese fashion — pelting the singer with the rotten fruit. "Iss to lemind prayer to be humber. To show skirr iss to make, how you say . . . henvy. To be gleater skirr than host iss to make his ross of head." (Lose face, actually, but listeners should have no idea what this means.)

Once word of this treatment gets around, only the hungriest of bards will knowingly play to this audience. And word spreads *fast* in the entertainment community . . .

If the characters lie to potential acts, word of this will also get around, and annoyed performers will demand double or triple payment, or threaten the PCs with character-assassinating songs and stories. This will earn a -1 Reputation from everyone, recognized occasionally (7 or less), and a -4 from members of the Megalan performing community, recognized sometimes (10 or less).

The request for the Moslem harem dancer will prove tougher to fulfill. After a couple days of searching, the characters can locate a single such dancer. She normally dances at a tavern in the dock area, and appears to be at least reasonably good (Dancing-13). The PCs will have to talk to her manager, who also plays the

Sahudese Magic Items (Continued)

Hirohama's Spoon: The Second Cook of Ghostly Rice possesses this revered item. It was enchanted by the great Sahudese mage and cook, Hirohama Yuki. It has a special Apportation enchantment that causes it to stir soups and sauces to perfection, without any direction from the cook. The spoon magically senses how fast and how much to stir. If an inquirer accidentally touches or handles the spoon, the cook will be greatly offended and may call upon the samurai to defend his honor. This is a good way to introduce the *Duelling Woks* event (see p. 86).

Besides Apportation, the spoon's component spells are unknown. It would sell for $150,000 in Sahud, but only $5,000 anywhere else.

The Rag of Tsunima Akito: This magical cloth appears as an oily rag, which the Sahudese servants leave lying around the house. They never use it to dust or clean, and by the looks of it, it would do more harm than good. In fact, the servants rarely touch the rag; when they do, they wave it around the air with a flitting motion and throw it carelessly on the floor. If asked about the rag, the Sahudese say only that it is the Rag of Tsunima Akito. If pressed for an explanation, they say, "Solly, cannot be exprain in youl rangrage."

The rag is actually enchanted with the Scrywall spell, protecting everything within 30 yards from information spells. The rag is enchanted at level 21. It sells for $200,000.

Gohira: This is a wood-and-paper mask shaped like the head of a ferocious lizard. Sometimes, for evening entertainment, a Sahudese retainer will place the mask over his face, activating its enchantment.

The mask creates a Complex Illusion and an Illusion Disguise, transforming the wearer into the image of a giant lizard. The lizard wades from an illusory ocean and begins to trample houses and buildings in a Sahudese city, sometimes shooting rays of magical light from its eyes at helpless citizens. The watching Sahudese feign screams of terror and, if the performance is good, throw rotten fruit at the monster.

music she dances to. He will be agreeable to any reasonable offer, and appears not to have heard of the peculiar "applause" of Sahudese audiences.

Have the characters talking to the musician make a Vision or Streetwise roll at -8. On a success, the adventurer will notice two men sitting nearby who seem to be paying too much attention to them, and don't quite fit into the tavern crowd.

The two men are Imperial spies, keeping watch on the musician, who is suspected of being a Wazifi spy (which she is). They won't reveal this fact to the PCs, but they will follow the performers to the villa, and may be noticed again by the escorts (have them make a Contest of Vision against the Megalan agents' Shadowing skill of 17).

Nothing will come of this unless the party attacks the counter-spies or harasses them in some other way. In this case, the agents will attempt to run away, or summon the City Guard, whichever seems more appropriate. The agents will not reveal themselves to the their attackers, but if the Guard is called, one of them will show something to the Guard sergeant, and the attacking characters will be marched off to the guardhouse on assault charges. A fine of $200 per person will be assessed before the group is released.

If either of the Megalan agents is seriously hurt or killed, the characters will suddenly find themselves under scrutiny by numerous people — Imperial intelligence decided that they may be Wazifi hirelings!

The Samurai

The two samurai guards that protect Shimota are masters of several Sahudese fighting techniques, are fiercely loyal, and can be easily offended. If anyone in the Yarohito household is insulted or becomes otherwise dishonored, the male samurai will demand the right to defend his master's honor (see *Duelling Woks*, p. 86). The individual samurai's stats are given below.

Koriko

Female, Age 24; black hair, brown eyes; 5' 6", 155 lbs.

ST 12, DX 15, IQ 11, HT 12.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Double-Jointed, High Pain Threshold, Literacy, Patron (Yarohito clan), Status 2 — warrior.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (samurai), Sense of Duty (to Shimota), Shyness.

Quirks: Wants to be a poet; Dislikes warriors; Falls in love easily.

Skills: Acrobatics-20, Climbing-20, Dancing-16, Disguise-12, Escape-19, Fast-Draw (katana)-18, Fishing-12, Hunting-12, Judo-18, Karate-18, Katana-20, Poetry-11, Riding (horse)-15, Savoir-Faire-15, Stealth-16, Survival (marsh)-14, Thrown Weapon (shuriken)-17.

Motivations: Protect Shimota. Find a boyfriend.

Sample Dialogue: (In Sahudese) "My love for you is like the spring flower that grows faithfully by the singing waterfall."

Koriko grew up on a small, marshy rice farm in Sahud. She was very aggressive as a child, and her parents consented for her to train with a samurai master. She excelled and soon found honorable work with the Yarohito Clan. She is shy and often obsessive when she finds an object for her affections (see *Cupid's Shuriken*, p. 88).

Continued on next page . . .

The Samurai (Continued)

Jiro

Male, Age 28; black hair, brown eyes; 5' 10" 195 lbs.

ST 15, DX 15, IQ 10, HT 13.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Literacy, Patron (Yarohito clan), Status 2 — warrior, Toughness +1.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (samurai), Sense of Duty (Shimota), Bully.

Quirks: Easily offended; Self-conscious about his age.

Skills: Acrobatics-16, Armoury-11, Boating-16, Bow-18, Climbing-18, Cooking-14, Disguise-11, Fast-Draw (katana)-18, Hunting-13, Judo-18, Jumping-17, Karate-18, Katana-21, Riding (horse)-16, Staff-17, Stealth-16, Tactics-13, Thrown Weapon (shuriken)-18.

Motivations: Protect Shimota. Defend the honor of the clan. Make a good meal.

Sample Dialogue: (In Sahudese) "What? You don't bow before the garden slug? You have brought dishonor to my clan."

Jiro is the second son of a wealthy nobleman in the Yarohito clan. He is related to Shimota, but only distantly. His training as a samurai was extraordinarily long due to his short temper and average intelligence. As a result, he did not become a samurai until he was 25 — which is old in Sahud where most samurai begin at 19 or 20. To make up for his insecurity about his age, he pushes others around and takes offense at things that outwardly seem insignificant.

Jiro is a devastating fighter, but prides himself in his cooking. Given any chance to prove himself, he will chose to defeat an adversary in the kitchen (see *Duelling Woks*, p. 86).

Duelling Woks

At some point during the adventure, a player character manages to insult the larger of the two Yarohito samurai. This can happen if the PC attempts to talk to the samurai — they are both very touchy, and easy to offend with innocent questions, especially given the translation difficulties. Or if the PC saves either Yarohito from some danger, the samurai will require the "offender" to prove his worthiness to protect the noble house. If the GM is hard up for a cause, the samurai might decide the guide isn't treating Shimota with the deference proper to his status, and wishes to give a "resson of honol." If one party member is overly fond of heavy weapons, armor, or magic, the GM should try to maneuver this character into the role of "offender."

In any case, a challenge will be issued. The Second Housemaster will explain the rules of the duel to the party. The challenged individual may decline the duel, but will "ruse head" (lose face, though the party may interpret this phrase more darkly) and the Sahudese will have nothing further to do with the offender. He may not remain in the house — both samurai will drive him away using whatever means are necessary.

If the character accepts the duel, he will be told that the choice of location belongs to the challenger, who has chosen the main hall of the villa. However,

the samurai will graciously allow the PC to bring whatever equipment he likes. The group may question the Housemaster about this, especially about armor, weapons, or magic. All are permissible. About the only thing not allowed is help by others in the duel, or the use of a champion by the challenged party. The Housemaster will be unhelpful on the exact nature of the duel itself: "Iss choice of honolaber walliol when duer stalt — must be plepaled fol anything." The contest will be judged by Yarohito Shimota. Any objection to this will be considered an insult to his honor.

The time for the duel is set for the following noon. During the period before the duel, the PCs will catch glimpses of the samurai practicing with his wickedly-sharp sword, performing exotic martial arts, and firing a strange-looking bow.

At noon the next, everyone gathers in the large hall to watch the contest. The party's "champion" gets to make a grand entrance (hopefully in heavy armor and festooned with weapons and magical gadgets). From the opposite side of the hall, the challenger enters, wearing only a bright blue silk robe in place of his normal armor. He still has his sword, however. Both parties are led to the front of the room, where Shimota sits at a low table. The samurai bows deeply to his master. (If the party member does also, start a bowing contest between him and the samurai. This could be a bit difficult if the PC is in plate mail.)

After the pleasantries are over, Shimota exchanges a few words with his man in their native tongue, then announces, "the contest iss to make mear." He signals to some of the servants, waiting in a doorway behind him. They carry out two braziers of glowing coals and set them to either side of the table. Other servants bring out trays containing numerous ceramic bowls filled with unidentifiable substances cut into bite-sized pieces, what appear to be shredded vegetables of some sort, and several liquids of odd hues.

As a final touch, two servants bring out metal plates bearing an odd metal object resembling a very convex small shield with handles on the edge and present them to the "combatants" with a deep bow. The metal plates are to be used as grills above the braziers, and the "shield" is a wok, of course.

The PC now gets to pit his Cooking skill against the samurai's skill level of 14. Because of the unfamiliar materials and equipment, the Megalan character has a skill penalty of -3. Use the rules for a *regular* Contest of Cooking skills (p. B87). In describing the duel, the GM can draw on experience with fancy "cook at your table" Japanese restaurants, or the old John Belushi skit from Saturday Night Live, *Samurai Delicatessen.*

Shimota will pronounce the winner of the skill contest as the winner of the duel. Regardless of the outcome, honor will have been satisfied. There will be no further effect from this episode, unless the PC wins the contest, in which case the Cook of Winter Starlight will approach the winner and attempt to swap recipes.

Captured!

Master Trader Kroveth hires a group of thugs, including mages, to kidnap Yarohito Najimatsu. The GM will have to tailor the kidnapping team and circumstances to exploit weaknesses of the PC group. A likely setup is to have some of the characters escort the kid to watch a group of street performers. A mage with a small Powerstone casts a 10-hex Stench spell centered on the boy, while a confederate standing near Najimatsu grabs the kid and Teleports away with him to a place nearby where the hired muscle is ready to take custody of him. Depending on the size and talents of the party, other tactics like Mass Sleep, Glue, or alchemical pastilles can be used.

The kidnappers are professionals, equipped to deal with Knowledge magics that might be used to track them down — they have disguises, either magical

Master Trader Kroveth

Age 51; brown hair streaked with gray, brown eyes; 5'7", 165 lbs.

ST 10, DX 10, IQ 11, HT 9.

Advantages: Filthy Rich; Status 2; Literacy.

Disadvantages: Compulsive Gambling; Paranoia; Unluckiness.

Skills: Administration-12; Area Knowledge (Megalos)-14; Area Knowledge (Ytarria)-13; Carousing-10; Detect Lies-13; Diplomacy-12; Economics-8; Falconry-12; Fast-Talk-13; Gambling-13; Heraldry-10; Knife-12; Arabic-11; Law-10; Leadership-10; Merchant-14; Politics-12; Riding-11; Savoir-Faire-13; Shortsword-11; Sleight of Hand-10; Streetwise-12.

Motivations: Rebuild his family fortune and prove he's the equal of his father (who made it).

Tactics: Whatever works. Use intermediaries when possible, to avoid getting caught. Bribe, subvert, and double-cross people.

Sample dialogue: "If you know what's good for you, you'll side with the winner — me."

Kroveth inherited the family business from his father, and it's been in a gradual decline ever since, though the trader is still extremely rich. For no apparent reason, things have just been going wrong since he took over, though his lack of talent for the business hasn't helped, nor has his excessive gambling.

Since the trader cannot blame himself for his problems, he looks to others as the source of his troubles. He's convinced himself that most of his competitors are in a conspiracy to ruin him. Because the House of Marcus has risen while his own trading concern has fallen, he believes Marcus is the prime mover in the conspiracy.

By the end of the adventure, the failure of his plans to stop Marcus, and the decline of his business prospects finally breaks him. He attempts to solve the problem personally. (See *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, p. 93.)

(Illusion Disguise) or mundane, and will take pains to leave nothing behind that might be traced with a Seeker spell. An amulet enchanted with Scryguard is placed on the kid to keep a Seeker from finding him.

As the thugs hustle the boy away to a no-mana safehouse ("Rent by the hour or the week") where he can be completely concealed from magical detection and rescue, an urchin serving as a runner arrives at the villa and presents a ransom note. (The delivery boy knows nothing of the contents, and his description of his employer is useless — another disguise.)

The note reads, "If he wants to see his son alive again, Shimota must come alone to the Yellow Kraken Tavern at sunset." Tracing the note is another dead end — a public copyist, hired by a man fitting the description the delivery boy gave.

Najimatsu is in no danger, of course — he'll escape from his kidnappers before they get him to the safe house. However, he doesn't escape *quickly* . . . it's too much fun playing with the thugs. (Use O. Henry's "Ransom of Red Chief" for inspiration.) The brat will play Hide and Seek with them for a while, using his spells to harass them and then ducking out of sight for a while. Eventually, he will tire of this game, and wander off seeking other diversions.

All of this activity occurs "off-camera" as far as the PCs are concerned, but they might run into some of the fallout — a peacefully-snoozing thug, with all his clothes, armor, and weapons in a neat stack in a nearby alleyway, perhaps.

If the bodyguards don't track down the kid before the time of the ransom meeting, he will turn up at the gate of the villa just before his father leaves for the tavern. If they do find him, he'll be watching a street performance by a clown.

Najimatsu will be quite uninformative about what happened, if asked (using a translator, since he won't reveal that he can both understand and speak Anglish). "They were stupid men. I ran away. The clown was fun — can I have one?" is the substance of his story. The escorts should be a bit suspicious of this explanation, naturally, but Shimota won't let them interrogate the boy hard enough to get anything more from him. Have anyone grilling the boy make Vision rolls at -4. On a success, they'll catch a brief sly grin when he is asked about what happened to his captors.

The thugs, if somehow captured by the party, will not know much. The mage, since vanished, was the ringleader. They did overhear him muttering something about "a crow" when he explained the job to them. Their orders were not to harm the kid, and to keep him cooped up in the safe house until someone came for the boy. Questions about how the boy got away will elicit confusing replies. They will mention demons with big fangs and claws, hordes of rats and spiders, and invisible guardians. (The boy will have used the Madness spell, as well as others, and the thugs will be *very* shaken by the experience. Since the kid casts spells with no visible actions, they didn't figure him as the source of their problems.)

Cupid's Shuriken

The female samurai falls in love with one of the escorts. This should *not* be a warrior — she sees enough macho behavior from other samurai to be thoroughly sick of it. Instead, she'll pick one of the physically weaker party members. The GM can chose someone suitably unsuitable, or make reaction rolls for her, one for each male character in the group. Apply an additional +1 bonus to the roll for every point the character's ST is *below* 12, and a -4 penalty to anyone who seems to be primarily a warrior. The character with the highest reaction roll becomes the lucky recipient of her attentions.

The PC learns of this when he starts finding mysterious little gifts in his room at the villa. Shortly thereafter, anonymous servants seek him out and hand

Sahudese Cooking

For the Sahudese, food is the wellspring of one's existence. Each meal is prepared with great respect and solemnity. Preparation for the evening meal can take four or five hours — each ingredient must be painstakingly chopped, shredded, diced and sometimes killed. Kitchen hierarchy is intricate and confusing. The Cook of Seven Seasonings is the only one allowed to prepare salad dressings. The Fourth Cook of Summer Rain can only observe — unless thyme is needed, in which case he becomes master of the meal.

The Sahudese brought large quantities of spice with them, as well as various dried meats, fish, and poultry. Since some of their dishes require live ingredients, they also have cages with various birds, lizards, and small rodents. The ingredients and recipes to the many of the meals are guarded jealously; if anyone comes in the kitchen while a meal is being prepared, he is reprimanded in Sahudese and brusquely escorted out.

Since the visitors' escorts will undoubtedly sample some of the Sahudese cuisine, some description is required.

Shunan Rice: This is a favorite noontime meal of the Sahudese. It features a strips of pork and lizard in a sweet sauce, lying on a bed of rice fried with egg and mushrooms. If the PCs ask what the ingredients are, a Sahudese translator responds, "How you say? Polk and rizald." If this cryptic-sounding statement is understood, most PCs will need to make a Will roll to actually eat the stuff.

Sweet and Sour Chopki: This dish is composed of small fried bits of an unknown meat, covered with sweet-and-sour sauce. It is served with rice and noodles. Some of the eaters may be invited to participate in the "Chopki chase" before the meal. Inquiry will reveal this event to be a dash around the kitchen after a small, heavily-feathered bird. The captor then has the honor of performing the traditional decapitation, which must be done barehanded. If a PC captures the bird (which the GM should let happen), the Sahudese will be very insulted should he refuse to perform the decapitation.

Continued on next page . . .

him other tokens. These gifts include a carefully-arranged group of flowers, a delicate china cup (with no handle), a poem written in intricate calligraphy in Sahudese on rice paper, a small bit of carved jade, and the like. Questioning the servants will be useless — they will not reveal the source of the gifts, even if the language barrier is surmounted.

The GM may wish to complicate this scene by mixing in "gifts" from thebrat, as well. Of course, these will be of a much less benign nature than the love-struck samurai's . . .

If the PCs come up with any reasonable plan to maintain a watch on the character's room, the samurai will be caught in the act of delivering yet another gift. She doesn't speak Anglish, so the most she'll do is gaze raptly at the object of her affections and sigh a lot. If a translator is found, she will confess her undying love. The GM should make her responses as flowery and poetical as possible — be *really* saccharine.

What happens next is up to the PC, but he should be warned that rejecting the lady's advances too strongly may result in her contemplating *seppuku* — honorable suicide — due to depression. (See ***GURPS Japan*** for more details of this custom, if needed.) On the other hand, getting involved with a visiting woman from Sahud has its own obvious drawbacks. If the escort responds to the warrior's advances, the GM will have to decide whether she'll stay in Megalos when the Yarohitos leave. She'll be torn between her Duty to the clan, and her love. Of course, her lover may decide to go with her to Sahud, at least for a while.

As an alternative to this scenario, the woman can fall for Cicero Tenax, and the party can try to help him extricate himself from the situation. This has the advantage of giving the GM better control over the outcome.

Let's Make a Deal

After his various henchmen fail to stop Marcus' dealings with the Yarohito clan, Master Trader Kroveth eventually turns to the escort for help. One of the PCs is contacted by an intermediary. This may be by a note passed to the character, or a chance meeting sometime when he is alone. The contact will be

Sahudese Cooking (Continued)

Rikuku Noodles: This dish is served in a large ceramic bowl and consists of noodles, pork broth, egg, and small dried beetles native to Sahud. The beetles are prepared such that they rise to the surface of the soup about five minutes into the meal. Eaters who see the bugs should get a Fright Check roll (especially any who have fear of insects). If anyone actually eats one of the beetles, he must make a HT roll or become violently ill. The sickness causes vomiting, convulsions and severe abdominal pain for 24 hours. The Sahudese find this completely normal and merely refer to it as the "Dance of the Beeter Spilit."

If any of the escorts spends at least a day studying the Sahudese cooking, he gets a +1 to his Cooking skill roll if he participates in the *Duelling Woks* event, see p. 86.

Stigma of the Fox

The fox is an arrogant, mischievous troublemaker in Japanese folklore (see p.

They may use this to help Marcus in his negotiations, or they may elect to receive gifts for their part (and their silence). If they take the latter course, the elder Yarohito will give any warrior-types a fine katana. This weapon can be used with Broadsword skill at -2, but after six months of practice can be used at normal Broadsword skill. Mages will be offered a jade amulet that is a 5-point Powerstone. Other characters will be given small works of art or magic items worth approximately $1,000. Anyone could ask instead for training in the Sahudese martial arts, though only the equivalent of 100 hours of study (½ point) can be gained before the visitors have to return home.

The Competitor: Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

When the silk trade deal between Marcus and the Yarohitos nears closing, Shimota tells Marcus that they must hold a dinner to which all his competitors should be invited. The clan head gives the reason that it allows the competition a chance to make better offers. "But rearry to make arr jearous, and . . . how you say . . . intimidate with powel of Yarohito cran and House of Malcus. 'Announce dear at end of dinnel."

Among the guests on the list is Master Trader Kroveth, of course. At this point, the characters should have some hint that he might be involved in some of the attacks, so they ought to be keeping an eye on him. When he arrives, though, he seems to be in good spirits, and has a present for Yarohito Shimota — a small monkey from the southern islands. During the dinner, Kroveth will give the trained monkey a signal, which causes the initially well-behaved creature to go on a rampage, leaping along the table from head to head, snatching and throwing food, and generally causing confusion. The Master Trader takes advantage of this diversion to execute a fine Megalan tradition — poisoning his competitor. He slips a tiny packet of Elixir of Thanatos powder into Marcus' winecup while "helping" to catch the errant simian.

Unfortunately for Kroveth, his Unluckiness interferes. Despite the confusion, several of the PCs have a chance to observe his poisoning attempt. Roll a Quick Contest between the trader's Sleight of Hand skill of 10 and the watching characters' Vision. Anyone with Intuition gets a +5 bonus.

Assuming the poisoning attempt is spotted and averted, the party has a chance to catch the trader with evidence on him — the small paper packet that contained the deadly herbs. Kroveth breaks down into a whimpering wreck. Using Knowledge spells, the whole thing can be proven sufficiently to take to court. With Marcus pushing the prosecution, the Master Trader will be fined most of his remaining wealth, totally ruining him. If this happens, Marcus will give each of the characters a $500 bonus at the conclusion of the trial.

The Ninja: This Joke's For You . . .

When the entertainment well begins to run dry (see *The Show Must Go On,* p. 84), the recruiter for dinner-time diversions is approached by a very short man in performer's clothes and makeup. The jester explains that he works with a group of excellent female acrobats. "Charlie" has a slight accent, which he will explain as coming from his childhood as a slave in Al-Wazif. The jester is none other than the Master of Spring Mud, and his "acrobatic troupe" is a trio of Megalan women he's trained in the Sahudese ninja arts.

If the interviewer is a PC, roll Contests of Acting vs. Detect Lies, or Fast-Talk vs. Will when needed. (The GM should make these rolls, to avoid tipping off the player. The alternative is to let the escorts interrogate all the nightly acts and play out any deception attempts on either side, but this will probably slow play too much.)

Charlie's Ninja (Continued)

Typhani

Age 25; blond hair, blue eyes, very beautiful; 5' 7", 150 lbs.

ST 10, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 12.

Advantages: Literacy; Magical Aptitude 3; Patron (Master of Spring Mud).

Disadvantages: Duty (to Master of Spring Mud).

Skills: Acrobatics-13; Acting-15; Alchemy-14; First Aid-13; Judo-12; Karate-12; Magic Jet-13; Poisons-15; Staff-13; Throwing-14.

Spells (all at 15): Ignite Fire; Walk on Air; Body of Air; Conceal Magic; Scryguard; Daze; Silence; Hush; Mage-Stealth; Sound Jet; Blur; Hide; Invisibility; Infravision; Night Vision; others as needed for prerequisites or as GM desires.

Motivations: Protect the Master.

Tactics: Turn invisible as soon as possible, then Daze people, or hit them with Sound Jet. Sow confusion.

Sample dialogue: "I don't kiss frogs — and you're about to be one."

Typhani has a 10-point Powerstone, as part of the jewelry she's wearing. She also has pastilles that produce flashes or 3-hex radius smoke clouds. She also has a -10 Conceal Magic spell on herself, so PC mages will not sense these items without extraordinary rolls.

The heavy jester's makeup Charlie wears conceals his Sahudese features — any attempt to penetrate this disguise is at -5. Since there's been no description of the Master up to this point, there's no reason for the recruiter to be particularly suspicious of the jester. Unlike the rest of the Sahudese, the Master of Spring Mud speaks Anglish quite well, and never mixes up his l's and r's. Well, almost never . . . he doesn't during the interview, anyway, since he's being very careful.

There should be little chance of the group's not being hired for the night — the jester is definitely funny, and the acrobats (who will audition, if necessary) are both beautiful and talented. Best of all, they'll work relatively cheap, but not too cheap enough to arouse suspicion — $50 for a performance by the four of them.

A Hard Act to Follow

The evening's entertainment is excellent. The acrobats perform impressive leaps, tumbles, and falls while dressed in skimpy outfits. (The GM should ask what any male characters with the Lecherousness disadvantage are doing during the performance — tearing their attention away from the women tumblers requires a Will roll at -5.) During their performance, the jester circulates around the table, telling jokes and making ribald remarks.

After the acrobats, the small man puts on a parody of their act, ending by tumbling down the length of the table, scattering plates and goblet everywhere. He bounces to his feet at the head of the table before Shimota and Najimatsu, and declaims, "From the great Ah Manchu, this joke's on you!" He flings a pellet at his feet, and the top end of the table is engulfed in cloud of orange smoke (3-hex radius), taking in both Yarohitos, both samurai, "Charlie," Prince Chu-Chu and the Heavenking-possessed cat (see p. 90). The cloud comes from an extra-large pastille of the Elixir of Circe, though this will not be clear to the characters for a few seconds yet.

The jester tumbles sideways out of the cloud and lands in front of the "acrobats," now holding wicked-looking knives. This group will attempt to leave before anyone organizes to stop them. They won't stop to attack, but the women will fight a rear-guard action to allow the Master to escape, if necessary. What happens next is up to the player characters, since the Sahudese are too stunned to do anything without orders from Shimota.

Carnival of the Animals

Meanwhile, strange growlings and screechings come from the smoke cloud, which swirls rapidly for a few seconds and then dissipates. Shimota can be seen standing at his place at the table, staring blankly at the fox sitting at his son's place. The female samurai is gone and a stork stands in her place, though the male samurai seems unaffected.

The greatest changes are elsewhere. Standing on the scruffy little dog's silken pillow is a Sahudese warrior in ornate armor — the spirit of Prince Chu. He draws his katana in an easy motion and growls a challenge to one of the female ninja protecting the Master of Spring Mud. As he leaps forward, he breaks into a series of . . . yaps? He looks briefly startled, and the sword clatters to the floor beside a small embarrassed-looking dog, as the prince fades away.

But it's the former cat that draws the attention of every Sahudese in the room. Standing with half a fish still sticking from his mouth, the ancient Heavenking makes an impressive sight in his gem-encrusted silk kimono. Yarohito Shimota breaks from his dazed stare at his fox-son and turns to look at what is drawing everyone's attention behind him. When he sees the former Heavenking looking at him and his son, he goes totally white and prostrates

himself on the floor before the Personage. He babbles something in Sahudese to the apparition. The Heavenking nods and answers shortly.

The clan lord sits up and slowly draws his shortsword, holds it point-inward at his stomach, and plunges it in. (If PCs try to interfere, the remaining samurai will block them, or if that won't be enough, the Heavenking will freeze the interlopers in place with a gesture.) Actually, he *tries* to plunge it in, performing *seppuku* to regain his honor. But the rubber *wakizashi* that one of the ninja planted on him earlier in the evening bends double at the pressure.

Shimota seems to sob helplessly for a moment, then lifts his head and breaks into helpless laughter. The Heavenking smiles benevolently, then his body begins to waver. He speaks to everyone in the room (the Megalans hear this as Anglish): "Yarohito Shimota, your enemy's own failure restores your honor. You may return me to our native shores." The apparition ripples wildly and coalesces back into the cat.

The PCs will have to do some cleanup after this scene — besides chasing, and possibly capturing, the Master of Spring Mud and his henchwomen, they will have to do something about Najimatsu the mage-fox, at least until the Circe potion wears off, sometime in the next 2d hours. Because of the Sahudese beliefs regarding foxes, none of the foreigners will go near him, including his father.

A Grand — or at Least Chaotic — Finale

If the GM has very good timing (and a somewhat sadistic sense of humor) he can combine all three endings into one frantic scene. The setting is the dinner party, as for *The Competitor* conclusion. The jester and acrobats of *The Ninja* resolution are the entertainers at the party. And the ending of *The Brat* plot thread changes slightly.

Follow the Kroveth scene up to the poisoning. When the poisoning attempt is spoiled, that's when the Master of Spring Mud tumbles down the table and

Passing Funny Money

Note any characters who received counterfeit or severely debased coins and didn't detect them. For the next game month, whenever that person buys anything, roll one die. On a 1-3 result, the adventurer has used one or more of the bogus coins. Roll for the seller's reaction and then for his Merchant skill at a -5 penalty (the coins are hard to spot).

If the seller's reaction is below 10, apply a bonus to his Merchant skill of one point for every point the reaction roll was below 10 — the merchant is already suspicious of the buyer. The result of a successful skill roll varies with the seller's reaction. In all cases, the seller's reaction drops by three points immediately.

If the new reaction is Disastrous, he either attacks personally or, more likely, has his guards attack. On any other negative reaction, he calls the watch and swears out a counterfeiting complaint.

On a Neutral or Good result, the seller will rant, but accept good coins to replace the bad ones — checking them all very carefully, of course.

A merchant with a Very Good or better reaction will accept the coins at "street value" — 10% of face value for counterfeit coins, 20% for debased real coinage.

The character can also find a shady money-changer to take the bad coins with a Streetwise roll. The price offered will depend on the money-changer's reaction, with "fair price" being the street value.

drops his bombshell. Marcus will be in the area affected by the pastille, and turns into a large falcon. If Kroveth is in the cloud also, as is likely, he is replaced by a large gray rat. Finish the scene with Shimota and the Heaven-king next. (Even the fleeing Master of Spring Mud stops to kowtow to the divine spirit, until it returns to cat form.)

The transformed Najimatsu tries to help apprehend the fleeing master ninja by throwing a Fireball spell. Since he can't throw a Missile spell in fox form, the boy attempts an on-the-fly modification so he can spit the fireball from his mouth. This results in the fire elemental instead, and the rest of the ninja chase and the search for Kroveth can take place as the world burns . . .

Add the City Guard, mix vigorously, and season with a few Imperial secret agents. It'll be a dinner party that will be the talk of the Empire.

"All's Well That Ends in 'Farewell' "

(Or, "Let's Not Say 'Au Revoir' — Let's Say 'Goodbye' ")

After all the plot thread conclusions take place, people are restored to their normal forms, and damages and fines are paid, Marcus and Shimota finalize their agreement quickly. (Shimota has "won" the conflict with Ah Manchu . . . for now. Thus it is safe to return to Sahud.)

Within two days, the Sahudese are ready to go, and cart all their household goods back to the harbor, leaving an empty — and dangerously weakened — villa behind them, somewhat the worse for wear. The Sahudese samurai gets a farewell scene with her love, if needed. The servants troop back into the junk, followed by the Yarohitos and, finally, the samurai. Ropes cast themselves off from the dock and snake back onto the ship. A favorable breeze springs up, the sails fill, and the junk sails gracefully into the sunset.

One of the characters feels a tug at his ankles. An all-too-familiar small gray dog gazes up at him and yaps hopefully . . .

Payday

Any guard to whom Cicero has taken a dislike (reaction Poor) finds his pay to be accurate in count, but of dubious coinage — silver pieces with shaved edges (worth 75% of face value), or from years when the Imperial Mint produced coins debased by too high a proportion of alloying metals. For each character so treated, make a Merchant roll to see if the PC noticed. Anyone explicitly inspecting or counting their pay gets a +5 bonus to the roll.

If anyone has achieved the distinction of a Bad or worse reaction from the accountant, their pay is short by about 10%. On top of that, many of the coins are either counterfeits, or from a series of coins alloyed into near worthlessness

Adapting to Other Genres

It is difficult to adapt this adventure to realistic historical or modern settings, simply because no such culture as Sahud existed or exists on Earth, though the scenario may still be played "straight." (See sidebar, p. 60.) Things might work out in a ***Supers*** campaign, but the GM will have to invent a good explanation for the Sahudese — perhaps as aliens. There are other genres which ought to work well, though:

Samurai in Space

The adventure will work almost as written in a ***GURPS Space*** campaign. Sahud becomes a Lost Colony with a very deviant culture. Magic is replaced by super-science or psionics. The brat becomes a powerful telepath with a variety of unethical skills. The transformation elixir becomes either a product of advanced bio-science or a holographic trick reinforced by hypnotics.

It Ain't Shangri-La

In a ***GURPS Cliffhangers*** campaign, Sahud can be a Lost Civilization, somewhere in the mysterious Orient. Instead of silk, the trade interest becomes gold, objects of art, or gems. The Sahudese use magic, but the player characters should have little idea about how or why it works.

Sahudwinked

This scenario could even work as a ***Horror*** adventure — keeping within a fantasy background. Change the Sahudese to a strange demon-worshipping cult. The cult has considerable economic power, and the party's employer wants to make a deal with them. He assures the party that the awful stories about the Sahudes are just that . . . stories.

So far, so good. But it turns out that the employer had a very good reason not to use his own staff for the job — he wants to keep them sane and on his payroll. The hilarious misunderstandings of the first few days soon develop spooky overtones, and the PCs eventually realize that there *are* no logical explanations for some of the things their happy visitors are doing . . .

This could all be true even if the adventure is played almost as written up until the climax. The visitors turn out to be exiles or near-exiles because of their demonic beliefs. The Big Finish, instead of (or along with) the low comedy, involves a genuine demon, or worse, summoned by the precocious boy. And what inhabits the body of poor Prince Chu-Chu? Better not to ask!

(10% of face value). The true value of the lot is only ⅓ of the agreed-on value. Counting the coins will reveal the shortfall, or the victim will notice it with a Merchant-3 roll. But the counterfeits and debased coins are much harder to detect — explicit inspection of the money is required, and a successful Merchant roll at a penalty of -5. A Metallurgy skill roll at no penalty will also detect the bad money, but the coins must actually be tested.

Further Adventures

If by some amazing twist of fate, Marcus closes his deal successfully, and the characters survive this adventure with their sanity intact, they will be in great demand as intermediaries to cope with other Sahudese parties.

No doubt the adventurers would be happy to never encounter another Sahudese again. But successful go-betweens are *very* rare — pay will be double or triple that of any other similar job. Or possibly even higher. Whether they accept or not, they'll regret it either way.

Visit Scenic Sahud

The party gets to visit strange and exotic Sahud, watch a "high war," meet humble wizards, colorful nobility and yet more mysterious ninja . . .

The Silk Road

Marcus needs to open an office in Sahud to manage his newly-arranged silk trade. Naturally, he calls upon the group he most trusts to deal with the Sahudese. Of course, he must send along an agent for the office — none other than the party's old friend, Cicero Tenax.

But nothing is easy in Sahud . . . The economic competition from the Yarohito clan has upset the other clans in the silk business. First, the adventurers are drawn into a "high war." When that fails, things turn nasty — duels are provoked with the PCs, bureaucratic and political tangles abound, and a "low war" starts, culminating in the kidnapping of Cicero and perhaps even some of the PCs.

A Mission for the Emperor

Agents of the Emperor have noted the group's success in dealing with the difficult Sahudese. Suddenly, they get an invitation they can't refuse — Councilor Mellus, rumored to be the head of the Imperial intelligence service, asks the characters to dinner. He suggests that they might like to take a nice vacation in Sahud, along with a few other sightseers. Perhaps someone might even pay them for the trip . . .

The other "tourists" are Imperial spies, of course. The Sahudese reaction to this invasion of sightseers might vary from amusement to outright indifference to the declaration of a "low war" against Megalos!

Sahudese Famery Lobinson

On a sea voyage, the characters are caught in a storm and shipwrecked on a small island far off the east coast of Megalos. Footprints in the sand on the beach lead them to the island's only inhabitants — a Sahudese family shipwrecked here ten years ago.

The family will happily introduce the new castaways to the joys of living at TL0, Sahudese style. No doubt the characters will find this a great incentive to acquire the Shipbuilding skill . . .

As a variant on this scenario, the PCs might rescue Lobinson Clusoe (and his man Fliday) from his involuntary exile.

The Cost of Success

Supposing the group is successful in its misson, word of the success will not only circulate around Megalos, it will reach across Yrth. Merchants from Al-Haz may want to accommodate a delegation of Sahudese, and who else can they call but our intrepid band of heroes? The adventurers will have to face the usual Sahudese cultural oddities *and* learn a whole new set of social norms and strange customs. Or maybe the Sahudese Emperor wants the escorts to come to Sahud to help him with a delegation of Reptile Men nomads. The possibilities are endless.

Escorts 'R' Us

An enterprising party may even want to start a business, working with foreign delegates and helping negotiate business deals. The field is lucrative — merchants are always looking for ways to increase foreign trade, and imperial officials are often stymied by their ignorance of cross-cultural protocol. The entrepeneurs can use the money from Marcus (provided it's good) to invest in a boarding house or even an inn specializing in service to foreign guests. There are several adventure possibilities that could stem from this kind of venture. A group of foreign spies, learning of the group's materialism, chooses their organization to unwittingly help gather sensitive information about the Empire. Or perhaps the leader of the infamous Sahudese Ah clan hires the group for his own devious purposes, to find an inside base for his country's secret invasion of Megalos! The PC are caught in the middle as Imperial Intelligence discovers the ploy and blames the party . . .

4 MORDAG'S LITTLE FINGER

by David L. Pulver

Mordag's Little Finger is set on Yrth, in a large town within a duchy in Megalos or Cardiel, but no elements exclusive to Yrth are necessary. With a few minor changes, it could take place in any medieval city with a normal-mana level. It is intended for a party of four to six 100- to 125-point characters, or a smaller group of more experienced adventurers.

The adventure's opening assumes the PCs are swords (or spells) for hire, with enough of a reputation that they could be contacted by someone looking for competent and trustworthy mercenaries. As an alternative to being hired, PCs could be distant acquaintances or relatives of the Sorceress in Silver or Maewen, knights willing to do a good deed for a fair lady, or even bounty hunters or guards after Saragrave.

The Sorceress in Silver

The characters are contacted one evening by a large bat, bearing a message scroll tucked in its claws. The bat drops the scroll at someone's feet, circles him twice, and flies off. The scroll is written in silver ink on fine parchment in a clear hand. It reads:

The Sorceress in Silver requests the pleasure of you and your companions tomorrow for breakfast at the Evening Star to consider a certain rewarding adventure to our mutual benefit.

Anyone familiar with local wizards or the town's high society (make a Savoir-Faire roll) will know that the Sorceress is a well-known mage, who is politically active in one of the local Mages' Guilds, and reputedly highly skilled in Air and Information spells. She has a reputation as an honest and God-fearing woman. Although originally a foreigner, she has lived in the Duchy for the last two years. She is also known to be both wealthy and attractive, and to move in the best circles of society.

The Evening Star has a reputation as a high-class restaurant. And its in a good part of town — the PCs won't get out for less than a gold apiece.

The Evening Star

When the visitors arrive, they find the Evening Star is patronized by well-off merchant adventurers, rich travelers and successful mercenary captains. Its decor is subdued but fashionable, its music and entertainment first rate. The adventurers find they are expected and are led to a table.

Waiting is a lady dressed in silver-gray, attractive, dark-haired, with a bat resting on her shoulder. She rises to greet them, introducing herself as the Sorceress in Silver (see sidebar, p. 100). She suggests they order dinner or refreshments at her expense. She chooses a fine wine and exotic seafood for herself. She is soft-spoken and well mannered, never raising her voice or becoming angry, though she may be quietly sarcastic if provoked. After she and the adventurers have exchanged formal introductions and begun to eat, she will relate her tale:

"There is a man called Saragrave. He's a thief, a master of disguise. It's said he filched the crown jewels of Caithness disguised as the king, robbed the thieves' guild vaults, took the Archbishop of Megalos' rings and burned the church behind him, and then because he knew he'd go to hell, one day he stole the keys to Saint Peter's gate, disguised as the Holy Ghost."

"But I don't care about that. I want you to find him and kill him because he killed my friend and took my staff."

"It was Mordag's little finger," she explains. "Mordag was a giant and a mage. He terrorized these lands long ago, but was eventually slain. The wizard who did it enchanted the finger bone and kept it as a staff. I acquired it in beneath Wye (a ruined city) a few years ago. The other day I lent it to my apprentice Maewen, who was working late in our laboratory. I had other things to do, but I kept a Wizard Eye on her — Maewen was skilled, but magic is tricky, and Enchantment most of all. Then Saragrave entered."

About the Author

David L. Pulver grew up in Canada, England and New Zealand. He has been a science fiction fan for most of his life, and an avid gamer since 1978. He began freelance writing in 1988, and is currently trying to support himself as a full-time game designer. David's work has appeared in the magazines *Roleplayer*, *Challenge*, and *White Wolf*, and he is the author of ***GURPS Ultra-Tech*** and ***GURPS Psionics***. He frequently contributes to APAa such as *Alarums and Excursions* and *All of the Above*. David presently lives in Kingston, Ontario.

Where is Northside?

Northside, the run-down neighborhood in which this adventure is set, is designed to be easily inserted into an existing city in the campaign. Because of this, the city and duchy have not been named — the GM should place it in whatever region is convenient.

In fact, the adventure works best if the party have no reason to be familiar with Northside. If the heroes are already intimate with the back streets of the nearest city, set the adventure in a neighboring town, and give them some reason to travel to it and stay for a time. The PCs will encounter the Sorceress after they have concluded whatever business took them there in the first place.

Besides Northside, two other locations are briefly mentioned in the adventure: the dragon-haunted ruins of Wye, and the Necromancer's castle of Hordag Loi. Being old ruins, neither is likely to appear on recent maps, but if it becomes important to know where they are, the GM should place them within a few day's journey of town.

The Sorceress in Silver

Human female mage — age 36, curly black hair, gray eyes, fair complexion. 5' 6'', 135 lbs.

ST 9, DX 10, IQ 15, HT 10.

Speed/Move 5/5.

Dodge 5, Parry 8.

Advantages: Beautiful; Literacy; Magery 3; Status 1; +2 Reputation (among area mages); Wealthy.

Disadvantages: Color Blind; Honesty; Sense of Duty to friends and apprentices; Vow of Chastity.

Quirks Vengeful; Dresses in silver or white; Tames small animals (like bats); Enjoys bad weather.

Skills: Animal Handling-14; Calligraphy-12; Magic Jet-10, Riding-9; Savoir-Faire-13; Spell Throwing-13, Staff-12.

Languages: Anglish-15, Latin-15.

Spells: Air Jet-15; Apportation-15; Armor-15; Astrology-15; Create Air-15; Create Air Elemental-15; Colors-15; Control Air Elemental-15; Destroy Air-15; Divination-16 (Astrology), Dispel Magic-15; Enchant-16; History-15; Keen Eyes-15; Lend Health-15; Lend Strength-15; Light-15; Lightning-15; Magelock-15; Minor Healing-15; Missile Shield-15; Mystic Mist-15, Predict Weather-15; Powerstone-16; Purify Air-15; Recover Strength-15; Scroll-15; Scryguard-15; Seek Earth-15; Seeker-15; Seek Food-15; Shape Air-15; Shield-20; Trace-15; Walk on Air-15; Ward-15; Watchdog-15, Wizard Eye-15.

Equipment: fine gray robes trimmed with silver; trained bat; quarterstaff; a silver necklace shaped like a bird of prey, holding an 11-point Powerstone in its talons.

Unless she is attacked, the Sorceress will not take an active role in the adventure, though she will provide healing or possibly information magic if her hirelings are in dire need.

''How he got past the guards and locks and wards I don't know, but he was like a masked shadow. He introduced himself and thanked Maewen for being so considerate as to have the staff ready for him. His voice was soft and deadly. She called for me, started a spell, but he was swift as a demon cat. He grabbed the staff — I watched him through the Eye as I ran downstairs — and killed Maewen with it. Before I arrived he was out the window and gone.''

To Catch a Thief

The Sorceress offers the adventurers $15,000 in silver (or the equivalent in enchanted items that she can make herself) for regaining the staff for her and killing or capturing Saragrave. She will not pay in advance, but if they are reluctant to take the job, she will remind them that the local Duke and the merchants' guilds, who have suffered from the master thief in the past, have posted a $10,000 reward for Saragrave's capture (he must be taken alive for

trial, since his identity is in doubt). She has some clues as to his whereabouts, but the party may not find it easy to track him down.

If the PCs agree to help her, she will provide more details. She tells them that, as of last night, her divination spells (specifically, Seeker) have given her a general idea where Saragrave may be: somewhere in Northside, a bad part of town. If they press her for details on how she knows, she will tell them that when she cast Seeker (first on the staff, which failed, then on Saragrave), she learned that he was walking down East Falasha Street. But by the time she got there he was gone into the night. Since Seeker can't be used on the same object or person twice in a week, she used Astrology, but lacking details of Saragrave's birth date, sign and so forth, she has only been able to determine that he is still somewhere in Northside.

Questions and Answers

The party may have several questions for the Sorceress; she will do her best to answer them.

Regarding Saragrave, rumor says he is a skilled thief, deadly in a surprise attack but he has no real magic abilities. No one knows his real identity, as he goes masked and few have seen him and lived, but the Sorceress will tell the characters he is about 5' 8'' tall, slim but muscular, and seems to be missing one finger on his left hand.

She has no idea why Saragrave stole the staff, or who might have employed him should the PCs suggest he might not have been working on his own. She says that neither she nor Maewen had any enemies or bitter rivals at the time, in the mages' guild or out of it. That she owned the staff was no secret — she has carried it openly since she found it at Wye.

Wye is a ruined town several day's journey away, famous as the lair of the ancient Blue Dragon. If asked, she smiles, and says that there is indeed a dragon, and that recovering the staff was far from easy. The dragon is still there.

If questioned about the history of the staff, she cannot tell them much more — having been born an outlander, the Sorceress knows little about Mordag or the wizard who slew him and enchanted the staff. Perhaps a local bard or storyteller would know.

As for the staff's powers, Mordag's Little Finger requires a command word to operate. She is still discovering its powers — there is a powerful Concealment enchantment on it — but she knows it has a very strong Powerstone; only a mage can unlock its other abilities. If the characters ask how Saragrave killed Maewen with it, a look of pain will pass over her face, and she will tell them he used it to beat her to death.

The Sorceress will not accompany the party herself, but urges them to begin the hunt before Saragrave decides to leave the area or get rid of the staff. If asked why she isn't after Saragrave herself, she will simply explain that she is not a fighter, and is presently arranging Maewen's funeral and comforting the dead mage's kin.

Once they have agreed to do the job, she thanks them warmly (if they refuse, she will regretfully hire another group, who will doubtlessly fail miserably, leaving the villains free for the GM to resurrect at some later date — perhaps when the party learns of disappearances within the city). Wishing them luck, she gives them her home address if they wish to find her. She then bids them good night and rises, going outside to a waiting coach and heading home.

Running the Investigation

The characters should be asking residents for information about Saragrave, both the person and his activities. If they meet the right people, they will learn of his treasure-seeking expedition to the Necromancer's castle at Hordag Loi. This may encourage them to seek out information on Mordag's legend, or even to travel there themselves. Pace this part of the adventure so that the characters have a sense of gradually discovering that something strange is going on in Northside, and let them acquire some allies and some clues. The reports of mysterious disappearances and the story that the Necromancer built a tower in Northside should eventually lead the searchers to the Pale Tower, perhaps guessing that Saragrave is not alone.

Exploring Northside

When the adventurers are moving through Northside, tell them what street they are on, and the general characteristics of it. Describe specific locations they pass by only if they are searching the street house by house (likely to take a few hours per street) or looking for a specific kind of building: a party walking down a street with their minds set on finding an inn or tavern will quickly notice Varley's or the Brass Door as they pass it, but not the Pale Tower or Mother Gird's, since that's not what they are looking for. Similarly, if they are just hurrying from one place to another, give only the most cursory descriptions ("you pass houses and shops, and a court full of beggars").

Resist the temptation to have the players see all of Northside in a single day. While some people will be easy to talk to, just meeting and dealing with even a single innkeeper could take an hour or more, as he serves customers at the same time and is constantly interrupted by other calls on his time. Suspicious people — criminals or members of street gangs — may be cagey on first meeting, and ask the PCs to rendezvous with them some hours later, at a safer place of their own choosing.

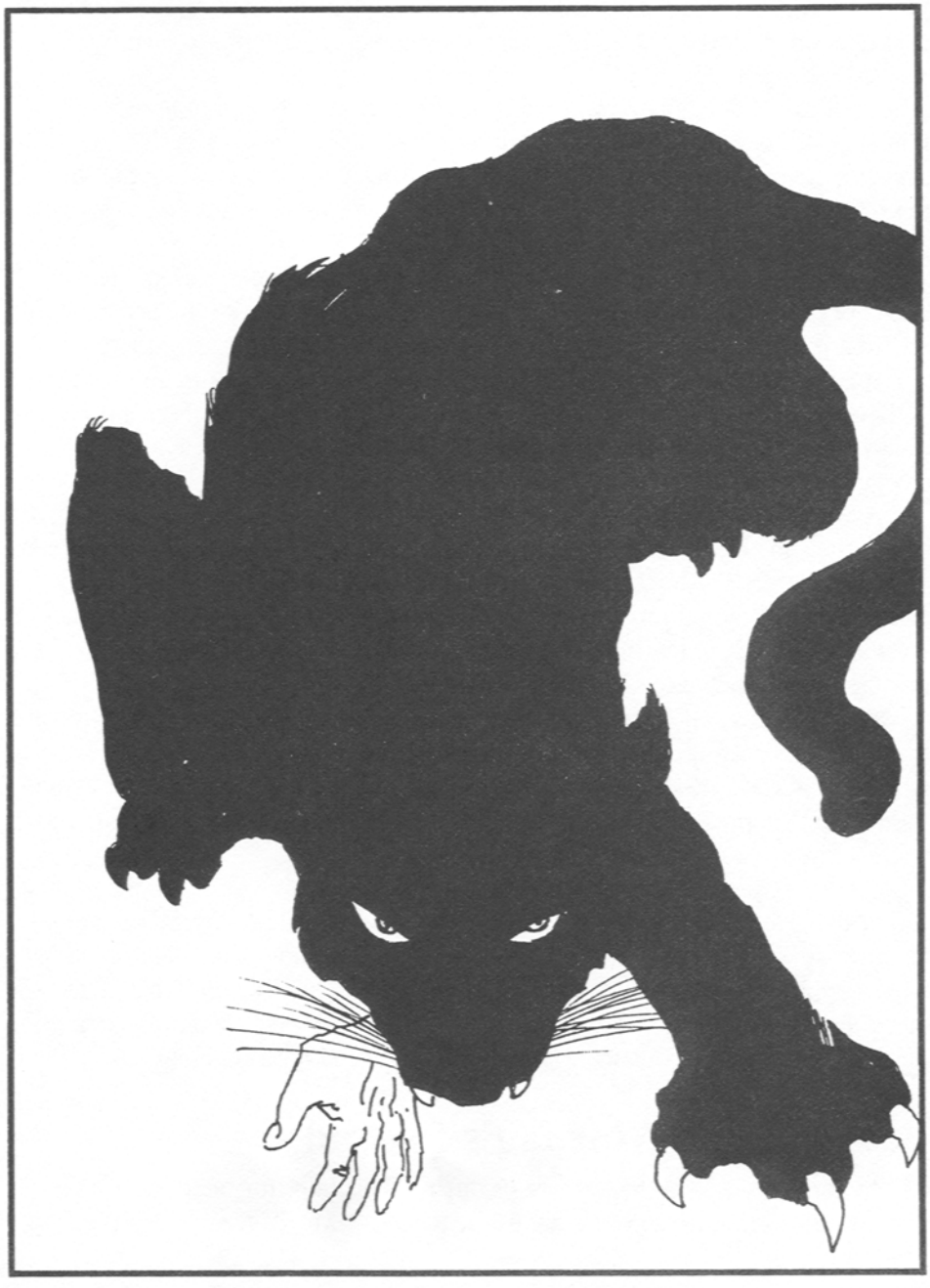
Background: Mordag's Legend

At some point — either before or during their hunt for the thief — the PCs may decide to inquire into the nature of the giant Mordag, and how his finger

came to be a wizard's staff. This information can be learned by consulting scholars (for a fee), asking bards for old songs or ballads, or through research in local university or church records (most chroniclers recorded the demise of the giant Mordag, but a Research roll should still be required, as well as some skill with Latin). Someone familiar with the area's legends can make a History roll, or the group can hunt up local gossip or ballads in Varley's Inn at Northside.

Of course, it's better if the adventurers do their own detective work. But it will add flavor to the adventure if the group is able to hear or read the legend before the final confrontation in the Pale Tower, so if they show no interest in the history of the staff and are concentrating all their efforts on Saragrave, it may be a good idea to hint broadly that there might be more to the sorceress's tale of a finger-bone staff. For example:

"So where are you off to this time, lads?"
"Looking for a magic item, innkeeper."
"Oh, and what rare treasure is it now?"
"They call it Mordag's Little Finger. Odd name."
"Ah, Mordag, eh? Now therein hangs a tale . . ."



Megan

Age 18; long brown hair, hazel eyes; 5' 6", 130 lbs.
ST 9, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 10.
Speed/Move: 5.5/5
Dodge 5, Parry 6
Advantages: Alertness +1, Acute Vision +1.
Disadvantages: Youth, Poverty (struggling).
Skills: Area Knowledge (Northside)-12, Brawling-11, First-Aid-9, Knife-12, Shortsword-12, Scrounging-11, Streetwise-10.
Language: Anglish-10

Megan is Varley's wife and a former Wharf Duke. She remains in contact with the gang and can introduce the PCs to Torch if she likes them.

She is a good wife and mother and is very protective of Tika, though she can't understand where the child hears all her little rumors.

If They Get Stuck

Ideally, the adventurers should spend several days gathering information in Northside before they zero in on the Pale Tower, especially if they haven't heard Mordag's Legend yet. If they are lucky enough to go right to the Pale Tower on the first day, the GM may wish to make it more difficult, by having Mordag in his reserve coffin at the Devil's Eye. On the other hand, if the investigation is getting absolutely nowhere and the players are feeling frustrated, dropping a few clues may pick up the adventure's pace.

One way of doing this is to arrange it so they stumble across one of the more knowledgeable NPCs getting robbed in the street or hassled by the Serpents or some of Maccadee's enforcers wanting protection money. In return for assistance, they may provide the party with information. Another method is to have them run into someone such as Shale, who is looking for a solution to the Northside disappearances on her own. This may give them the idea that more is going on in Northside than they know, and spur them in the right direction.

Or have them catch a glimpse of a huge fog-shrouded shape moving through the alleys at night . . .

Once Upon a Time

"This is a tale from nearly a hundred years ago, in the days when our Duke's great-grandfather ruled the land . . .

"Mordag was a giant who was also a mage, a terror to the whole region, as feared in his time as such banes as the Necromancer of Hordag Loi or the blue Dragon of Wye, but his power was as nothing to his greed, and one night he broke into the old Duke's castle and carried off the young heir. The Duke's retainers spent all the next day searching for the child, but without success.

"The next night a terrible messenger arrived, a demonic cat the size of a tiger, bearing the Duke's son's severed left hand in its jaws. The cat spoke, delivering a message that, if an immense ransom and the Duke's homage were not delivered to the giant by the dark of the moon, the other hand would follow. Then it bounded over the castle walls and vanished into the night.

"The Duke was grief-stricken, for he loved his son, but his rage and pride were greater. In his youth he had stormed the walls of Hordag Loi and driven the evil Necromancer from her lands, led a Crusade against the infidels, and fought the infamous bandit Starkad hand to hand. Now he was old and gray, his strength nearly gone, but even so, he would not meekly surrender. On the altar of Saint Martin's Church he swore a mighty vow that he would never treat with the monster. Instead he pledged he would grant lands, riches and his lasting friendship to whomever, be it noble, knight or commoner, that would rescue his heir alive.

"And because the Duke was rich and powerful, many tried to claim the reward, but all failed to find the giant, or succeeded but were overmatched, and the day of reckoning drew closer. On the night of the dark of the moon, the Duke's hall was packed as all awaited the demon's final visit, the Duke and his remaining knights with swords drawn, hoping to send the demon cat back to hell if nothing else.

"At midnight, the doors of the hall opened, of their own accord, and a pale, beautiful woman all in black entered. Evil sorceress, witch, vampire or demon's child, all knew her from the tales: the ageless Necromancer of Hordag Loi, the Duke's ancient foe, whom he had once driven from her lands. And she came into the Duke's hall, bearing his one-handed child under one arm and in the other what she said was Mordag's little finger.

" 'I would have brought you his entire hand, my lord, but I couldn't carry it,' she said, laughing merrily into the silent hall. She swore that Mordag no longer lived, and claimed the reward: the old Duke's friendship and his boon.

"And it is said that the Duke fulfilled his vow, giving the Necromancer her lands back, and the post of court magician. She built a pale tower in the city, and lived as a great lady till the end of her days, much to the disgust of decent folk who whispered that she was evil still and never went to church, though it is said she served the Duke well. Eventually she passed away, slain, it is told, by the great dragon of Wye. As for the Duke's son and heir, he grew to become a mighty man at arms despite his wound (alas, he could never wield a greatsword!) and sired many children, and it is his son's son who rules us now, wisely and well."

The Untold Story, or What is Going On

The legend leaves out a few crucial facts: Mordag is no longer alive, but he isn't dead, either. As some suspected, the Necromancer was a vampire. Mordag was attractive as giants go — and his blood was sweet.

After the Necromancer moved into the city as the Duke's court wizard, she kept her newly undead slave as a guardian for Hordag Loi (her lands to the east), and ensured the giant's obedience not only through her vampire charm but by binding the giant's soul into a magical prison, a Soul Jar: the staff she had carved

Handling Information Spells

If there is a skilled wizard in the party, or the PCs hire one, he or she may try to find Saragrave or the staff using information spells. They can help a lot if cast at the right time, but shouldn't be allowed to dominate the adventure. Here are some notes on using them:

Analyze Magic: This spell could detect the presence of the Soul Jar on the staff, but remember its Concealment spell. A mage could also use Analyze Magic to learn the staff's name, but it resists at +5!

Aura: Anyone using this spells who sees Mordag's Little Finger will realize that a malign spirit is trapped within. Anyone looking at Mordag will see that his soul is missing!

Divination: Only a yes or no question can be asked, and repeated questions have a cumulative -4.

Mage Sense: Can help pinpoint the staff, but since there is a -1 per hex penalty, it's only useful if the caster is fairly close. Remember that the staff is in the *top* floor of a tower — 30 hexes above ground level.

Pathfinder: This spell can't show the PCs the path to Saragrave, since they don't know where that "place" is.

Seeker: The Sorceress has already used this to narrow the search for Saragrave and the Finger down to Northside, so she can't use it again — only one try per week is allowed.

See Secrets: This spell will spot the secret door in the library.

Trace: Remember that a Seeker must be cast first.

Wizard Eye: A sneaky method of exploring the Pale Tower or Sardag's room, especially if the Invisible variant is used. Belshazzar's demonic senses will enable him to spot an invisible eye. Staying in housecat-form, he will enjoy catching and eating it!

from his little finger bone. If Mordag misbehaved, destroying the staff would slay his soul, and besides, it tickled her humor to hold his life so. Still, for the most part she kept Mordag imprisoned in the catacombs, not wanting it known he still existed, for she knew the Duke would not be pleased.

After the Necromancer met her end fighting the great dragon of Wye, Mordag remained bound beneath Hordag Loi until accidentally freed by an unwary party of treasure seekers. The vampire giant's powers had grown, and the adventurers died to feed his thirst — with one exception: their leader, Saragrave, who became his charmed slave.

All this is information no one knows: if the hunters are curious, they can, of course, ask Mordag . . .

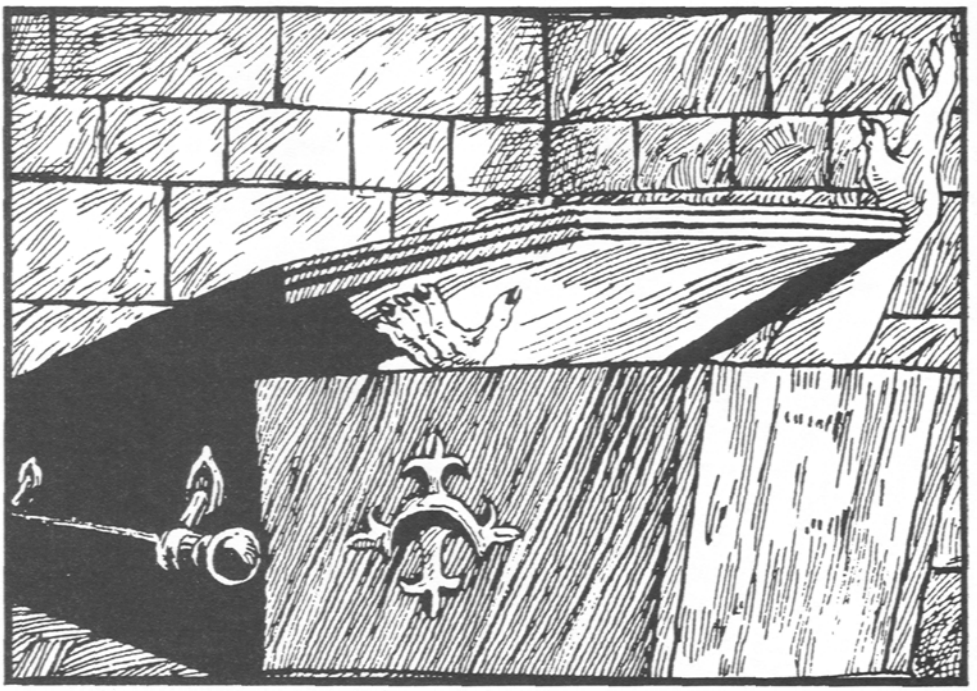
Recent Events

After he was freed, Mordag thought the time was ripe to go out into the world again, but he feared the power of the staff that held his soul — if anyone had it, that person could destroy him merely by breaking it. He knew it still survived, for so did he, but it had been lost when the Necromancer was slain. The vampire needed an agent who could work in daylight and not attract the attention a giant would. With his newly charmed servant, Saragrave, Mordag journeyed in secret to the Duke's town, hoping his wily servant could locate the whereabouts of the staff.

Saragrave began his master's task by searching in the ruins of the Pale Tower in Northside, the Necromancer's old townhouse, now abandoned. The thief found many things of interest in the tower, but the staff was not one of them. After more inquiries he learned that the Sorceress in Silver had recovered it from the ruins of Wye, and wasting no time, he stole it.

After acquiring the staff, Mordag only needed one thing more: the command word that would unlock its powers and free his soul. Guessing it was hidden in the secret library in the Pale Tower (as it is), the giant is now spending his nights laboriously translating the ancient scrolls. Occasionally he goes out to hunt, but most of the time Saragrave keeps him supplied — with blood.

But Mordag's presence has not gone completely unnoticed in Northside . . .



The Streets of Northside

These descriptions give some flavor for each area; refer to them when the characters are walking down a particular street.

North of East Bluegate and west of Vrai Road: Most of the buildings are the shops and homes of lower middle class tradesmen — carpenters, weavers, or the like. During the day, this area is crowded with peddlers hawking wares, pickpockets plying their trade, musicians playing for pennies, noisy street vendors and people haggling over goods and produce.

Between Lower Tower Road and the west side of Gaunt: A very rough neighborhood. The majority of the buildings are cheap tenements (some owned by Maccadee) rented by laborers or struggling journeymen; their children make up most of the area's gangs. During the day there is a fair chance (2 in 6) of meeting the Wharf Dukes here. By nightfall small groups of burly laborers are returning home from looking for work elsewhere in the city, often drunk or ill tempered.

Falasha Street, and South Lower Tower Road: The buildings are mainly warehouses or deserted, run-down tenements, many inhabited by derelicts. During the daytime, street urchins may be playing here, or drunks lounging against buildings. More than usual, the characteristic odors of human and animal waste are present here. A good place to get mugged, especially at night. It is one of Saragrave's favorite hunting grounds for victims.

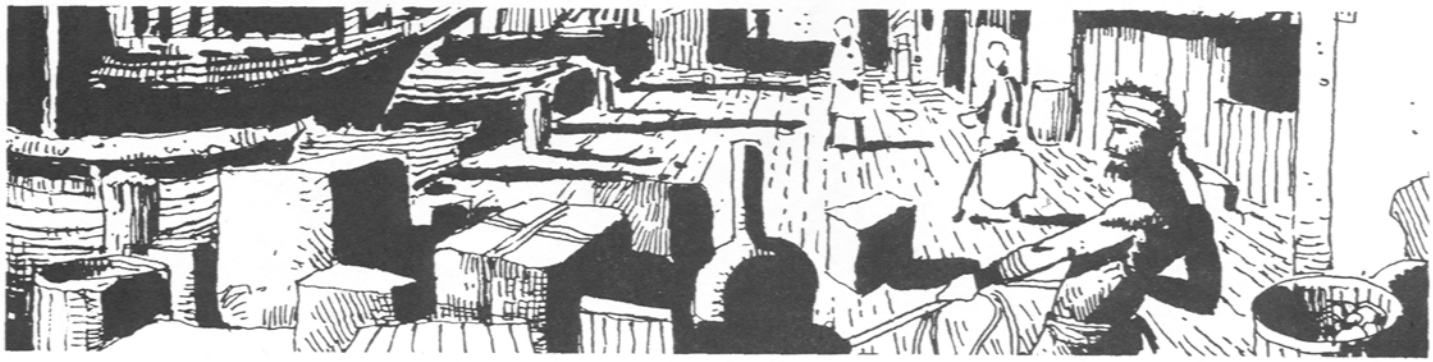
East of Kepper Street: Another poverty-stricken working-class neighborhood, similar to that between Bluegate and Gaunt, but with somewhat older architecture. A good place to meet the Serpents.

Between Gaunt and Kepper Street: The heart of Northside. South of Bluegate it's a shade dangerous, but it's also where the best inn (Varley's) and restaurant (Fishburgers) are, as well as Fountain Court. This is also where any specialty shops, such as Dacaro's Herbal Ointments, are located. The Wharf Dukes claim this area as their own: Kepper Street is their boundary with the Serpents.

Northside

Key:

1. Varley's Inn
2. Fishburgers
3. Shadowmane's
4. Dacaro's Herbal Ointments
5. Mother Gird's
6. Fountain Court
7. The Bell Tower
8. Hen Wen's
9. The Brass Door
10. The Windy Tower
11. Half-a-Loaf
12. Halt Shipping and Storage
13. The Devil's Eye
14. Fishmarket Square
15. The Spinning Wheel
16. Maccadee's Office
17. The Pale Tower



Mordag's Little Finger

Northside

Dark, narrow alleyways and winding roads whose buildings overhang the streets on either side, hopeless faces staring out of open doorways — this is Northside.

It was a good area once, for several tall towers and churches still stand, and many of the three- or four-story buildings have the look of rich houses fallen to cheap tenements and left to decay. But the only people living here now are those who can't afford to leave, and the only church is closed on Sundays and holidays.

The neighborhood is probably no more than an hour's walk away from the Evening Star or any other part of town, so the investigators will likely want to go there and check it out. Northside is usually entered from the intersection at Kepper and Falasha Streets, or from the northern part of Vrai Road. Its boundaries are easily apparent (see map, p. 105). The characters will quickly notice a change as they move into Northside: the city's smells take on a more pungent tang as the odor of fish mixes with that of rotting garbage. Drunks lie passed out in the main streets, not just in the alleys, and the town watch is conspicuously absent.

Northside Encounters

Each of the numbered encounters described below corresponds to an important location on the Northside Street Map (p. 105). Some locations, or the Northsiders who frequent them, can provide clues to Saragrave's whereabouts.

When the adventurers talk to the locals, most will be happy to gossip on a reaction of Good or better; Streetwise can usually substitute for a reaction roll, as can Sex Appeal in certain circumstances. Neutral characters may be won over by Influence Rolls (see p. B93 — assume IQ 10 unless noted), or by appealing to their individual interests, such as Shadowmane's love of exotic weapons, or Mannanan's interest in new songs (see the NPC descriptions in the sidebars for details). Observation, talking to others, or Diplomacy and Carousing can all be helpful for finding out what these interests are, if they are not readily apparent.

Remember that the characters described here are not the only residents of Northside: feel free to introduce other obnoxious NPCs — pickpockets, muggers, etc. — to give the PCs an idea it's a Bad Neighborhood. Some suitable street encounters are described in the sidebars.

1. Varley's Inn (Falasha and Kepper St.)

Varley's is a run-down three-story building with a sign showing a shadowy figure drinking from a skull. The inside is cheery in contrast to the rough streets, with poor but honest tradesmen and local rowdies engaged in good-natured conversation and ale-quaffing. The inn is run by Varley, a grizzled one-eyed retired soldier who plays the harp at odd hours; use the Enforcer stats (p. 106) if he has to throw someone out.

Varley keeps order with the help of his two large dogs and his wife, young ex-Wharf Duke, Megan, who still wears the gang's colors. With Megan is their cute eight-year-old daughter, Tika, who enjoys playing marbles on the common room tables. Varley gets along well with anyone who calls him Captain and likes his music, but he doesn't tolerate fighting in his inn; Megan warms to anyone who is friendly to her kid.

Megan can provide an introduction to the Wharf Dukes (p. 113); Varley has heard of Mordag, and knows an old ballad was written about him. Other patrons of the inn who may meet the characters include the dark-cloaked pawnbroker Shadowmane (see p. 108), who drops by for a drink in the evenings. Mannanan, a handsome half-Elven bard who often plays ballads with Varley, is also often present, strumming on his harp, mixing traditional Elven melodies with human

Northside Scum

These stats can be used for pickpockets, Maccadee's enforcers, barroom bouncers, or other lowlife whom the party comes into contact with in taverns or on the street. With a few changes (higher IQ and more skills) the Enforcer stats can also be used for reputable characters like Varley and Mannanan.

Enforcers

ST 12, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 11
Speed 5.25, Move 5.
Dodge 6, Parry 7, Block n/a.
Light leather armor, no encumbrance.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Toughness-1.

Disadvantages: (pick two) Bad Temper; Bloodlust; Bully; Gigantism; Lecherousness; Jealousy; Intolerance; Overconfidence; Sadistic.

Quirks: (pick one) Arrogant; Bad breath; Evil smirk; Likes to gamble; Mild lecherousness; Sarcastic; Scarred face.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Northside)-10; Brawling-13; Knife-11; Shortsword-12; Stealth-11; Streetwise-9; Thrown Knife-12.

Weapons: Shortsword 1d-1 impaling, 1d+2 cutting or baton 1d+2 crushing; Knife 1d-1 impaling, 1d cutting.

Cutpurses and Pickpockets

ST 9, DX 13, IQ 11, HT 11.
Speed 6, Move 6.
Dodge 6, Parry 6, Block n/a.
No armor or encumbrance.

Advantages: Alertness +2; Night Vision.

Disadvantages: (pick two) Greedy; Laziness; Lecherousness; Kleptomania; Impulsive; Skinny; One Handed; Overconfident.

Quirks: (pick one) Juggles Knives; Likes to gamble; Mildly lecherous; Pretends to be a beggar; Shifty-eyed; Showoff.

Skills: Area Knowledge-10; Climbing-12; Fast Talk-11; Knife-12; Lockpicking-13; Pickpocket-12; Stealth-13; Streetwise-12.

Equipment: Lockpick; middle-class clothing; large knife in boot (1d-2 impaling, 1d-3 cutting).

folk music. He collects songs and tales from foreign lands; he will approach adventurers who look well-traveled or exotic, asking about their travels for source material. He knows the legend of Mordag in ballad form (though not, of course, what really happened to the giant afterward).

The talk of the inn is the mysterious series of disappearances that have occurred over the last week: at least six people, unrelated and some with no known enemies, have disappeared at night! One of them is known to some of the patrons: Rowenna, a girl from Hen Wen's. Of course, people vanish in Northside all the time, but usually the bodies turn up in a gutter soon enough. Many theories exist as to what is causing the disappearances. Shadowmane and Megan believe them to be the work of an insane murderer, while Mannanan suspects the local street gangs, with whom he has had trouble before. As for Tika, she's sure it's the return of the demon Ahriman, "who lives in a windy tower at the end of the road." And she tells that to anyone who plays with her.

2. Fishburgers (Kepper St.)

A passer-by can recognize this place easily from the odor of frying fish. This open-front restaurant is the hangout for the Wharf Dukes, a small local street gang that delights in harassing strangers, led by a pyromaniac punk called Torch. When it's open, the Dukes will be there the first time the PCs show up, and have a 2 in 6 chance of being present at other times.

During the day, the place is usually full — the food is good and cheap (Fishburgers sell for $2 each). But anyone who acts tough or who is not properly respectful to the Dukes will face harassment from the gang. On a Bad or worse reaction or without an introduction from Megan (above), insults and a beating by the gang after the party leaves are likely unless the PCs apologize and make a successful Influence roll with Fast-Talk or Diplomacy. A show of force (magical or mundane) could also scare them off without a fight — but only if the PCs leave the gang a way to save face and treat them as equals; a successful Psychology-2 or Diplomacy-2 skill roll will accomplish this.

On the other hand, the gang is always eager for a job, and if the visitors come recommended or take time to stroke the kids' egos and get a good reaction, the Dukes can help them out: they know some interesting things themselves, and for

Torch

Leader of the Wharf Dukes — half-Elven male, age 18, long white hair and silver eyes, pale complexion, 5'7", 140 lbs.

ST 9, DX 12, IQ 13, HT 10.

Speed 5.5, Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry 8, Block n/a.

Advantages: Magery 2; Literacy; Half-Elven; Reputation +2 (on the street).

Disadvantages: Enemy (Rival Gangs; 6-); Minority Group (half-elf); Impulsive; Pyromania; Poverty (struggling).

Quirks Wears gold; Favors direct action; Tosses coins and Orcs into wells; Dresses in gang colors.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Northside)-12; Fencing-12; First Aid-12; Leadership-14; Lockpicking-11; Knife-12; Scrounging-12; Streetwise-13.

Spells: Apportation-13; Create Fire-13; Flame Jet-15; Flaming Weapon-13; Heat-13; Ignite Fire-15; Shape Fire-14; Simple Illusion-13; Ward-15.

Languages: Anglish-13, Elvish-13.

Equipment cheap saber; large knife; light leather jacket with gang colors; lockpicks; heavy leather boots; $24 in belt pouch, and gold arm bands worth $200.

The unwanted child of an Elven lady and a Northside spice trader, Torch inherited his mother's magic and his absent father's wanderlust. At 14 he said farewell to the Elfwoods and found his way to the Duke's city. He is the half-brother of Icehawk, the owner of the Devil's Eye, a seedy tavern in Northside. Icehawk is looking for him, but due to his poor vision, hasn't recognized Torch as his sibling.

Torch's gang is the Wharf Dukes; their colors are red and black. Use the stats for the Serpents (see sidebar, p. 112), but only roll 2d for numbers. In a gang fight Torch hangs back and uses his spells; he could give an unwary party a nasty surprise.

Maccadee

Male, age 43, long black hair streaked with white, mustache, dusky skin, heavily-built. 5'9", 212 lbs.

ST 11, DX 13, IQ 14, HT 11.

Speed 6, Move 6.

Dodge 6, Parry 7, Block n/a.

Light leather armor (enchanted to PD 2, DR 3); no encumbrance.

Advantages: Literacy; Reputation +4 (as underworld boss, always recognized); Strong Will +2; Very Wealthy.

Disadvantages: Enemy (law enforcement and underworld rivals, 6-); Lecherous; Overweight; Sense of Duty (toward his followers).

Quirks Likes to gamble; loves architecture; Calls everyone "mister;" Jealous of Saragrave's reputation; Keeps meticulous records.

Skills: Acrobatics-12; Administration-14; Architecture-12; Area Knowledge (City)-15; Brawling-12; Cooking-15; Detect Lies-14; Diplomacy-12; Fast-Draw (Shortsword)-13; Gambling-14; Lockpicking-13; Merchant-13; Politics-13; Sex Appeal-12; Shadowing-13; Shortsword-14; Stealth-14; Streetwise-15; Traps-13.

Languages: Anglish-14; Arabic-12; Hebrew-14.

Equipment fine shortsword with Loyal Sword enchantment; amulet shaped like a silver bird that gives him +4 magic resistance; $200 in gold.

The unchallenged crime boss of Northside, with his fingers in everything from smuggling to prostitution. Maccadee always has two Enforcers with him, but he can call upon a dozen more if necessary. He reacts poorly to threats, but doesn't bluster: anyone bothering him will meet a hired assassin within the week.

His passion is architecture; if he meets a well-traveled stranger, he may inquire about interesting castles or cathedrals they have visited. If the PCs bring up Northside buildings, he says he admires the gargoyles on Saint Martin's Chapel. Another structure, the Pale Tower, is supposed to have a fantastic glass skylight, built for the Necromancer when she was court wizard, and several cunning secret doors and panels.

$10 or so per person (double that for Torch) they make good street informants or shock troops.

See the sidebar on p. 107 for Torch's statistics; use the Serpents' stats for his followers. More sociable than the Serpents, the Dukes are mostly teenagers who make a few coppers through odd jobs on the river front. They know nothing more about Saragrave than the usual gossip, but they have seen some strange things. Star claims she saw a cloud of fog or mist rolling down Kepper Street and up East Night, past Dacaro's Herbal Ointments. And a few days before, a great covered wagon rumbled through the streets after dark, heading north up Valkris Road. The next morning the gang found it abandoned on Lower Tower Road, near the old Bell Tower. Torch had fun burning it . . .

3. Shadowmane's (Falasha St.)

Shadowmane's is a small two-story stone building, notable for the solid bars on the windows. Inside the shop, visitors will find a dimly lit room packed with shelves of junk and treasure. Shadowmane is a pawnbroker (and a fence), but collecting exotic weapons is his obsession. Shadowmane is tough and an expert shot with a crossbow; he will warm to anyone who wants to talk weapons and tactics. Giving him a fine or magic weapon, or something odd like a pair of Sahudese nunchuks, will win his friendship for life (+5 reaction or on Influence rolls). He is also Megan's uncle, and drops by Varley's once a week.

As a fence, he's actually met and dealt with Saragrave before (on a business basis — they are not friends), and while he doesn't know anything about the thief's current activities, his description matches that of the Sorceress, except that he doesn't mention the thief is missing a finger, and if queried, is sure on this point.

He can offer one other piece of information: a friend of his, a thug named Black Tom, was one of several hired by Saragrave for an treasure hunting expedition "somewhere to the east." He hasn't seen Tom (or Saragrave) for two weeks, and he thinks he must either be in hiding or out of town. He says one could always ask Tom's girlfriend, Charis, who works at the Brass Door (#9 below).

Shadowmane's back room is filled with racks of weapons for sale. He has many knives, and a few specimens of almost any other weapon locally available

for sale. Most items are of cheap or standard quality, but he may have one or two fine knives or daggers. Armor is limited to a few pot helms or suits of leather.

If Shadowmane is involved in combat, use the generic Enforcer stats in the *Northside Scum* sidebar, p. 106, for him, but add IQ 12, Crossbow-17, Gambling-12, and Merchant-15.

4. Dacaro's Herbal Ointments (Kepper Street)

Located at Kepper Street and East Night, Dacaro's is a small psychedelic herb shop fronting for an unlicensed fortune teller. Dacaro is about 30, thinks the millennium will soon be at hand, and tends to believe every stranger is the promised Messiah, especially if he looks the part. She's a good source of dire, foreshadowing hints:

"I have *seeen* the beast, and he has come, like unto the form of man but vast as a tower, and his hand is marred with the sign of *eee-vil.*"

She's also a reasonably competent alchemist (skill 15), and all kinds of potions are available here on request. She makes her living selling them to the lowlife and local thieves, but she would much rather tell your fortune. She doesn't know anything about Saragrave, but if the visitors mention four-fingered men, she does remember one coming buy a few days ago to buy a potion of Chiron (elixir of healing, p. M90).

Dacaro's is a good place to pick up a supply of garlic.

5. Mother Gird's (Vrai Rd.)

This is a reasonably cheap, fairly clean, four-story tenement and boarding house, marked with a sign promising hospitality. Mother Gird is also a passable healer and a good midwife. It's a safe place for out-of-town PCs to find a room if they have to stay in Northside, and local residents like Shadowmane and Torch will recommend it. It's also where Charis, Black Tom's girlfriend, lives (see #3 above).

Charis is a pretty, dark-haired girl, about 18 years old. She works as a street seller (hawking onions and the like). She is nervous about Tom, who went off with Saragrave on an adventure two weeks ago and didn't come back. She might open up to any questioners who are sufficiently sympathetic and don't look too much like law enforcement agents.

She knows Tom left town two weeks ago, accompanying Saragrave and a small group of companions — local adventurers — seeking some lost treasure Saragrave thought was in the ruins of Hordag Loi. She can tell them that much; she hasn't seen him since, and she is worried sick since he said he would be back in a week at most. She has never met Saragrave, but she says he is seven feet tall and can turn invisible at will.

6. Fountain Court (Fountain Court Rd.)

The fountain actually works, a minor miracle for Northside. As a result, this large paved courtyard is a favorite hangout for poor street vendors and beggars during the day. Usually 2d of them will be present, especially in the summer months. Most of the beggars are pretty scared about the disappearances — two of them, Blind Sal and the madman Roger, are missing.

For a bit of copper, all kinds of tall tales will be offered: how Dacaro, the witch of Kepper Street, has predicted the end of the world, or what the crimelord Maccadee plans to do to keep the streets safe and profitable. A beggar named Uncle Newt claims Godfrey Daniels, a young pickpocket, was carried off by a cloud of darkness yesterday night. Another, old One-Eye, says he saw a flock of bats leave the ancient Bell Tower down the road and head northeast a few days ago . . .

The Gargoyles

The four gargoyles on the bell tower of Saint Martin's Chapel are just statues. But a mage, such as Mordag, could use the Animate spell to bring them to life. This would cost 6 energy each. If animated, they have the following statistics:

ST: 16	PD/DR: 2/4
DX: 12	Damage 1d
IQ: 9	Reach: C or 1
DX: 14	Size: 1
Speed/Dodge: 6/6	WT: 320
(flying Move 12)	

A stone gargoyle takes no extra damage from cutting or impaling weapons. It will strike with its claws for 1d cutting damage, or bite in close combat for 1d impaling damage.

Mordag may animate the statues for an attack on the Sorceress (see *Wings in the Night* on p. 126), returning any surviving gargoyles (perhaps chipped and blood-stained) to the Bell Tower afterward. If he discovers that he is being hunted, and has a night to prepare, Mordag may also use them to attack his foes, but the spell's energy cost is too high for him to maintain them as guards during the daytime.

Shale

Bouncer at Hen Wen's — female, age 26, green eyes, black straight hair, cut short, with olive complexion. 5'10" tall, 170 lbs.

ST 12, DX 13, IQ 10, HT 12.

Speed 6.25, Move 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 8, Block n/a.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; High Pain Threshold, Reputation +1 (honorable mercenary), Social 2.

Disadvantages: Overconfidence; Truthful; Sense of Duty to Employer.

Quirks Grins evilly in battle; Very earnest; Wants to learn Sahudese fighting arts; Thinks she can paint; Quotes bad haiku.

Skills: Brawling-14; Broadsword-14; Heraldry-10; Lance-14; Poetry-8; Riding-14; Savoir-Faire-8; Streetwise-9; Two-handed Sword-14.

Equipment bastard sword, light leather armor, $35 in silver. She has a suit of chainmail, a spear, and a pot helm in her room, and a war horse stabled in Varley's Inn.

Shale (not her real name) is actually the younger daughter of a Caithness knight. With no land to inherit, she went out in the world to seek her fortune. She has been looking for work in a mercenary company, but has had bad luck finding one that accepts females. As a result, she works as a bodyguard in the city. She is bored, and after her contract runs out (in a month), she would be willing to sign on with a band of adventurers willing to have her.

Shale met a wandering Sahudese blade master early in her travels, and never quite recovered. She has recently been trying to find out what happened to the missing people, particularly Rowenna, and has been hanging out at the Devil's Eye and stalking the streets at night. The PCs could meet her if they do the same, or if they just want to get into Hen Wen's.

7. The Bell Tower (Lower Tower Rd.)

When Northside had a church, this was it — the chapel of Saint Martin of the Sword. It is a burned-out, three-story church with a 40-foot-tall bell tower and a warped bell. Crouched about the top edge of the Bell Tower are four evil-looking stone gargoyles, one facing each of the cardinal points.

The place is reputed to be haunted, probably because the wind occasionally makes the old flawed bell sound on its own — an eerie noise indeed!

The characters might want to investigate. No floor plan is included, since there isn't much here to find, but the GM should describe lots of clinging spider webs, creaking boards, and the like, as they make their way through it. The biggest danger is falling through the rotten wooden floors (1 in 6 chance per person). An Acrobatics or DX-5 roll is necessary to avoid a four yard fall.

From the physical evidence, a lot of bats recently lived in the belfry at the top of the tower. Something seems to have made them all leave . . . The only present occupant is Miles, an old derelict huddled under a blanket in the top. He sleeps by day; at night he will be awake, but feigning sleep with a large knife ready in his hand.

Miles was recently scared by something and shakes a lot; on a Poor or worse reaction, or if people sneak up on him, he suddenly leaps up and attacks, but if the characters approach him calmly he will tell what he saw:

"Last night I was down by the old fountain, alone 'cept for blind Sal the beggar. I was asleep under me cloak when something woke me up — a bad dream, maybe. Sal was snoring fit to wake the dead and I couldn't get back to sleep. I 'ad my eyes half closed, when up comes this fog, rolling in, so thick I could barely see 'me nose. Then I 'eard footsteps — 'eavy ones. Closer they came — but no breathing, though I knew it was right by me. I stopped breathing too, 'oping it would go away. That's when Sal screams! Something 'ad her, she yells, and I open me eyes and see 'er being lifted up, up into the fog! Something 'ad her, but all I could see in the fog was two points of red light, high as trees. Then the fog rolled out, an' she was gone."

8. Hen Wen's (Fountain Court on Gaunt St.)

Hen Wen's is a house of ill repute with a good reputation and no hassles from the city watch (they pay their bribes on time). From the outside, Hen Wen's is a normal enough building, looking like a typical boarding house, but at night, PCs who make successful IQ or Carousing skill rolls notice an unusual number of

men entering and leaving its doors, some of them casting furtive glances as they do so.

Anyone who doesn't act like a customer will have trouble getting past Hen Wen's bouncer, a tall, thin swordswoman called Shale (described in the sidebar on p. 110). A good excuse and an Influence roll using Fast-Talk or Sex Appeal may get them past her to see Hen, if that's what they want.

The madam, Hen, is a talkative, middle-aged woman who knows nothing of Saragrave beyond the tales, but she and all her employees are very worried about the disappearances, and scared of going out at night alone. One of her girls, Rowenna, vanished three days ago, sometime after dark. If the PCs offer to look for her, Shale will want to go with them when she's off duty.

9. The Brass Door (Lower Tower Rd.)

This restaurant is a large three-story wooden building with stone foundations, a heavy, brass-bound door, and a black sign emblazoned with a silver crescent moon. A back door opens from the kitchens onto Gaunt Road, often used as an entrance.

Due to its fine ale and hearty food, the Brass Door is the favorite meeting place of the local criminal element. Charis (see #3 and #5 above) works part-time as a waitress when she isn't selling onions. If she isn't here and the PCs come looking for her, the owner, Jeriz, can direct them to Mother Gird's where she lives.

The Brass Door is a good place for gossip, as it is frequented by pirates, thieves, smugglers, fences, common thugs, and the occasional crime boss and his bodyguards. Usually 3d+2 people will be present. Notable patrons include Shatter, a decidedly paranoid mercenary sorceress; Grim, a dour, seven-foot-two Enforcer; and Maccadee, the local crimelord. If there's a thieves' guild in town, it is Maccadee's organization; his stats are described in the sidebar on p. 108, and his headquarters detailed at location #16. The GM can create the other NPCs as necessary; see the *Northside Scum* sidebar for typical statistics.

The locals are suspicious; visitors who don't fit in — knights in shining armor, or the like — will learn little, and may be followed by cutpurses, or challenged to an impromptu knife duel in an alley behind the tavern. If they consent to a duel, a space will be cleared in the alley, and a ring of onlookers will watch to prevent cheating and cheer on favorites. Fighting *within* the restaurant is frowned upon — "save it for outside — you want to bring the law here?" Anyone not heeding this warning will find himself facing a collection of otherwise disinterested patrons.

Visitors who make successful Streetwise rolls or who look or act like they fit in may get important information (Acting skill may help). Saragrave occasionally dealt personally with the local talent, but no one has seen his face. However, with suitable alcoholic or monetary lubrication, the thieves can tell dozens of stories about the master thief's escapades, some obviously fanciful, but those who know him agree on a few points.

He is said to wear a magical suit of leather armor and a mask that lets him see in the dark. He is an expert with thrown weapons, a brilliant acrobat and a skilled cat-burglar. He calls no man master, and does not acknowledge the authority of the area's crimelord. Saragrave usually works alone, but has been known to employ hirelings if necessary, and pays well, though is somewhat careless with the lives of his men. Most recently he recruited a small party of criminals (including a boyfriend of the waitress Charis) for a treasure hunting expedition. None of them has been seen since.

Oddly, none of the stories mention his missing finger — exactly the sort of detail that it seems would stand out in the man's legend . . .

The Town Watch

Age 25-30; average height 6'0", 185 lbs.

ST 12, DX 14, IQ 10, HT 10.

Speed/Move: 6/5.

Dodge 8, Parry 10.

Chainmail (PD/DR: 3/4), light encumbrance.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold, Legal Enforcement Power.

Disadvantages: (pick two) Bully, Bloodlust, Overconfidence, Gigantism, Lecherousness, Intolerance.

Quirks (pick one) curses a lot, loves fish, hates street gangs, wants a promotion, sexist.

Skills: Broadsword-14, Interrogation-10, Knife-12, Law-10, Shadowing-10.

Language: Anglish-12

The Town Watch is noticeably absent from the Northside, but a few of the braver guards can be found in Fishmarket square or walking a beat near the storehouses.

If attacked, each watch member carries a broadsword (2d cutting), a large knife (1d-1 impaling); and a horn that he will blow to summon any of the watch who are nearby. If there are none within hearing distance, one of the attacked will break off to get backup. Attacking a watchman is a crime punishable by death or slavery.

The Street Gangs

The two main street gangs in Northside are the Serpents and their rivals, the Wharf Dukes. They incorporate both males and females, ages 13 to 18.

ST 9, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 10.

Speed 5.5, Move 5.

Dodge 5, Parry 6, Block n/a.

Advantages: Alertness +1.

Disadvantages: Bully; Poor; Sense of Duty (Gang); Youth.

Skills: Area Knowledge (City)-10; Brawling-11; First Aid-9; Knife-12; Shortsword (for club)-12; Scrounging-11; Streetwise-10.

Languages: Anglish-9.

Equipment ragged clothes with scarf and headband in gang colors; large knife, 1d-2 impaling and 1d-3 cutting; light club, 1d crushing. Each has a few coppers.

Each gang contains 16-18 gang members. If met on the street, roll 3d to see how many are encountered.

The Serpents

The Serpents' leaders are Viper (age 17) and Sister Snake (age 15) — same statistics but add Strong Will +2, Leader-10, and Knife-14; Viper dyes his hair green, and Sister Snake has a pet viper (her *other* one, she calls it — use rattlesnake stats, p. B143). Viper is very suspicious of outsiders and transfers this suspicion to his followers. The gang members react to strangers at -2.

Continued on next page . . .

10. The Windy Tower (East Falasha St.)

This crumbling 50-foot edifice of gray and black stone looms over the neighborhood. Locals who are questioned can tell the PCs that it may have been the headquarters of the Wizards' Guild of Ikaris before they fled the second coming of the demon Ahriman.

Whatever its history, the Windy Tower is now the hangout of the street gang known as the Serpents, arch-rivals of the Wharf Dukes, who defend "their" tower against intruders. During the day, the gang is likely to be out on the streets; otherwise, they'll be here.

The Windy Tower has five floors.

Floor One: Empty. But if the gang is awake, intruders can usually hear laughing, shouts, and so on from above.

Floor Two: This floor contains a large table of rough wood, some benches, and a fire place; if the gang is meeting, especially in the mornings and late evenings, this is where they will be.

Floor Three: Here are several sleeping mats and chests; about half the gang can be found sleeping here on any given night.

Floor Four: This story has a desk, some oil lamps, and some rough chairs. This is where the gang leaders, Viper and Sister Snake, hold court, and where the gang will drag anyone they beat up for "judgment" — and probably another beating, if they don't act humble enough — before tossing them onto the street. A trapdoor leads to the battlements.

Floor Five — The Battlements: The battlements are empty, but the stone is melted and gives off an odd sulfuric smell (a demon was once summoned here).

When they are not in the tower, the Serpents aggressively patrol their "territory" (east of Kepper Street), extracting protection money from businesses, occasionally fighting with the Wharf Dukes or lesser gangs, and roughing up strangers. The Serpents are even less friendly than the Dukes — they react to strangers at -2 (the same penalty applies to Streetwise and other Influence rolls), but if the PCs are known to have roughed up the Wharf Dukes, or boast about doing so, reaction rolls are normal.

If the PCs somehow befriend the Serpents, or bully them into talking, they know nothing about Saragrave except that he is a famous thief. However, if asked specifically about the Pale Tower or haunted buildings in Northside, Viper and Sister Snake say they once visited the place on a dare. They found a dungeon with chains and skeletons, a kitchen, a great hall with strange wall-paintings, and lots of locked upper rooms. They are vague about further details ("nothing much else") but an Empathy, Psychology or Detect Lies roll reveals that something scared them off. If pressed, they will describe seeing the shadow of a huge cat on the third floor landing . . .

The gang's statistics are given in the sidebar on p. 112, as are some possibilities for meeting them on the streets.

11. Half-a-Loaf (East Blue Gate)

This is a good place to buy bread, as the delicious smells wafting from the open storefront will quickly convince any passerby. The owner, Firebud, hasn't seen any sign of Saragrave, nor does she want to. She has enough trouble affording the Serpents' and Maccadee's "protection" to want to find more thieves. She has heard rumors that a ghost is haunting the old bell tower on Lower Tower Road: some people have heard strange noises there.

Half-a-Loaf is usually very crowded at mid-morning and noon, as local housewives and restaurant owners come to purchase baked goods. Megan (from Varley's) and Mother Gird can possibly be met here, and both will be willing to chat.

12. Halt Shipping and Storage (Falasha St.)

This is an ordinary-looking, one-story wooden warehouse. The first time the group passes by, they notice a group of people arguing outside; two members of the town watch are also present. If the PCs stop to listen, they will learn that the warehouse owner just came back from a journey out of town to check on his wares, only to discover it had been broken into in his absence. The lock was expertly picked, and two 7'×6' wooden shipping crates were stolen, but oddly enough, the contents of the crates — salted fish — was not, and was left strewn over the warehouse floor!

No one saw who did it, but the owner blames street kids "probably Torch and his lot took them — may a demon cat chew out their guts." If the characters have yet to meet Torch, this may spur them to find him (see sidebar). But it was Mordag and Saragrave who took the crates to make Mordag's spare coffin (see #13 below).

If the characters decide to investigate the warehouse, they will find that it holds a great variety of crates and barrels. The crates contain fish, the barrels, salt or pork.

13. The Devil's Eye (Night St. and Vrai Rd.)

This two-story stone building displays no name, just a sign with a winged demon. It is the Devil's Eye, the toughest pub in Northside. Though the Eye is not an inn and doesn't serve food, the owner has a few locked private rooms in the back for anyone willing to pay his steep prices ($30/night, in advance). He has a policy of asking few questions.

The inside of the tavern is rough but functional — most of the first floor is taken up by the common room, furnished with heavy tables and chairs, a fireplace, and a long bar; there are few windows, and the place is poorly lit. Dark shadows are everywhere. Broken crockery is swept into the corner, and suspicious stains darken the floor. Stairs lead up to the owner's chamber and six guest rooms on the second floor, and down to the basement wine cellar.

There will be 1d+1 patrons present in the pub during the day, double that in evenings. The tavern closes after dark, but anyone who rents a room will be let in by the owner, or given a key. Shadowmane is occasionally here, and so is

Street Gangs (Continued)

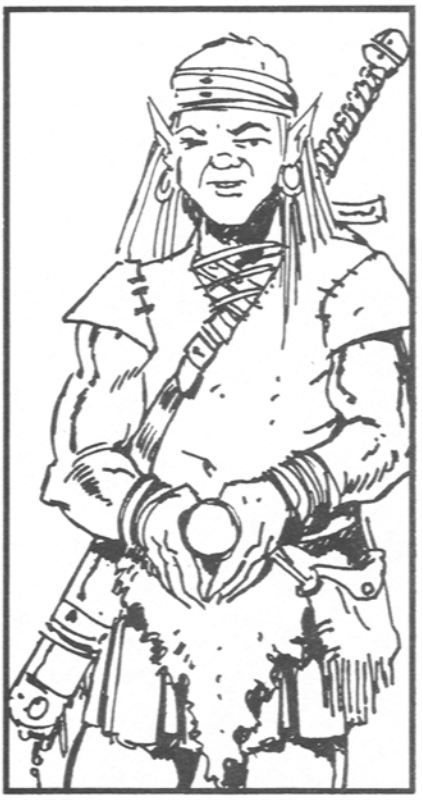
The PCs can meet the gang anywhere east of Kepper Street. They won't pick on large groups of well-armed adventurers unless they outnumber them three or more to one, but would consider a couple of warriors on their turf a definite challenge. They will trail a group for a few minutes before attacking, sizing them up and hurling taunts. If the party scatters, they go after only one. If they catch someone, they beat him up and steal everything he has, but don't kill unless their one of their own has been killed.

The Serpents' headquarters is the Windy Tower (see p. 112). They run the streets during the day and stay inside the tower at night. The gang's colors are green and blue.

The Wharf Dukes

The Wharf Dukes claim the area between Gaunt and Kepper Streets as their "turf." They are friendlier than the Serpents, only reacting to strangers at -1 (no modifier if they were introduced by Megan or Icehawk). They spend most of the day down by the docks, trying to earn a few coppers doing odd jobs. They have no official headquarters, but at night they can often be found in a abandoned warehouse on Night Street. The Wharf Dukes' colors are red and black.

Mordag's Little Finger



Icehawk

Elven owner of the Devil's Eye — male, age 63 (looks like a human aged 25), Elven features, silver hair and watery blue eyes, pointed ears with one gold earring, pale complexion. 7', 157 lbs.

ST 12, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 11.

Speed 6, Move 6.

Dodge 7, Parry 8, Block n/a.

Leather jacket (PD 1, DR 1), no encumbrance.

Advantages: Usual Elf advantages (Magery-1 and Combat Reflexes), Status +2 (among elves).

Disadvantages: Nearsighted; Gigantism; Reputation -3 (as black sheep, among elves), Skinny.

Quirks Wears one earring; Likes humans and their music; Dresses in street fashions; Unfocused stare; Carries a greatsword; Looking for his brother.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Elflands)-13; Bow-9*; Brawling-12*; Carousing-12; Cooking-13; Merchant-12; Riding-11; Streetwise-10; Tracking-13; Two-handed Sword-15*.

Spells: Continual Light-12; Flash-12; Lend Health-12; Lend Strength-12; Light-12; Minor Healing-12; Test Food-13.

Languages: Anglish-11 (strong Elven accent); Elvish-13.

Equipment Light leather jacket, lower-class clothing, black and red headband, fine greatsword, 1d+4 cutting (an heirloom of the House of Fire, his upper-class Elven family), $120 in silver.

*Includes modifications for poor sight.

Shale. The patrons are mostly hardened criminals, freelancers not affiliated with Maccadee's organization. But a few tough but honest folk stop by for the dark Elven ale and the atmosphere.

If the PCs stay for any length of time, it's a good bet they will witness either a brawl or a knifing — and if any PCs don't look like proper street scum, they'll likely be the targets. See the *Northside Scum* sidebar for typical patrons stats, split between cutpurses and enforcers; brawlers will start with knives, but may draw swords if faced with the same.

The owner of the Devil's Eye is Icehawk, a huge, seven-foot-tall elf with long silver hair, watery blue eyes, and one gold earring (see sidebar). Icehawk came to Northside to look for his half-brother, who ran away from the Elfwoods when he was young. He will be grateful to anyone who can help him find him.

It turns out that his half-brother is none other than Torch, the leader of the Wharf Dukes. Torch knows that Icehawk is looking for him, and having dyed his hair, is relying on Icehawk's poor vision to keep him hidden. He thinks that Icehawk wants to send him back to the Elfwoods.

If the party thinks of the connection and mentions it to Icehawk, he will seek out Torch. There will be an argument followed by a tearful reunion, during which Icehawk will promise not to send Torch back to the Elfwoods, provided that he gives up the gang and comes to work for him. Torch agrees.

Icehawk bought the Devil's Eye a month ago, after the last owner was killed breaking up a brawl. He manages the place himself, though he hires a maid to do the cleaning and occasionally employs Shale as bartender.

If the PCs ask, he hasn't seen Saragrave. If he is asked about anything unusual, or if the PCs mention disappearances or other weird happenings, Icehawk says he has no trouble topping that.

A couple of days ago he heard a knock on his door. It was just before dawn and the place wasn't open, but he was up and he recognized one of their voices so he let them in. The one he knew was a fellow named Sardag, to whom he had rented a room a few nights ago. The other was as stranger, seven feet tall, hunchbacked, silent, and heavily cloaked — his face was hidden under his hood. They needed help dragging two huge wooden crates upstairs to Sardag's room.

Icehawk pauses to watch the PCs' reaction, and if they ask what he thought was in the boxes, he will shrug before continuing with his story: "Bodies, maybe? I get a lot of those in the morning . . ."

"But anyway, that wasn't very strange. No, before I answered the door, I had been out earlier to empty a chamberpot, and the night was crystal clear. But when I opened the door to let the pair in, I couldn't hardly see them — a dense fog lay over the whole street, and curled into the tavern like a living thing even as I held open the door . . . a fog so thick I could hardly see my own hand in front of my face — now, that was strange."

Regardless of the owner's opinions, the characters may decide to check out "Sardag." If they ask for a description and get a good reaction, Icehawk will tell them (otherwise he'll tell them to mind their own business), describing the man as slim and graceful, with short brown hair and black eyes, wearing gloves and black leather. He was soft spoken and polite, and wore a shortsword under his cloak, but carried no other visible weapons. Icehawk thinks he was probably a smuggler. He went out later, and hasn't been back since, but the hunchback may still be in his room — at least Icehawk hasn't seen him leave.

Icehawk will not be willing to let intruders into his customer's rooms — it's a matter of honor — but the PCs can always sneak in at night, or just fight past him. If the investigators enter the room by stealth and get into a fight with its occupant, Icehawk will hear, and could arrive to help if they are having a tough time of it.

Sardag's Room: The door is locked with a difficult lock (-2 to Lockpicking); Icehawk and Saragrave both have keys. The room measures 14'×10'; there is a bed, a small table, a clothing chest, two chairs, a washbasin and a small fireplace. The shutters on the window are always closed and the drapes drawn. The fire is out. Oddly, one the chairs and the chest are on the bed, which hasn't been slept in. Sitting in the shadows at the corner of the room is a cowled, hunchbacked figure (see below). A glass of dark Elven ale and some untouched food sit on the table beside it.

Anyone looking into the room will see that the center of the room is dominated by two large 7'×6' wooden boxes nailed end to end. This is Mordag's reserve coffin, filled with earth from his homeland. Mordag comes here when he has been hunting in the east side of town and can't get back to the tower in time, entering the room by flowing in mist form under the shutters. It is up to the GM whether he will be here or not — if the party drives him from the Pale Tower, this is where he will retreat to; a prudent party that discovers his hiding place can amuse themselves by filling his coffin with garlic!

Bone Golem

Constructed of bones; 6' 5", 450 lbs.
ST 17, DX 13, IQ 8, HT 13/19
Speed/Dodge: 7/7
PD/DR 1/1
Size: 2.

The bone golem can use one weapon (its sword) at skill-14, or strike with its fist for 1d+2 damage. As with skeletons, an impaling attack to the golem does -2 damage and *no* bonus damage, but any crushing blow that gets through DR does *double* damage! It is *not* undead, however, and spells that affect undead (Control Zombie, for instance) will not work against it.

The full instructions for constructing a bone golem are in the Necromancer's notes (the same ones that Mordag is reading). The rules for creating and controlling a golem can be found in ***GURPS Magic,*** p. 106.

Creating a bone golem takes 3 weeks of work and requires at least three human-sized or larger skeletons. None of them has to be terribly intact, but at least one must be human rather than an animal. A successful Restoration roll is also necessary. Energy cost to activate: 400. The notes are written in Latin, and require a Research-2 roll to locate from among all her other magical papers (roll once per day). They would be worth $10,000 or more to a suitably inclined wizard.

Fishwives' Gossip

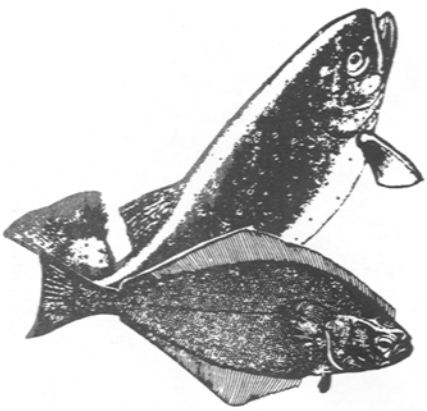
All news comes to the market, or so it's said. The fishwives gossip about their own and their husbands' doings, and the peddlers talk about what they hear on the street. Along with the price of fish (no worse than usual) and the faithfulness of husbands, anyone hanging about the market who can spend several minutes listening to pointless trivia may eventually hear something of interest. A successful Will roll gives a PC enough perseverance to stick around long enough to overhear one or more of the following rumors:

Tensions are high between the two Northside street gangs, the Wharf Dukes and the Serpents; two nights ago one of the Dukes was found beaten up on Falasha in Serpent territory, and is still unconscious. Most people expect the Dukes to retaliate soon. It could get bloody . . .

The Duke has raised tariffs recently to compete with his neighbors. Combined with talk of a poor harvest, many people think that prices are likely to rise. One woman complains that this will give Maccadee another excuse to raise all our rents.

An apple seller complains that her husband loses all her money gambling at the Spinning Wheel; the fishwife she is speaking to says she's lucky — her husband drinks her profit away at Varley's Inn. But at least he takes her with him sometimes — last night a bard from the Elflands was there, and his music was beautiful.

People have been vanishing at night, over the last week — a streetwalker from Hen Wen's is missing, and she's only the latest; no bodies have turned up. The beggars and street urchins are scared, and mothers are telling their children and husbands to get home early — honest folk might be next.



The hunchbacked figure will ignore anyone who opens the door, but if someone talks to it or enters the room, it draws a gleaming curved blade, and gestures menacingly, still in the shadows. If it is attacked or the characters do not retreat, it will drag its hideous bulk to its feet, and attack.

The room's guardian is a *bone golem,* a magical construct created by the Necromancer. Its hunchbacked body is a patchwork of bones worked into a mockery of a human skeleton. On its neck is a horned skull, and a human skull leers from its open ribcage. It wields a scimitar (cutting broadsword) and moves with a lurching grace.

Mordag found the golem in the Pale Tower, learned the words to command it during his researches, and sent it here to watch over his spare coffin, with orders to slay intruders. Its characteristics are given in the sidebar, p. 115.

14. Fishmarket Square (East Bluegate)

During the day this is a busy marketplace, filled with fishwives selling their wares, street vendors hawking fruit and vegetables, stalls peddling pies, eggs, beer and ale, jostling customers, and young children running everywhere.

It's very crowded during the mid-morning and around noon, making it a good place to lose a pursuer (-3 on Shadowing to follow someone through the square); by nightfall, the square is deserted. Before the market opens, kids in gang colors are waiting to be paid a few pennies to help unload fish crates and carts. During the day a couple of town watchmen will be about, loafing and keeping an eye out for pickpockets and cutpurses. Sometimes a noisy chase develops when an urchin steals some food and runs through the crowd!

The square is also a good place to pick up rumors about Northside (see sidebar).

15. The Spinning Wheel (Lower Tower Rd.)

This establishment is located on the second floor of a stone and wood building. The first floor is Old Hob, the cobbler's shop. The Wheel has no sign, but characters may notice the place because of the traffic of furtive-seeming people coming and going in the side door and up the stairs during evenings, when the cobbler is obviously closed. (Make an IQ or Gambling roll — a good gambler knows where there's business to be found).

The side door leads upstairs to the second floor, where an unlicensed gambling house is located. By day it is closed; in early evening it begins to fill up, and by nightfall a dozen or so patrons will be betting their money on dice, knucklebones, darts, mumbledy-peg, kings and castles, and other games of skill and chance.

Anyone seeking entrance will have to get past Lean Jack, the Wheel's burly doorman. Use the Enforcer stats (p. 106) with ST 13. Two assistants (normal ST enforcers) watch the tables upstairs, and will back him up in case of a fight. A fee of $10 is customary to get past him, more on a Poor or worse reaction. Anyone who looks like trouble won't be allowed in without successful Fast-Talk or Streetwise rolls unless accompanied by a known patron. Respectable-looking gamblers *are* welcome: rich folks from other parts of the city are common, usually with a token hooded cloak.

Any mage will notice something immediately upon entering the upper floor: the entire 5×4 yard area where the gambling takes place is a no-mana area! The Spinning Wheel has been in business, under a variety of names and owners, for decades. One of its more prosperous owners, fed up with magical cheaters, paid to have a Drain Mana spell cast on the premises. If the characters are ever pursued by magical entities such as Mordag, this may prove a useful refuge: the giant will not enter the casino.

The establishment is owned by Igriz Ghan, a small, quick man whose dark

green hair and sharp features hint at more than a trace of goblin blood. Ghan has an oily manner, but is very inquisitive about strangers. He claims to have much information about anything to do with Northside, but only knows the same stories about Saragrave that are told at the Brass Door (#9 above). If he senses that his visitors are interested in paying for information, he will try to take them for as much as he can. He *can* provide an introduction to Maccadee or Hen Wen. If he gets into a fight, use the Cutpurse stats.

If they haven't already met him, Maccadee will be here with his two bodyguards, gambling with the pawnbroker Shadowmane (see #3 above). There is a 2 in 6 chance any other night that one of them is here. If someone offers to gamble with him, Maccadee will usually be willing to give information — especially if he is winning!

16. Maccadee's Office (Night St.)

This is a small two-story limestone building, with elegant architectural lines, in a classical style from an earlier century. Once it was a wealthy lawyer's office, when Northside was a respectable neighborhood. It is now the headquarters of Maccadee, who some call the "King of Northside." All the windows are barred, and at great expense, both floors have been enchanted with a permanent Scryguard spell cast at skill 17.

Most people know where to find the place, since Maccadee also runs his legitimate real-estate business there. Maccadee's stats are in the sidebar, p. 108. As the crimelord of Northside, he wields considerable power. If the investigators get on his good side or blackmail him into helping them, he can provide both information and muscle.

The ground floor of the building has three rooms: a kitchen, a conference room, and two offices — one for Maccadee, the other for his lieutenant and secretary, a cold-eyed Enforcer named Baron. During the day Maccadee is usually in his office with three or four Enforcers on business. The office holds several valuable paintings of cathedrals and famous castles and a 200-pound wrought-iron office safe warded by a Magelock (skill-17), holding $13,200 in operating funds and incriminating records of his widespread illicit activities. If someone got his hands on these papers, Maccadee would be susceptible to blackmail — one way to get his help. Another is to play on his feelings of jealousy: Maccadee resents Saragrave's refusal to acknowledge his authority in

Belshazzar

Demon cat — a black man-sized house cat, 5' long, 160 lbs.

ST 26, DX 18, IQ 9, HT 15/20.

Speed 12, Move 12.

Dodge 10, Parry n/a, Block n/a.

Claws and bites for 1d+2 cutting damage, reach 1.

No armor or encumbrance. Fur has PD 1, DR 3.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, Magic Resistance-2, plus all usual demonic Advantages (see p. M103). He can use the Illusion Disguise spell (skill 15) to appear as a normal-sized house cat. He can speak most human languages, with a purring accent. He has Dark Vision and can see invisible.

Disadvantages: Laziness; Sadistic; all usual demonic Disadvantages (see p. M103).

Quirks Loves fish; Washes paws; Enjoys playing with food and balls of string; Pretends he's a normal cat.

Skills: Shadowing-12; Stealth-18; Tracking-10.

Languages: speaks fluently any human language.

Belshazzar was first summoned by Mordag nearly a century ago with a magical scroll. The demon cat and giant shared common interests and soon became allies. After Mordag fell to the Necromancer, the cat joined her, becoming the guardian of her town house. He has remained at the Pale Tower for the last 60 years, sleeping a lot and eating occasional trespassers.

Although allied once more to Mordag, Belshazzar is a pragmatist as demons go, and will just as easily abandon Mordag for a luckier master if things break the wrong way. He can talk, and may surprise the party by suggesting a temporary alliance with any properly ruthless PCs.

Saragrave

Human male — age 30, with short brown hair and black eyes. Light-skinned, 5'8", 156 lbs.

ST 11, DX 15, IQ 13, HT 12.

Speed 8.5, Move 8.

He wears light leather armor enchanted to PD 3, DR 3. No encumbrance.

Dodge 9, Parry 10 (with staff). Will always use retreating dodge or parry if possible.

Advantages: Literacy; Magic Resistance 3; Night Vision; Reputation +3 (in the underworld).

Disadvantages: Bloodlust; Enemy (city watch; 6-); Greedy; Reputation -3 (among decent folk).

Quirks Always polite; Soft-spoken; Missing one finger on left hand (marked by Mordag).

Skills: Acrobatics-15; Area Knowledge (Northside)-14; Brawling-16; Climbing-16; Disguise-13; Escape-15; Fast-Draw Knife-14; Forgery-14; Holdout-12; Knife-14; Lockpick-14; Merchant-11; Pickpocket-14; Research-12; Running-14; Savoir-Faire-11; Shadowing-13; Shortsword-14; Staff-15; Stealth-17; Streetwise-15; Teamster-14; Throwing-15; Traps-14; Ventriloquism-12.

Languages: Anglish-13; Arabic-11; Sign Language-12 (thieves' sign).

Equipment Saragrave is armed with a belt full of a half dozen large throwing knives (1d-1 impaling) to Fast-Draw and throw in battle, and a fine shortsword (1d imp., 1d+2 cut). He wears a ruby ring of Fire Resistance on his left hand which he will always activate in combat, fearing mages with Flame Jet spells. He carries a pouch holding a potion of Chiron, which he will drink if necessary, $48 in silver, and three keys, one for his chest, one for "Sardag's room" and the third for the pantry. He has a lockpick in his boot.

Northside, and he feels threatened by the daring and independent "prince of thieves."

Maccadee and his pet cat Dragon sleep in a luxuriously appointed apartment on the second floor. The door is not locked, but Dragon sleeps lightly, and a Stealth roll must be made at -4 to avoid waking her! Maccadee has his blade under his bed, and two bodyguards are within earshot in the next room.

If someone does break into his room, he would find many things worth stealing, the most valuable being a set of original signed woodcuts of Megalos castles by Donibec, a famous Tredroy artist. They are worth $18,000 to a dealer, but no intelligent Northside thief would dare cross Maccadee.

17. The Pale Tower (Gaunt and Tepole)

The tower is five stories high, 50 feet tall and 18 feet in diameter, made of pale gray stone. It has only one window — a skylight — and the only entrance is a flight of stone stairs leading to a double door of solid oak bound with iron.

Abandoned since the disappearance of the Necromancer, the tower has remained largely undisturbed. It has a reputation for being haunted by the Necromancer's ghost, so locals do not visit it. The few treasure seekers who found the top floor were eaten by Belshazzar!

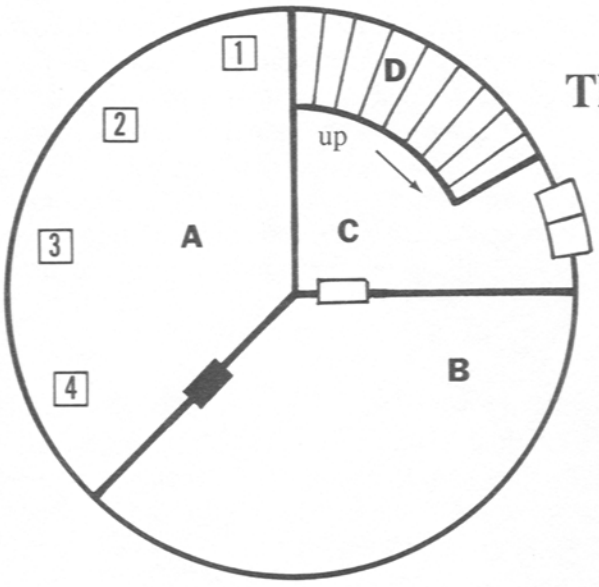
The Pale Tower is the secret hideout of Saragrave and Mordag; it is described in detail below.

Inside the Pale Tower

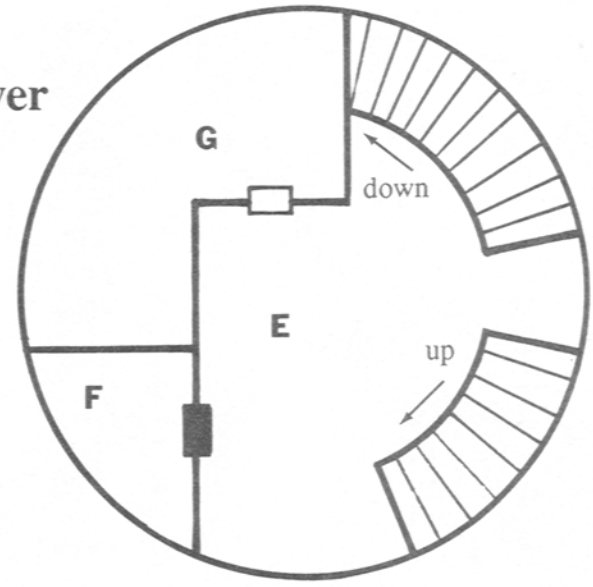
The walls are polished stone; the furnishings and doors are wood, inlaid with silver. With the exceptions of the entrances to the dungeon and pantry, all doors are unlocked. The interior is always dark, save for the Conjuring Room (M), which is bright during the day. Each location is keyed to the Pale Tower map, p. 119.

The exploration of the Pale Tower and the party's battle with the giant could be the climatic scene of the adventure. But it is possible that the party will get lucky and stumble onto the Tower right away, and go on to discover the secret library and Mordag's hidden coffin. If they do it at night, the giant will probably drive them off, leading to the deadly game of hide and seek described in *After the Battle* below. But if they arrive by day, the adventure could be considerably

The Pale Tower



Floor 1



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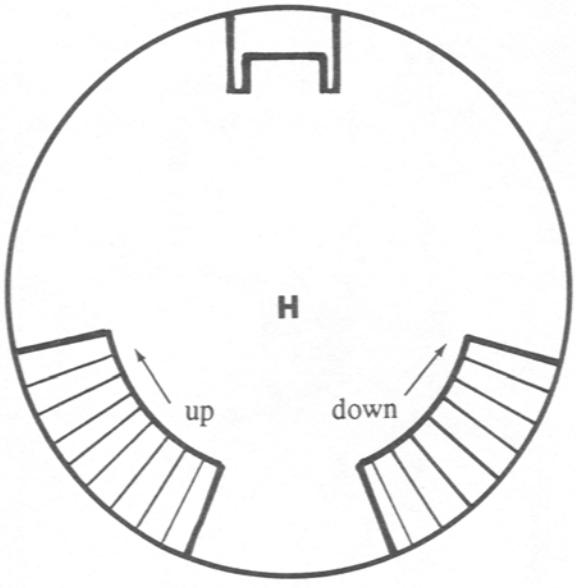

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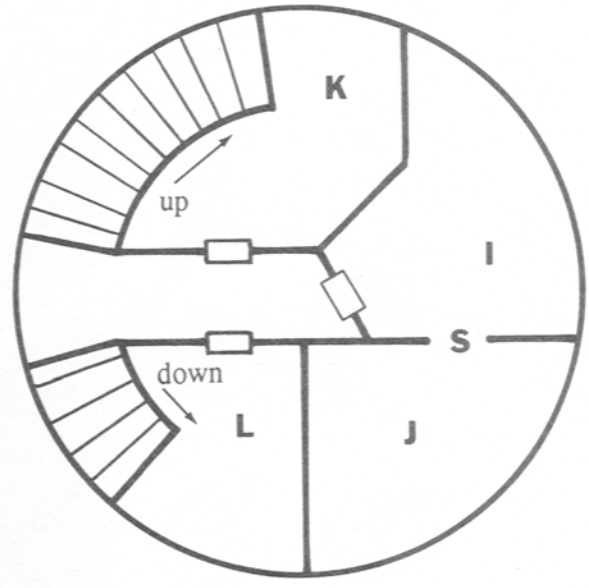
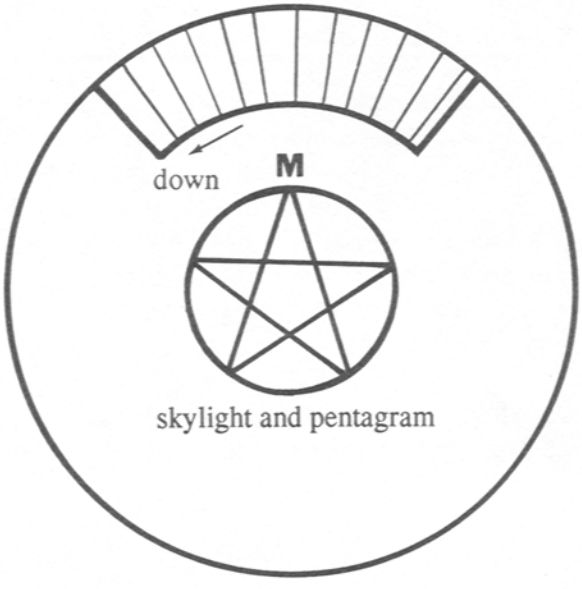


Floor 4



Floor 5

A. Dungeon
B. Store Room
C. Guard Room
D. Staircase
E. Kitchen
F. Pantry
G. Servants' Quarters
H. Great Hall
I. Saragrave's Quarters
J. Secret Library
K. Guest Room
L. Guest Room
M. Conjuring Room

door
locked door
double door
secret door — S —

N

18'
scale

Mordag's Little Finger

The Finger is a thin, five-foot-long staff made of ash, tipped with a giant's finger bone and terminating in a shard of black opal (the fingernail). The staff functions as a quarterstaff in combat.

It is heavily enchanted with the following spells, all at level 19: Puissance for +2 damage, Staff, Name and Concealment (-5 on information spells cast on it, or to locate it). The gem on its tip is a 30-point Powerstone. Neither the Powerstone nor any of the staff's other powers, except its +2 damage and Concealment, function unless the item's true name is known. To activate the staff's full powers, the staff must be held while its wielder invokes the name of Alyssa Morgan, the true name of the Necromancer.

In addition to its other powers, Mordag's soul is trapped within it (via the necromantic spell Soul Jar). Should Mordag be slain, his spirit passes into the staff, trapped but able to communicate with anyone touching it. But if the staff is destroyed, whether Mordag's body is dead or alive, the giant's soul will be destroyed. If the characters guess this (or use an Analyze Magic spell) they have an easy way of destroying the giant — if they can stand to lose the magic of the staff . . .

Understandably, Mordag is paranoid about losing the staff, so he keeps it with him at all times, even sleeping with it. However, if both he and Saragrave are involved in combat he will toss the staff to Saragrave since he can use it as a weapon.

Only by finding and speaking the command word can Mordag free his soul from the staff and return it to his body, ending the threat the staff poses to him — as well as gaining the use of the staff's other powers for himself.

shortened, making it less interesting. To prevent this, feel free to have Mordag (and the Finger) somewhere else when the party first opens his sarcophagus.

If this option is taken, assume the giant was sleeping in his spare coffin in the Devil's Eye (#13 above) when the PCs come by — the night before he had been out in the west end of the neighborhood hunting victims until just before dawn, and he went there because he couldn't make it back to the Pale Tower before sunrise. So when they open the Pale Tower coffin, the intruders will find grave earth and cushions, but no vampire. Mordag will return to the tower just after nightfall . . .

A. Dungeon

This chamber has shackles on the wall (one of which holds an ancient skeleton) and four iron grates in the floor — these open to small (6' square, 10' high) cells. One contains four corpses in various stages of decomposition — Mordag's victims, their throats ripped open and their bodies drained of blood. One of them is Rowenna, the missing girl from Hen Wen's.

B. Store Room

Dusty, musty, and filled with mostly empty boxes. An open well in the

middle of the room is a hazard for careless explorers — a failed Vision roll causes a 7-yard fall! The store room is also the home of a swarm of rats (3 hexes worth). They are unlikely to attack unless bothered, but can be commanded by Mordag: during a fight, he might mentally order them to cut off the party's retreat or head upstairs to harass his enemies in a battle — use the Swarm rules (p. B143). Most of the wooden crates are empty save for old bones and remnants of food, but hidden in one of the boxes is the key to the pantry (room F).

C. Guard Room

Now empty. A stairway (D) winds its way upward. Double doors of wrought iron lead out to a flight of steps running down to Tepole Road.

D. Staircase

This staircase spirals up to the fifth floor. A successful IQ or Tracking roll

indicates that something heavy was dragged up it quite recently (Mordag's sarcophagus).

E. Kitchen

The room contains a work table, a fireplace, and several chairs; a cabinet holds numerous kitchen implements. The place has been cleaned by Saragrave, and the broken crockery and spider webs have been swept into a corner. On the table is a loaf of fresh bread, a bottle of wine, and a plate of fish — being eagerly eyed by a fluffy black house cat! This is the demon cat Belshazzar, Mordag's pet and guardian (see sidebar, p. 117). If Mordag is not home, Belshazzar will not attack the intruders, but will just observe the party in housecat form (pretending to flee if attacked). If they leave, he may try to follow them.

Saragrave will be here at meal times, in which case Belshazzar will be sitting on a cushion in Saragrave's room (I), pretending to sleep. If the explorers never discover the hidden library room (J) where Mordag is studying, and Saragrave is out or eludes them, Belshazzar is perfectly willing to remain a friendly house cat, even to the extent of being petted or taken home. What happens afterward won't be pretty, though.

F. The Pantry

This door is locked, though the PCs may find the keys (see room B; copies are in Saragrave's pocket and Mordag's belt pouch) Or they might pick the lock or force it, though loud noises will alert Belshazzar and Saragrave.

Inside is Mordag's dinner, two of the missing residents of Northside . . . Blind Sal (a nearsighted beggar-girl, age 9) and Godfrey Daniels, a 14-year-old pickpocket (use the cutpurse stats with ST 8 and the Kleptomania disadvantage). Both are half crazed with fear, but so far they haven't been touched, nor gotten any clear impressions of their captors: Godfrey remembers a black cloud, and Sal, a fog. Both agree about great hands choking them. They can describe Saragrave, though: he feeds them, but he doesn't talk (they do remember a missing finger, though). Until yesterday night, a woman named Rowenna was with them, but Saragrave took her and they haven't seen her since.

If the PCs rescue them, Sal will cooperate with them, but is too scared to fight. Godfrey will fight if he can't run, but he's not too scared to pick the PCs' pockets if an opportunity presents itself. In exchange for prospective treasure, Godfrey might aid the party in later adventures . . . if they don't kill him first.

G. Servants' Quarters

This room contains rough-hewn wooden tables, crude chairs and beds, but except for numerous spider webs and some big spiders these chambers are abandoned.

H. Great Hall

Several benches and long tables fill the room and empty torch holders line both walls. Faded frescoes adorn the walls and ceiling, depicting scenes of fantastic beasts, flocks of bats over dusky forests, and naked witches dancing under the moon. At the end of the room is a throne-like wooden chair. The hall has no windows and is quite dark. Three dozen bats hang on the ceiling, summoned here by Mordag from the Bell Tower. Like the rats in room B, they will come at his call (use the Swarm rules, p. B143, to handle combat; there are 3 hexes worth).

I. Saragrave's Quarters

The furnishings are impressive: a canopied double bed, a beautifully carved table and pair of chairs inlaid with silver, an ornate Sahudese lamp and an empty

Mordag

Vampire giant — male, age 276. Pale skin, with long white hair and burning red eyes. 12'8" tall, 720 lbs. Takes up 3 hexes.

ST 48, DX 10, IQ 12, HT 18/36.

Speed 7, Move 7.

Dodge 7, parry 8, block n/a.

DR 2 skin and immunity to metal weapons; light leather (PD 1, DR 1) armor; no encumbrance.

Because Mordag is a 3-hex character, Regular spells cast on him — even if he cast them himself — will cost three times as much energy!

A blow from his fist does 5d+1 crushing, a kick or stomp 5d+3 but is -2 to hit.

Advantages: Acute sense of smell +2; Literacy; Magery 2; all vampire advantages — see the sidebar on p. 122.

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Greed; Megalomania; Sadism; all vampire disadvantages — see the sidebar on p. 122.

Quirks Likes to make speeches; Fancies himself a powerful wizard; Jealous of other mages; Missing one finger.

Skills: Brawling-12; Magic Jet-11; Shadowing-11; Stealth-10.

Spells: Air Jet-12; Animate-12; Beast Speech-12; Blur-12; Clouds-12; Continual Light-12; Create Air-12; Create Water-12; Darkness-12; Death Vision-12; Destroy Air-12; Fog-12; Hide-12; Light-12; Predict Weather-12; Purify Air-12; Purify Water-12; Seek Water-12; Shape Air-12; Summon Spirit-12; Walk on Air-12.

Vampire Magic: Can use the following Vampire magic at Skill 15 with no energy cost: Steal HT (via drinking blood); Body of Air; Charm; Shapeshifting (Wolf or Bat — equal to a giant eagle but 2d+1 damage); and Control Mammals. Note that if Mordag turns into a giant bat; the bat does 2d+1 cutting damage due to its greater size.

Languages: Anglish-13; Latin-10.

Equipment: sarcophagus, ragged leather clothing, belt pouch (as big as a sack) holding $1,200 in silver, several poorly written Latin scrolls (his Grimoire) the keys to his library and pantry, and of course, Mordag's Little Finger.

bookshelf. The lamp is worth $800, the table and bed $900 each, and the chairs $250 apiece. The chairs weigh 25 pounds each, the table 300 pounds, and the bed 800 pounds. A locked chest holds several different sets of clothing — Saragrave's many disguises — and a few candles.

By day, the thief keeps guard in this room, though at noon he may snatch a snack from the kitchen. As night falls, he attends to his master's needs (bringing victims from the larder or listening to the giant's apocalyptic soliloquies) and then sleeps here while Mordag works. Saragrave's statistics are given in the sidebar on p. 118, and his tactics are described in *Playing the Villains,* p. 124. Note that if a party arrives by day, Saragrave will try to lure them away from the tower. Even if captured, he will not willingly reveal his master's existence, or if they guess it, he lies to them about his plans.

J. Hidden Library

The entrance to this is not a door but a sliding panel disguised as part of the wall (roll vs. IQ-5 or Architecture skill to casually spot it, or IQ if deliberately searching). Half of the floor is piled high with scrolls and old grimoires, mostly written in Latin (substitute another arcane language if not using Yrth). More spill out of shelves. A quick glance through these books will make it clear that this was the library of the Necromancer. If anyone is able to read them, they cover everything from the day-to-day household affairs of her activities as court magician to works on astrology and alchemy to pages from magical grimoires and recipes requiring eye of newt and wing of bat. Somewhere in this chaos is the formula for making bone golems (p. 115).

At night when it is open, Mordag's coffin is visible, a huge ceramic sarcophagus leaning against the wall. The giant himself will be hunched over, laboriously reading Latin scrolls (out loud) by the light of a single candle, hunting for the command word to unlock the powers of the staff. An eavesdropper who listens at the secret door will hear the deep mumbling of Mordag's voice. If he or she makes a Latin language roll, the language is recognizable; an Occultism roll allows the listener to realize he is reading aloud from a grimoire on Enchantment magic, though not actually casting a spell.

Vampires

A vampire is an undead creature who feeds on the blood of the living. Vampires, such as Mordag, have a variety of advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages: A vampire's ST is doubled, or increased by 50% (round down) for humanoid races with starting ST over 20. HT and Hit Points are also increased by 50 % (round down). All vampires have DR 2 skin, Night Vision, and Immunity to Disease. Metal weapons pass through them without effect, but they take full damage from any weapon made of wood or other organic material. Magical attacks affect them normally. A vampire does not age, and has powerful magic abilities (see sidebar) usable at no energy cost.

Disadvantages: A vampire loses one HT every day at noon. This daily HT loss can only be replenished by drinking the blood of an intelligent mammalian creature. A vampire does not heal "normally" at all; healing spells will cure injury but not daily HT loss. A vampire has no "reserve" of HT below 0 — if HT is reduced to -1, it crumbles to dust!

A vampire should spend the time from sunup to sundown in a coffin or sarcophagus filled with the earth of his homeland. A vampire who cannot do this loses two *extra* HT at noon each day. A vampire whose coffin is opened between sunup and sundown is stunned. A vampire exposed to direct sunlight takes one hit of damage per minute, or two minutes if in heavy clothing. Even indirect sunlight (e.g. indoors) hurts their eyes terribly: -4 to DX.

Vampires must roll vs. HT-5 to cross any portal sealed with garlic, or to tolerate the odor of garlic without fleeing. Also, a vampire cannot cross running water under its own power. A vampire can sometimes be "turned" by a holy symbol by one who believes in it: roll a Quick Contest of Will between vampire and foe. If the vampire loses, he may not touch the holy symbol or its user on that day, and must stay at least 3 hexes from the symbol where possible (even if it means fleeing). If the vampire ties or wins the contest, the symbol doesn't affect him.

All vampires are feared and hated by the living, who react to them at -6 at best. As a magical being, a vampire's powers remain the same at any mana level — unless there is *no* mana (such as in the Spinning Wheel), in which case he loses 1 HT per *turn*, soon aging to a powder-dry corpse.

Continued on next page . . .

In the daytime Mordag sleep within his gigantic sarcophagus, which is concealed by a powerful Hide spell. The coffin itself is actually a magic item, enchanted at great cost so that when it is closed, the spell activates and it is hidden: IQ-5 to notice it. Mordag's Little Finger is nestled beneath him. If the coffin lid is opened, the giant's Danger Sense will likely awaken him, but he will be stunned until he makes an IQ roll (at least one turn), giving the unlucky discoverer time to act or flee.

Because of the Hide spell, a group of daytime explorers might penetrate the library (even capture Saragrave) but fail to notice Mordag's existence! From a dramatic standpoint, this is not entirely undesirable — Mordag will probably guess what has occurred when he wakes, and sooner or later track them down for revenge.

The tactics that Mordag and his minions use are detailed under *Playing the Villains*, p. 124. Take care to make the first confrontation between Mordag and the adventurers as dramatic as possible, particularly if until now they believed they were only hunting Saragrave! Mordag wakes quickly, even during the day. As the monster rises to his feet, or looms out of a fog, the GM may well roll a Fright Check. In any case, Mordag will introduce himself as dramatically as possible:

"Do you recognize me, worms? I am Mordag! Surrender now, and I promise you your dooms will be exquisite and artistic. Resist, and your end will be crude."

If the PCs feel like talking, the megalomaniac giant has no objections . . . as long as he does it all:

"Silence. Do you not perceive my power? I am the shadow of the world, the dark that devours. I am Mordag. Will you hear my Tale?"

And on with a somewhat biased account of his legend . . .

Unless the party is willing to swear eternal servitude, Mordag will eventually attack, but a clever talker might be able to keep him occupied while the rest of the party sneaks up behind him (or gets away). But watch out: Saragrave or Belshazzar are less overconfident, and if the party didn't get them first, *they* might be doing the sneaking.

K, L. Guest Rooms

Each has a double bed, chairs, a table, a wash closet and several lamps of ordinary quality. The sheets are black and covered with dust. The rooms are full of cobwebs.

Vampires (Continued)

Vampire Magic

A vampire automatically knows the following spells at level 15: Body of Air, Charm, Mammal Control, Shapeshifting; Steal Health. These spells may not be studied or improved; they are inherent to the vampire's magic. Vampires may learn other spells, and may even be mages, but may not improve these "inherent" spells. However, there is *no energy cost* for a vampire to use any of these spells!

Body of Air: See p. M31. The vampire uses this to instantly dissolve into a mist. He keeps his high HT, but is vulnerable to winds and Air Jet. He cannot go instantly from mist-form to bat-form; he must take human shape between them. If caught in mist-form by the sun, he dies instantly!

Charm: As per the spell (p. M59) except that if a victim resists, he is *forever* immune to that vampire's charm.

Mammal Control: Exactly as the spell (see p. M22)

Shapeshifting: The vampire can take the form of a giant bat; the change (either way) takes 3 seconds. Stats are the same as for a were-eagle (p. M100). If Mordag becomes a bat, he does 2d+1 damage.

Steal Health: As the spell (p. M64) except it works *automatically* with no roll required, and the vampire must drink the victim's blood for the spell to work. One minute of blood sucking restores 1 HT (from injury or daily HT loss) *or* 1 ST, as the vampire chooses, but the vampire has to bite the neck, leaving unmistakable marks. Because of his great size, Mordag is messier than most human vampires, though . . .

In the Giant's Larder

Should the PCs be defeated (or surrender), the adventure is not over. Any unconscious survivors will wake up in the pantry or the prison cells downstairs, ready to slake Mordag's thirst. The doors will be securely locked, and watched by Belshazzar (if he survived) or Saragrave.

If the players fail to come up with any means of escape (bribing the demon cat with a tuna sandwich?) and no other PCs are available to stage a rescue attempt, there are several ways a GM can give them a second chance: dramatic escapes are the stuff of heroic fantasy, after all.

An unlucky group of city watchmen investigating the disappearances in Northside could arrive on the scene to search the Pale Tower. In the confusion, the party is left unguarded and able to break free.

Shale might come looking for her missing friend (particularly if the PCs have met her and told her any suspicions) and rescue them.

They could discover a secret passage out of their cell, unnoticed by the new owners of the tower, probably just as Mordag comes for dinner.

If all escape attempts fail, have Mordag come for one of the prisoners and either charm him, or turn him into a vampire (see *Becoming a Vampire*, p. 125). He or she can be sent to slay any still-free friends or the Sorceress . . .

M. Conjuring Room

This room has nothing but an old rug (though the faded silver and black patterns are quite beautiful — it weighs 20 pounds and could sell for $800), shelves and a broken table. The shelves contain smashed or empty beakers, bottles and gourds stained by nameless liquids.

Hidden under the rug is a dusty pentagram — important, as it still works, and while ineffective against Mordag, it will provide a refuge from Belshazzar.

Sunlight shines into this room from the skylight over the pentagram, and for this reason, Mordag avoids it during the day.

Playing the Villains

Mordag and Saragrave do not expect well-armed intruders, but both are cunning and clever with years of experience. The GM should play them as ruthless and intelligent adversaries. The worst danger to the PCs is ignorance of what they are facing. If the characters were unaware of Mordag's existence and arrived unprepared to face a vampire giant, don't be afraid to let Mordag win! Once the adventurers get their hands on vampire-hunting paraphernalia such as wooden spears, holy symbols and garlic, their next encounter with Mordag will be more even, and their victory more satisfying after an initial defeat.

Saragrave's Actions

If Saragrave is encountered first, he will try to flee, warn his master, and strike at the party from behind. If possible, he will use his Stealth to escape and his Ventriloquism to lure them into a trap. Remember, Saragrave does not have the staff with him: if the heroes are unaware of Mordag and are willing to talk (or take him captive) and the giant has not yet been encountered, the thief may offer to bring them the staff, showing them into the giant's parlor while covertly alerting his master, who arrives in mist form.

Mordag's Actions

Mordag trusts in Saragrave or Belshazzar to warn him of any trouble. If he has time to plan a defense he passes the staff to Saragrave, then keeps him back to ensure its safety, relying on the demon cat and his own strength to deal with the PCs, toying with them if they don't seem too powerful.

When moving through the tower, the giant may choose to squeeze through doorways, although it takes him a full turn and a DX roll, but he is much more likely to turn into mist and flow after the intruders, materializing behind them when they least expect it. If he's badly wounded, Mordag may choose to flee the tower. With his high HT he can even abide sunlight for a short while; if forced to flee in daylight, he will head for his spare coffin in the Devil's Eye (#13 on the Northside map).

If he is given time to prepare and cast defensive spells on himself, Mordag's immense strength makes him a formidable mage even with his limited array of spells: he could cast a fog or darkness spell that covers a city block, control the weather, or summon a wind using Create Air that able to blow people away. Were he to gain control of the power of the Finger (which he would use like a wand) he would be even more deadly. If possible he will have Saragrave or Belshazzar distract adventurers while preparing a spell, but he is strong enough to ignore minor damage during spell casting.

After the Battle

The first encounter at the tower may end indecisively. The party could find Saragrave, only to retreat when they discover the presence of the vampire giant.

giant. Or skilled (and lucky!) adventurers may drive off Mordag, forcing him to flee the tower, but fail to track him down and kill him. What happens next?

If the giant knows that his lair has been discovered, Mordag will not sit quietly while adventurers plot his doom. His actions will depend on how dangerous he perceives the party to be.

If his foes impressed him with their power, the giant will abandon the tower, moving himself and his scrolls to his secret lair (location #13), or taking his coffin and moving to some other hiding place if his spare coffin has been discovered. The move will take at least four hours, as he has to gather the Necromancer's notes from the library. Only in dire peril will he abandon these, and even then he will try to regain them. He will only move at night, summoning a dense fog for cover.

If the intruders did not seem dangerous (they run away without much of a fight, or he defeats most of them), he remains at the Pale Tower, though he may choose to stay awake for a few days instead of sleeping (accepting the loss in HT).

Mordag will use Saragrave or Belshazzar to shadow any enemies who retreat. Should Mordag be unable to find the party, or if he is forced to flee himself, the giant will use his Mammal Control and Beast Speech powers to set bats or rats as watchers around the Pale Tower, ordered to inform him of future intrusions, and, if possible, to shadow invaders back to where they are staying. If the party returns, a Vision roll at -4 (plus any penalties for darkness) is necessary to notice that the tower approaches are being watched.

Once Mordag finds the characters, he will act directly against them. He will not try to take on the entire party, but will wait until he can catch a single character (or an Ally or Dependent) alone, on the streets, in bed, or whatever. Then he either sends Belshazzar or animates the stone gargoyles from the Bell Tower. Mordag may even stalk a foe himself, if his other minions are defeated or he judges the risk to be slight. He will not necessarily kill — he would prefer to take a PC alive, for interrogation or charming, and to satisfy his thirst.

If Mordag becomes aware that the investigators are hunting him but is unable to find them, he may guess they were hired by the Sorceress in Silver and go after her instead. See *Wings in the Night* below for one way of handling this.

Running for Help

What if the PCs discover Mordag and Saragrave's hideout, escape, and then run to the authorities with the news? Well, giants are only an old wives' tale, and everyone knows Mordag is dead even if he *were* real, so they will only get laughed at. The Sorceress in Silver might help (or at least use her magic to heal any wounds, and give advice) but on a Poor or worse reaction roll, even she will be skeptical at a tale of undead giants, thinking the characters are just making up excuses for failure.

Belief in the notorious Saragrave is another matter. If the characters press it, a good reaction or influence roll with the local justices could get a squad of soldiers sent to arrest the thief. If they go in with them, fine: the adventurers have six or so town watchmen to serve as cannon fodder (their stats are in the sidebar, p. 111), but the noisy soldiers will probably cost them the advantage of surprise. If the PCs don't go in with the watchmen, they see them disappear into the tower. Nothing for a while. Then screams . . .

The characters may have better luck with Maccadee or other Northside residents, who have heard of the disappearance: the crimelord, suitably motivated, can get together a dozen or so Enforcers, and other NPCs like Shale or Torch might help.

Becoming a Vampire

If Mordag loses some of his minions to the characters, he may decide to make new ones — perhaps even some of the PCs. Anyone killed by the vampire Steal Health spell may rise again as a vampire. This happens only if the creating vampire wills it and takes 1d nights. The victim has a HT of 3 upon rising; he must feed soon, or die.

If a PC is killed by a vampire, he may rise as a new vampire if both the player and the GM agree to let this happen. His next 100(!!) character points must go into buying this advantage, though the GM can also let him add a couple of mental disadvantages, or perhaps forget some skills from the shock of the change, to help balance his point totals.

Upon becoming a vampire, a PC's DX and IQ remain unchanged. ST is *doubled;* HT increases by 50% (round down). The vampire also acquires the other advantages and disadvantages described above. If a new character is created as a vampire, buy his attributes normally and then increase ST and HT as described.

A newly created vampire is not automatically bound to serve his creator, but if he was charmed before death, he may still be charmed after he rises again.

Character Points

The players should be awarded two character points for successfully regaining the staff *and* capturing or killing Saragrave (the sorceress hired them for both tasks). If they regain the staff, but leave Saragrave free, they should only receive one point. If they only capture Saragrave, and do not regain the staff — no points!! The GM can also give one bonus point for exceptional roleplaying and/or accomplishing any of the following:

Killing Mordag.

Reuniting Icehawk and Torch.

Rescuing Blind Sal and Godfrey Daniels.

Returning to Northside

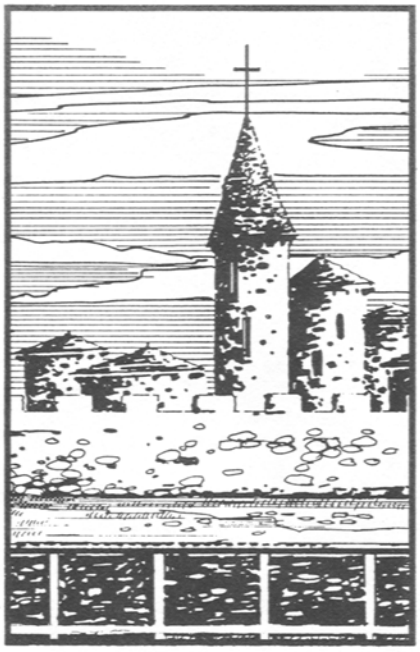
Northside is a darkly-textured cityscape that can be used over and over as an adventure setting. The relationships between the NPCs can be developed further and new characters brought in. A suitably inclined group might even want to settle down there. The following adventure seeds may prove useful for GMs who wish to continue in the Northside scenario.

Clean Up Crew

The streets of Northside are crawling with scum, from ragged cutpurses to experienced cat burglars. It is the refuge of unwanted criminals from the rest of the city. The PCs are hired by the city's government to "clean up" Northside. The are assigned a squadron of guards and given *carte blanche*. If they are powerful enough, they can create an intimidating presence that might actually lower the neighborhood's crime rate. Or maybe they'll turn it around and take bribes from Maccadee to leave well enough alone.

Criminal Minds

If the investigators become friendly with Macadee, and they don't mind doing a little dirty work, he might hire them as an elite team to help him expand into the city proper. They could perform tasks as simple and as safe as information gathering, or he might ask them to "rub someone out."



Wings in the Night

This incident is optional, but can add drama to the plot. It could take place early to spur the party on if the heroes waste several days without tracking down Saragrave or discovering Mordag — or later, if Mordag survived his first encounter with the party and is out for revenge.

A Desperate Message

Sometime late at night, the bat that first contacted them scratches at a character's window, bearing a hastily scrawled message:

I am under attack! Follow the bat, but hurry, for I am sorely pressed, and my guards cannot hold them off — Silver.

The Sorceress lives near enough to wherever the party is staying so that they can reach her if they make an honest effort to hurry (no donning plate armor, etc.) It will take Mordag's magical assassins a few minutes to defeat her guards

and breach her magical defenses, so if the party responds quickly enough (following the bat's flight on horseback, teleporting, or the like), they arrive in time to help.

Gargoyles!

Her house stands alone on a hill in an exclusive part of town, screened by a high hedge and a pair of huge willows. As the characters approach, a piercing scream echoes from the house. The front door is missing, torn from its hinges. A mangled body in blood-stained gray livery lies just inside the threshold, but from down the hall issue cries and shouts, and the chant of spells. The rescuers are just in time!

More dead or unconscious servants lie scattered about the house, some with weapons in their hands. The Sorceress in Silver is at bay in her laboratory, dueling two of the gargoyles with her spells, protecting an elderly manservant who lies wounded behind her. She is down to half ST and HT, and her Powerstone is exhausted. One gargoyle lies broken on the floor in front of her, charred by lightning; the remaining gargoyle is menacing a maidservant who is hiding under a laboratory table.

If the PCs arrive too late and the GM wants to complicate the plot further, have the Sorceress gone when they arrive: a wounded servant tells them that he saw his mistress carried off by gargoyles! Mordag will try to charm the Sorceress, then drink her blood, turning her into a vampire under his control. The PCs had better hurry . . .

Consequences

The characters will have fulfilled the Sorceress's commission when Saragrave is captured or slain and Mordag's Little Finger recovered. To do so, they'll probably have to destroy Mordag as well, if only in self-preservation. But that doesn't mean the adventure is over.

Mordag's Doom

Taking out the giant is difficult: so is making him stay dead, as unless the Finger is destroyed, his soul will simply pass into the staff. While he remains there he is effectively trapped, though he can communicate (to threaten or promise) with whomever holds it, and an exotic spell like Exchange Bodies could get him out. If he escapes, Mordag may yet return — for revenge against the party, or perhaps to further some scheme against the Sorceress or the old Duke's descendants.

If the characters think of it, an elegant way of destroying Mordag permanently while keeping the Finger intact is to use a *second* casting of Soul Jar to transfer his soul to a different, less-precious object, which they could break, finishing him off.

The heroes are being paid to regain the staff, but if they destroy the Finger to kill Mordag, the Sorceress will be understanding: with Mordag (and probably Saragrave) gone, her apprentice Maewen will have been avenged.

Saragrave's Fate

If Mordag is destroyed and Saragrave is taken captive, the thief will be freed of the charm, and protest innocence of Maewen's murder ("the giant made me do it"). On the other hand, if Mordag's body is destroyed but his soul remains in the staff, Saragrave will *not* be freed, but he may pretend he is, to gain the PCs' confidence and rescue his master and the staff. In either case, whether the characters (or the Sorceress) believe his innocence of murder is a moot point. After all, he has a long history of roguery, and the merchants' guild and the Duke

Adapting to Other Genres

Mordag's Little Finger is at its core a ***Fantasy*** adventure, but that doesn't mean that the basic concept cannot be taken into other genres. The party is very much like a special operations team, sent in by a wealthy patron to wreak vengeance on her foe (making it easily adaptable to ***GURPS Special Ops***). In fact, with a little tweaking, this adventure could be run in several of the ***GURPS*** backgrounds.

Blood on the Streets

With only slight adaptation, this adventure could be run as a modern-day ***GURPS Horror*** scenario. Mordag the giant vampire stalks the back alleys of London or New York, preying on the poor and unsuspecting dregs of the city. A grieving widow hires the heroes to investigate her husband's strange disappearance. In the ensuing investigation, they find more than they bargained for . . .

Space Vampires

In ***GURPS Space,*** Mordag could be a member of an alien race with psionic, mind-draining abilities. He has fled with an experimental psi enhancer into the worst sector of the galaxy. If allowed to develop his mental powers with the device, he could threaten all of human space. The party, as a group of mercenaries or even Space Marines, has to travel to several planets to locate and destroy the evil alien.

have posted a formidable reward for his capture. If brought to justice, he will probably be sentenced to slavery or death, but he could break jail before his execution . . .

Belshazzar

The demon cat may perish in combat, but if he manages to survive Mordag's destruction, he will immediately flee. If he escapes, the heroes may meet him later, perhaps serving as a familiar to another evil mage, or up to some deviltry of his own.

Maewen's Grave

If the PCs defeat Mordag and Saragrave and part on good terms with the Sorceress in Silver, the Sorceress will ask to see them again, after they have recovered from any injuries or fatigue and she has paid them their reward. This meeting can serve as a good closing to the adventure.

The place she chooses for the meeting is a clearing in a grove of trees, on a hill just outside of town. Thanks to her weather magic, the sky is clear, the sun bright, and a gentle breeze blows through the trees. When the party arrives, she is standing by a simple cross marking a recent grave.

"I buried Maewen here. Now that you have avenged her, her spirit can rest in peace. We both thank you."

She places flowers on the grave, smiles a little sadly, and turns away.

Further Adventures

Though Mordag and Saragrave may have met their doom, the Sorceress in Silver and the other denizens of Northside are still around. Northside itself can be used as the setting for further urban adventures. If the characters never found the Bone Golem, someone might report seeing it wandering the streets looking for its master! The crimelord Maccadee can be either a powerful Patron or a deadly enemy, especially if he decides to expand his operations beyond Northside. Here are two suggestions for specific scenarios.

Gang War!

The violence between the Serpents and the Wharf Dukes finally escalated into a full scale gang war. Smaller gangs in the area have split and taken up sides with one of the rivals. The Serpents have taken Megan and her little girl hostage and demand that they get all of Northside as their territory. Somebody had better do something soon or the hostages could be killed. Varley hires the party to rescue his wife and daughter from the Windy Tower, the Serpents' headquarters. The Town Watch won't even touch this one.

Northside Underground

The party witnesses an assassination that they weren't supposed to see. They find out that it was set up and arranged by Maccadee, Northside's crimelord. He's trying to eliminate a competing crime boss in another section of the city. Both sides know the PCs are witnesses; Maccadee wants them dead, and his competitor wants to capture them to extract any information they know about Maccadee. The Duke wants the party to use the evidence to turn both crimelords in, whatever the cost.

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P.6.

The (m) classification for magic items, described in the footnote, should not exist. Any of these items can be used by a non-mage.

P.26.

At the end of Jaim's Advantages list, delete the extraneous "10".

P.39.

All Mazuka's spells should be at a minimum level of 18. Change each 17 to an 18.

P.54.

Sabristus has Magery 1, not Magery 3. All his spells should be at a minimum level of 13; change each 12 to a 13.

P.100.

All the spells of the Sorceress in Silver should be at a minimum level of 16; change each 15 to a 16.

P.106.

In the second paragraph under 1. Varley's Inn (Falasha and Kepper St.), Tika is not Megan's natural daughter; she is from Varley's first marriage.

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