# SCORE DEPENDENCE

BY ZZARCHOV KOWOLSKI

AN ADVENTURE FOR NEOCLASSICAL GEEK REVIVAL AND OSR ROLEPLAYING GAMES



# SCHERCER OF THE THE THE THE ALE AND BY 77. ARCHOV KOWOLSKI

COVER ART - GROVE OF TREES BY FÉLIX RESURRECCIÓN HIDALGO LAYOUT & ILLUSTRATION - ALEX MAYO • EDITING - JAMES MALISZEWSKI ©2014 ZZARCHOV KOWOLSKI PRINTED IN CANADA ISBN 978-0-9920472-3-8

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# **A REQUEST**

This adventure is far darker than it may appear at first glance. Really take a read through and appreciate the kinds of bad people and reprehensible behaviour that can arise in this adventure and be careful with your audience. Just as some people can play a game with the death of an infant and some people have suffered miscarriages and don't want to think about it in the middle of a social outing, you will need to make sure this adventure won't mortify anyone in your group and ruin their evening over a game. I am not going to spell out what in this adventure requires this veritable "trigger warning" because if it isn't obvious to you that is a good indication you may need to think on it a little more before deciding to run it.

# SET UP

The village of Taal is nominally part of the Rhajanate; its distance from the capital makes it largely autonomous but also vulnerable to the local brigands, warlords, and pirates of the area. Most of the village lives by fishing or subsistence level farming, as the gold mine that served as the original cause of the village's foundation was played out over a generation ago. The flow of gold may have stopped, but the village still has a sizable stockpile saved for a future emergency – and that emergency may be at hand.

A vicious Tikbalang has been reported in the area and it is terrorizing

the village. The townsfolk are too frightened to attempt to hunt down the beast and the village elder is cautious about emptying the town of defences, since there are pirates in the neighbouring village. A heavy reward in golden treasures is offered if the rumours can both be proven true and solved by bringing the head of the beast to the elder. If the beast is not slain, the villagers may need to kill those it assaulted, lest they give birth to more Tikbalang. It is hoped that, if the original beast is slain, the children will be born as normal human children.

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#### WHAT IS A TIKBALANG?

In folklore, the Tikbalang is either a mischievous spirit that helps lost travellers and/or a terrifying monster who rapes virgins to produce more Tikbalangs. It has the body of an ogre and the head of a horse. Usually, it is

depicted as having hooves rather than feet. If you plan to switch this adventure to fit a different region, you will need to create a creature with the both the same behaviours and a culturally similar physical appearance.

# THE VILLAGE

The village is a motley collection of stilted napa huts crafted from local bamboo and straw, partially shaded by an abundance of coconut trees. An 8' tall wooden fence cuts off the village proper from the jungle, but the beach is undefended. One can easily walk around the fence and it is more of a deterrent against animals and undetected thieves than a fortification. There is an ageing dock that goes into the deeper waters, but it has not been properly maintained in years now that the Rhajanate no longer sends trading vessels to collect gold as tribute. There is also a prominent two story stone building with a heavy timber roof in the centre of town. This is a remnant of the village's more prosperous past.

Originally a combination garrison and smelting facility, it is now used as a granary and vault for the village's remaining gold.

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#### DATU BAHANDI, THE ELDER

Datu is an ancient and gaunt figure, whose weathered face is dominated by more wrinkles than a dress shirt at the bottom of a laundry hamper. It is almost impossible to tell his demeanour, but one is always led to assume it is exasperation with a hint of belittlement. During his youth he was a decorated officer, but now he spends his days giving glares of vague disappointment at the village's children and pining for the glory of days gone by.

He did not see any of the events in question when they first occurred last month, but is very concerned about resolving them. He is offering the village's entire stockpile of treasure to any band of heroes who can bring him the head of the Tikbalang. He will honour this request by paying 1800 golden coins for the head. The town has 2400 golden coins in treasure, but he has hidden the other 600. If the bounty is paid, no one in the village will be suspicious (as far as they know all the treasure was granted in bounty) and he will leave for a random Imperial coastal city within a few weeks to live out his remaining years in rela-

tive luxury. If the PCs figure out the mystery, he will be unhappy but will go along with their conclusions.

#### DAKILA MAGBANUA, THE MILITIA LEADER

Dakila is the leader of the local militia. He is a giant of a man in his mid twenties and acts as both civil peacekeeper and leader of the dozen men the village can call upon to defend itself against pirates and other vagabonds. Dakila employs a steel machete, a wooden buckler, and a two-handed oxtongue spear should he be called upon for battle. The rest of the militia is armed with hunting bows and clubs in case of emergency.

Dakila was the first on the scene of the first assault. He heard cries coming from his fiancée Mayumi as she was picking wild fruit and rushed to the scene. By the time he had arrived it was too late and the beast was already absconding deeper into the jungle. He wished to hunt after it immediately, but Datu forbade it, fearing his loss could put the entire village at risk of pirates.

If successfully pressed on his story,

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(OSR: A charisma check, NGR: A successful social conflict to challenge his story) other details become apparent. He did not actually see the beast in question; he merely has the testimony of Mayumi. He also did not originally believe Mayumi and thought she was having an affair. He did not think the cries were of distress. He only believed Mayumi when another victim and other witnesses came forward. He is now deeply ashamed of his mistrust and blames himself for Mayumi's assault.

OSR: 1st level warrior. AC: As unarmoured with shield, 7 hp. Attack: As weapon, +1 damage.

NGR: 1st level 3 part warrior, very strong (16) but somewhat dull (8 intelligence) and gullible (6 social). 7 luck points.

### MAYUMI MUTYA, THE FIRST VICTIM

Mayumi is a stunningly beautiful woman in her early twenties. After her father died at sea, her mother arranged for her to marry Dakila to ensure she will be well taken care of in a village with few prospects for a secure future. She is currently showing signs of pregnancy.

Mayumi was the first known victim. She was gathering wild fruit in the jungle when she heard a rustling in the foliage. Initially, she thought it was a feral hog so she climbed up a tree, but instead a hulking Tikbalang emerged and wrenched her down from the tree before having its way with her. It fled into the jungle only moments before Dakila rushed into the clearing. If asked to give more information on what it looked like, she will restate it was a Tikbalang. If pressed more, she will describe it as being coated with thick brown fur and 10' in height. If she is accused of lying, she will stick to her story at all costs, but the PCs may be able to sense she is lying. (OSR: A charisma check will determine she is lying. NGR: She will always claim stubborn refusal but the PCs will be able to determine she is lying if they win a social conflict)

#### KIKO TALA, THE SECOND VICTIM

Kiko is a somewhat frumpy teenage girl with a frantic personality. She is unable to sit still for ten damn minutes without rambling on about various bits of gossip from around the village; some of it is even true. Two days after Mayumi's assault, Kiko was assaulted while bathing alone. She said the

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beast burst from the bushes and ravished her before fleeing back into the jungle. If pressed for more information on the beast, she will claim it had to be twelve feet tall and was as black as the night. If the PCs give contradictory information beforehand, she will mirror their description. If the players grill Kiko in more depth about the exact details, it will become obvious she really doesn't even understand how sex works. She is, in fact, a virgin.

#### MAGTANGGOL PALAD, THE FIRST WITNESS

Magtanggol is a thirty year old hunter who spends most of his days in the jungle hunting feral pigs. When Mayumi's account was told to the village, Magtanggol brought forth his own tale. He claims he has seen bipedal hoof prints in the jungle several times and swears he has seen a looming figure by an inland stream at dusk some weeks before. He never told anyone for fear they would think him crazy. He also recounted seeing something big running through the jungle around the same time Mayumi was attacked. He laments that his brother is probably dead after he went looking for the creature once the bounty of gold was promised. He will

direct the PCs towards an ominous stone pillar deep in the jungle if they seek to hunt down the creature.

If he is accused of lying and interrogated by the PCs, he may crack and admit he made up the story to shield his younger brother Makisig from suspicion (*OSR: requires a successful charisma check. NGR: Requires a successful social conflict*). His brother is currently hiding in the abandoned mine and he will suggest they talk to him before doing anything.

#### MALAYA LAKSINA, THE SENILE HALF WITNESS

Malaya is a senile nonagenarian who claims to have seen the beast not only in her visions, but also circling the village on the full moon, emitting great plumes of smoke from its nostrils as it debated whether the time was right to attack the village. If the PCs talk to her on one of her good days (50% chance each day that she is coherent), she will urge the players to hunt it down and destroy it before it can finish whatever dark rites it is working towards from its lair deep in the jungle. If the characters promise to slay the beast, she will *Bless* the characters and

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warn them not to stare into the jewel it wears in its ear or they will suffer some unknown curse. If any astute PCs point out that Tikbalangs don't have jewels in their ear, she will slap her forehead and say "Oh that's right: it isn't a Tikbalang; it is a Sarangay. My mistake. Kill it either way, though".

**OSR:** 1st level cleric. AC as unarmoured. 1hp. Has memorized "Bless"

**NGR:** 0th level 2 part priest. She is frail (4 strength) and sickly (5 health). She has 15 piety and the Miracles, Exorcism, and Dogma powers.

# WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON?

A S you may have deduced, there is no Tikbalang. Mayumi was having an affair with Makisig when a jealous Dakila tried to catch them in the act, barely missing his opportunity. Mayumi spun the first tale she could think of, but Dakila wasn't buying it as he dragged her back to town. Realizing what his dipshit brother had probably done and fearful of what Dakila would do not only to his brother but Mayumi as well, Magtanggol added his own support

to her cockamamie story, hoping it would help. It shouldn't have, except for Datu's quick thinking that allowed him to hatch a dubious plan. He backed what he figured was probably bullshit with a proposed bounty and a demand that Dakila not leave the village to prove this story true one way or another. The village was scared, but still sceptical. Datu then sought to use the ramblings of Malaya as further proof to rile up the increasingly frightened townsfolk.

Kiko, being a pathological attention seeker no longer able to gain the limelight, quickly fabricated her own tale of woe to bring the spotlight back onto her. While normally her story would have been discounted, the heightened paranoia and the benefit her story provided to Datu and Magtanggol ensured no one doubted her. Makisig saw his brief window of opportunity to escape before Dakila wised up and killed him, so he took it and secretly moved into the abandoned gold mine. Mayumi became Unfortunately, pregnant. Datu added to the myth of the Tikbalang by claiming that, if it is slain, any unborn children it sired will revert to being human children ÓSEMY KJEKSKIEKSSMQSKSEY

so as to buy Mayumi time. He doesn't really want to see her killed.

The players could simply expose these charades for what they are and consider the mystery solved. Then they don't get any treasure do they? No Tikbalang, no treasure. Makisig has his own plan that may help with that.

#### THE ABANDONED MINE

A generation ago, there was a well trodden path leading to this small and unassuming hole in the hillside. Decades of neglect has allowed the jungle to reclaim the trail in its entirety. The timber supports at the mine entrance are coated in a vibrant green moss to the point that none of the wood underneath is visible. Were it not for their distinctive shape, you could not tell they were there at all.

The mines go several hundred meters into the hillside, but the only thing they contain of note is Makisig and his campsite. They are clearly visible within the first ten meters of the mine. Other than a small fire pit and a reed mat, there isn't anything out of the ordinary.

#### MAKISIG PALAD, THE SCHEMER

Maksig is a handsome young man in his early twenties. He could have had his pick of almost any woman in the village for his bride – anyone but Mayumi. So like any notable scoundrel, he went directly after Mayumi. Mayumi did not really care for Dakila and resented her betrothal, which made the rest clichéd history.

Makisig wants to return to the village and his life, but he can't do that now that the townsfolk will kill Mayumi and his unborn child. But he has a plan: the PCs simply need the head of a horse to claim they slew the Tikbalang. Unfortunately, there are no horses within a hundred kilometres, except for one. A small village two days from here was recently conquered by a local pirate named Captain Yalung. He has a fine steed he brought with him from the far off mainland. If the PCs can sneak in and kill his horse, they can claim the treasure and say they rescued Makisig from the Tikbalang's lair. He will sing their praises up and down. His testimony, combined with the "Tikbalang" head, will ensure no one will doubt their story.

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If the party instead intends to expose this scheme but have not yet told the village of the deception, he will foolishly attempt to kill them in a rage. He is just a regular villager armed with a small iron knife, so it is unlikely he will succeed.

#### THE NEIGHBOURING VILLAGE

This small coastal village has 8 napa huts still standing and a dozen burned down husks. There is a crude dock, which currently has a small Junk moored alongside it. There are 30 villagers remaining, mostly the elderly and some children. Everyone else was slain in the raid, fled into the jungle, or was taken and sold as slaves. There is a garrison of 5 pirates who sleep in one of the napa huts with Captain Yalung's horse tied outside of it. The PCs will need to sneak quietly into the village at night and decapitate the horse without raising the alarm from either the pirates or the townsfolk (who do not wish to be blamed for the incident). Alternately, they could try and free the village from pirate oppression. There are 25 more pirates on the Junk alongside Captain Yalung.

#### **Captain Yalung**

**OSR:** 5th level thief. AC: As leather and shield (high Dexterity). Attack: As weap-on (d8 with Dao). 20 hp.

NGR: 5th level, 2 part rogue, 1 part bard. Quick on his feet (16 agility) and charismatic (16 social) but also somewhat sickly (8 health). Parkour, Detect Traps, Expert, Leadership as powers. 20 luck points.

**Equipment:** Leather armour, Dao Sword, Whip, d1000 pieces of silver stamped with Shogun's seal (stored on his boat).

#### His men

Thirty 0th level humans in leather armour with battleaxes. (**OSR:** Excellent morale **NGR:** 10 spirit and Yalung's leadership)

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# REPERCUSSIONS

#### THEY EXPOSE THE MYTH OF THE TIKBALANG!

The villagers are aghast! Mayumi is shunned for her lies and exiled. She dies in the jungle at Dakila's hand before he hunts down Makisig, unless the PCs take them along. No bounty is awarded to the PCs (unless they take it by force), as no Tikbalang existed. The village becomes ashamed of its paranoia and they slowly emigrate to more populous and less backwater areas over the next decade until only a handful of people still live in Taal.

### THEY PERPETUATE THE LIE!

The great bounty is awarded to the PCs, except for a small secret portion that Datu will abscond with in a few weeks time. Mayumi marries Dakila, who is in turn forever ashamed of his behaviour and treats Mayumi like a queen out of guilt as he raises Makisig's son as his own. Makisig takes over leadership of the village when Datu leaves, due to both his charm and Dakila's loss of self worth.

Fear of the jungle causes the village to become fanatical in its devotion to appeasing every half-remembered spirit from both folklore and Malaya's delusions. A strict orthodoxy is enforced and those deemed too frivolous are killed for the good of the community.

## THE NEIGHBOURING VILLAGE...

If the PCs did nothing, the pirates will bore of the area and leave within

the next month, having no reason to stay. If they defeated the pirates in battle, the village will celebrate their

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new saviours, venerating them first reborn as a living god? as folk heroes and then later as unofficial saints from half-remembered tales while under Western Colonial rule. If the PCs quietly sneaked in and killed the horse, Captain Yalung will blame the villagers and cut off all of their right hands the following morning despite their cries of innocence.

#### HEY WAIT... WHAT ABOUT THE STONE PILLAR?

Oh that? It is just some weird stone obelisk in the jungle carved with Greek text. Something about defeating Theseus but allowing him to live and claim victory if he led the author from some maze?

Also something about studying from Megara in the barbarian wilds before journeying here. Entombing something's soul in a gem emerge on to the full moon until the stars are right to be

All gibberish really. Best to just forget about it.





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