

Palladium Books® Presents:

The Western Empire™

Palladium RPG Book 8:

By Bill Coffin



A Sourcebook for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Second Edition

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A sourcebook for the
Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition

This book is dedicated to Fairfax, Snaggleteeth, Steel & Ramis.

— *Bill Coffin*

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The Western Empire™

A Sourcebook for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Second Edition

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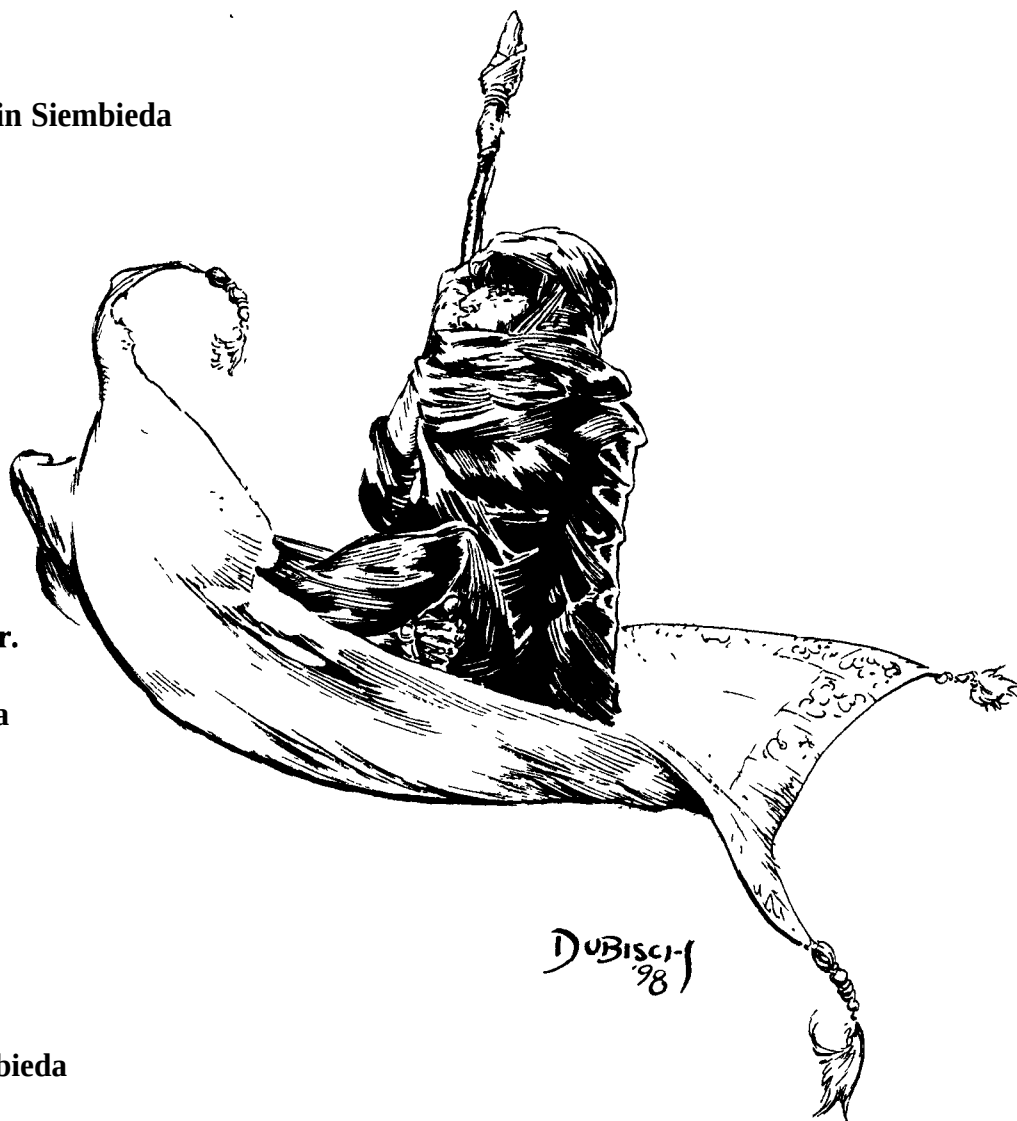
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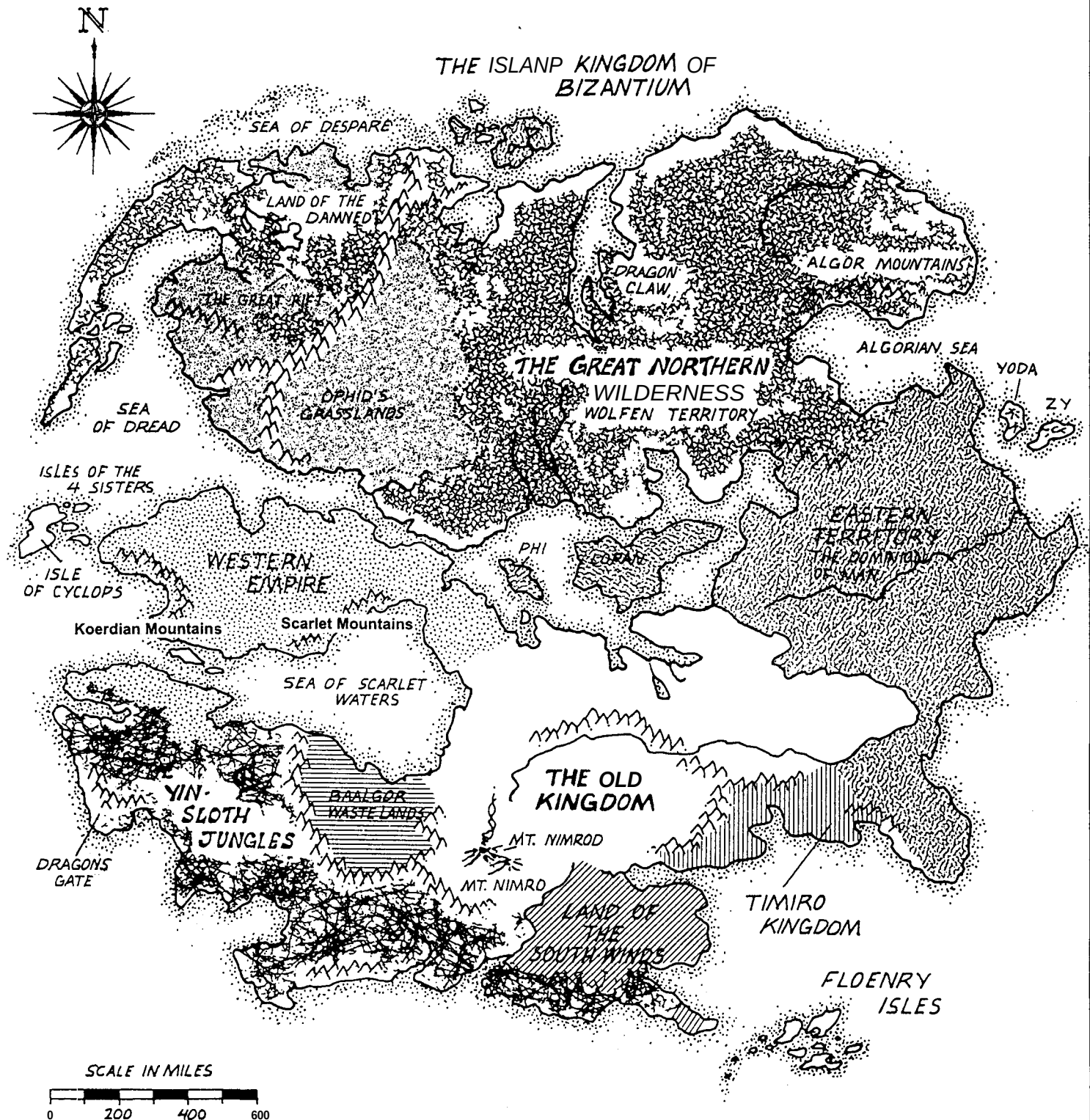
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Map of the known world





Demon Black Ship

Overview of the Western Empire

Prologue

Rystrom wiped the sweat from his eyes as he ascended the final hill. It had been a long and dangerous journey, but it had been worth it. "Four months ago, I was just another scholar's understudy," he thought. "Now I can see for myself the wonders I have only read about!"

Doska, Gron and Clarien followed behind him, all winded from trying to keep up with their younger, more excitable companion.

Doska adjusted the sword hanging at his side as he spoke to Gron and Clarien.

"What's gotten into him? The way he's running over these last few hills, you'd think he's never been to the Western Empire before."

Clarien smiled at her brawny but none-too-bright comrade. "That's because he hasn't, you dope."

"Yeah, but why the Western Empire? What's so special about this place that he'd give up a cushy monastery position back in Timiro?" asked Doska. He agreed with Gron — this seemed like a hell of a lot of travel just for some young bookworm's field trip. Still, Rystrom had paid good money to be escorted through the Old Kingdom, and a deal's a deal. They contracted to accompany the kid all the way to Caer Itom, and that was what they were going to do.

Of course, there had been lots of trouble along the way, but the kid handled himself surprisingly well. Must have had some kind of training, Gron kept saying. You don't learn how to handle weapons like that reading books and copying manuscripts.

At the top of the highest hill, Rystrom Khejas, wandering scholar and sometimes swordsman, gazed upon the vast valley below. It was a perfect stretch of waving fields and green meadows unlike anything he'd seen back home or in the Old Kingdom. Could all this be farmland? But how could there even be so many people to need such quantities of grain? As Rystrom's mind grappled with that, he shifted his focus to a farther point and spied a large grey and tan patch on the earth, like a weird fungus. The air shimmered over the area. The kind of atmospheric distortion that only comes from big fires or lots of people gathered together. Or both.

"So this is one of the cities of the Empire of Sin, is it?" Rystrom thought. "Well, I'm ready."

"Magnificent, isn't it?" asked Clarien, breaking Rystrom from his reverie.

"Uh, yes" he responded, while wondering how she snuck up on him like that, he didn't think he had been that lost in thought, but then Clarien was a Western thief by birth, and after years of training and practice, moving so silently must come easily.

Clarien smiled as she pointed to the distant settlement at the edge of the Western Empire, her homeland, and added, with a sigh, "I'd forgotten how much I've missed the sight of home."

"You were born there? In that city?" Rystrom asked.

"There? No. I am from Caer Kurgas, far to the west of here."

Rystrom blinked, as if to clear away the confusion he suddenly felt. "But... then ... is that Caer Itom?"

Clarien threw her head back and laughed loudly.

"That tiny bit of brick and mortar, the capital of the Western Empire? No, no, no. That's just some frontier city that probably isn't even as old as I am."

Rystrom looked crestfallen, and mumbled, "For months I have looked forward to arriving at Caer Itom, where I could begin my studies at the imperial universities, under the great masters of lore. I had thought our journey was complete."

"Not at all, Rystrom. In fact, you might say your trip is just beginning," Clarien retorted with a smile and pat on the back. "All that you've seen in your travels has barely prepared you for the wonders and sorrows you will see while travelling across my homeland. By the time we reach Caer Itom, I doubt you will be the same man you are now."

Clarien spread her arms, as if addressing the entire valley, with Rystrom, Gron and Doska standing behind her, sharing in the marvelous view.

"You want a real education?" Clarien said. "Well, get ready, because you're in for the learning experience of a lifetime. Rystrom Khejas, welcome to the Western Empire!"

The Western Empire is the oldest and most powerful human kingdom in the Palladium world. Also known as the "Empire of Sin," the Empire has a long reputation for decadence, injustice, slavery, practicing forbidden magic, cruelty, savagery, violence and poverty. It's ruled by an entrenched caste of corrupt nobles who usually seem to care more about abusing their power than running the country. The majority of Western citizens are said to be no better — corrupt and decadent, filling their time with self-serving plots and squabbles, and backstabbing each other over the pettiest of causes.

This realm is also beset by conflicting and competing religions, cults, merchants groups, guilds of every stripe, power-hungry alchemists and criminal organizations. Racial strife constantly threatens the peace and quiet of daily life, as does the specter of civil war.

For nearly 6,000 years, the Western Empire has been the so-called "throne of humanity." But out of all that time, the Empire has been at the height of its power for only 1,500 years. The rest of its existence has been spent either rebuilding the realm's power or watching it fall apart. Like the ebb and flow of the Sea of Scarlet Waters, the Western Empire has risen and subsided in power many times.

Currently, the Empire has recovered from its most recent civil war, and the realm is again growing in wealth and (frightening) military strength. The people are again proud to call themselves Westerners, and the sound of gold rings in every marketplace from the great cities and fleets of the western shore to the Old Kingdom Frontier. Yes, this is a time of plenty for the Western Empire. A period in which it has found strong leadership, reasonable unity, and has regained a good portion of its former strength.

And that is exactly what troubles her neighbors. A strong Western Empire inevitably tries to conquer and control the rest of the world. And with the aggressive *Emperor Itomas* on the throne, such a destiny seems inevitable. In the last decade, the Army and Navy of the Western Empire have grown considerably in the number of troops, raw power and world presence. For the first time in the last century, it can be said that the Empire again rules the seas and oceans around its shores, while its armies and bold colonists dare to claim lands in the Old Kingdom and expand the Empire's disputed borders. Western spies have infiltrated every nation in the known world, and the West's use of magic grows stronger than ever.

Some claim the West is nothing to worry about. Its cities indeed gleam again in the sunlight, but such new-found beauty only masks an utterly rotten core. The West isn't called the "Empire of Sin" for nothing, and it is a time-honored fact that the stronger the Empire gets, the more decadent, excessive, and self-destructive it becomes. Historically, this nation has always been troubled by civil war, tyrannical leaders, despots, religious fanaticism, drug abuse, dark and violent cults, rampant crime and social decay. Critics point out that the Western Empire usually is its own worst enemy, and that before it can mount any genuine effort to take over the world, it will (probably) self-destruct again.

While such sentiments allay many people's concerns, others find no comfort in them. The Western Empire could cause war and strife across half the world before it "self-destructs." And only a fool can convince himself of the certainty that the Empire will crumble before it can cause any serious damage. The Western Empire has not been this strong in thousands of years. While one can argue about its inevitable downfall, one can also argue that the nation may be entering a new golden age of military and political superiority.

Either way, the Western Empire stands poised to either rule the world or to shake its foundation as it again rises, perhaps only to fall into the dust of defeat. Whatever happens, one thing is for certain — for good or for ill, the shadow of the Western Empire stretches across the world, and threatens to engulf it.



A brief history of the Western Empire

The Ascendancy: 6,000 - 4,176 years ago.

6,000 years ago: Human barbarians rise from the wreckage of the Elf-Dwarf War and settle the western peninsula of the world. Led by the warrior-king *Jonoro Kighfalcon*, these humans drive out all bands of marauding ores, ogres, and other monster races to establish a fledgling kingdom.

5,880 years ago: Western sailors discover the Isle of the Cyclops (and are quickly destroyed). Meanwhile, miners led by *Koerdi Greensleeves* discover mineral riches in the southwestern mountains.

5,624 years ago: *Saerghi Kighfalcon*, twelfth-generation descendant of *Jonoro Kighfalcon* and king of the "Western Peoples," announces the sovereignty of the Western Empire and declares himself "Emperor." Among the nation's people are a tiny percentage of Elves, Dwarves, Changelings and Titans. Many are refugees and displaced people from the Elf-Dwarf Wars.

5,269 to 4,700 years ago: Western settlers continue to press east and south, despite increasing hostilities from growing numbers of wild ores, ogres, and other "monster races." The Kighfalcon Plains, Scarlet Mountains and Lower Barraduk regions are all formed.

4,654 years ago: The Second Ogre War begins in what is today the Kighfalon Plains. The war is a five year stalemate that finally ends when a cabal of Western wizards arrives on the front (at the behest of the Emperor) and drives off the orcish hordes with a mix of spell magic and the aid of many summoned demons, deevils and other minions.

4,391 years ago: *Alston Vequerrel* founds the Vequerrel Woodlands region. He obtains imperial aid to harvest the local forests for their exotic hardwoods.

4,200 years ago: Imperial troops swiftly crush religious dissension in the newly formed Middle Kingdoms region. Westerners barely notice the end of the reign of the mythical *Prestida Kings* (See *Island at the Edge of the World* for more about these Kings).

4,176 years ago: Settlers establish the Tarldet Plains and Old Kingdom Frontier regions.



The Height of Power: 4,176 - 2,311 years ago.

4,150 years ago: *Emperor Justician* uses the hysteria of the Changeling Inquisitions as an excuse to prosecute his political enemies, claiming they are all either Changelings or Changeling sympathizers. After that, none of the lower noble houses dare challenge imperial authority.

4,000 years ago: Elven and Dwarven refugees enter the Western Empire en masse. The Dwarves settle mostly in the

Koerdian and *Scarlet Mountains* while the Elves settle mostly in the cities to the west and the central farmlands. Both races integrate with Western society fairly smoothly, despite widespread feelings of human supremacy among Westerners.

3,854 years ago: The realm's first great Wizards' Guilds and spell casting schools are founded.

3,505 years ago: Western merchant ships establish global overseas trade routes.

3,250 years ago: *Emperor Zenerou III* declares war on the Isle of the Cyclops over the destruction of some Western merchant vessels. With a fleet of Demon Black Ships, Zenerou blockades the island but fails to successfully invade it. The naval blockade never starves or forces the Cyclops into submission and the West accepts defeat in what turns into a war of attrition. Afterwards, the Empire's top generals plot to assassinate Zenerou III, but are foiled at the last minute.

3,200 years ago: The Isle of the Cyclops declares its sovereignty.

3,198 years ago: In one of his last acts as Emperor, Zenerou III, now a doddering old man, forges a lasting peace with the king of the Cyclops. Some historians say the peace is not forged by Zenerou III, but by his cunning and ambitious daughter, *Zenerea*, who succeeds her father as the Empire's first "Empress."

2,967 years ago: Western sailors establish diplomatic relations with the Timiro Kingdom.

2,900-2,400 years ago: The Golden Centuries — five hundred years of prosperity, peace, cultural achievement and expansion through military conquest. The Empire is at its most wealthy and most powerful.

2,371 years ago: The Western Empire's first attempt to colonize the *Ophid's Grasslands* fails after a five year campaign. The last colonists die horribly of starvation during a particularly long and harsh winter, but not before making contact with extra-dimensional creatures, presumably from a dimensional nexus far to the north known as "The Devil's Mark." Rumors abound regarding secret diaries, reports and documents describing this encounter, but no such records are known to exist, although forgeries and fakes have surfaced hundreds of times.

2,355 years ago: Western explorers head into the Northern Wilderness, finding a race of fearsome, wolf-like creatures initially believed to be Alu demons. Further exploration and contact reveals the creatures to be mortal, canine beings who call themselves *Wolfen*, *Coyles* and *Kankoran*. Other creatures such as the Bearmen, Bug Bear and Drakin, are also discovered. Western slavers bring 12 Wolfen and Bearmen back home, where *Emperor Garredin* sends the "subhuman savages" to die in the Imperial Arena.

The Downfall: 2,311 - 602 years ago.

2,311 years ago: An elaborate investment scam in *Lower Barraduk* causes the economic collapse of several city-states. Thousands are forced from their homes as lenders and corrupt nobles seize every bit of property they can. The pathetically weak *Emperor Nosaad*, a known drug addict, declines to intervene. Meanwhile, tax revenues in rebellious areas like the Middle Kingdoms and the Scarlet Mountains cannot be collected. The morale and quality of the Western military also plummets.

2,100 years ago: No longer fearful of the Western Empire's once vaunted military, now a laughing stock, the *Land of the South-Winds* stops paying protection money to the Western Emperor and declares its national sovereignty.

1,845 years ago: Poverty and crime rises throughout the realm, especially in the larger cities. Much of the great building projects from the so-called "Golden Centuries" begin to crumble and fall to ruin. Death cults and scores of other dangerous, decadent and misguided (often ridiculous) cults spring to life like weeds in a field. Meanwhile, barbarian hordes of Ores, Goblins, Ogres, Trolls and other monster races wreak havoc along the Old Kingdom's borders, destroying dozens of farms and settlements and pushing the Empire's eastern borderlines hundreds of miles westward.

1,600 years ago: The Floenry Islands are discovered by the sailors of the burgeoning Timiro Kingdom. By this time, Western ships have all but disappeared from the southern waters, except for slave ships that cruise the Yin-Sloth coastline looking for "inventory."

1,230 years ago: Ratlings, a "subrace" of monstrous humanoids ignored for centuries, virtually take over the cities' sewer systems and catacombs. Other inhuman menaces such as Boogie-Men, Goblins and Kobolds also root themselves in and under the once great cities. Likewise, monster and demon sightings increase dramatically throughout the realm, particularly where certain cults to ancient gods (including the Old Ones) abound.



1,113 years ago: The Great Vampire Scare. Vampires appear in alarming numbers in a half dozen of the declining grand old cities, including the Capitol. A six year campaign successfully eliminates the threat posed by the Undead, but the cost in manpower and resources contributes to the Empire's woes. To this day, the Western authorities are very touchy regarding the subject of vampires, and are fanatical about stomping out the vermin whenever the slightest hint of them appears.

900 years ago: Many merchants, craftsmen and settlers leave for the new promised land: the Eastern Territory. Most are good, hardworking people fearful that the corrupt nobility is destroying their homeland. Dubbed "The Silent Rebellion," this mass exodus cripples the Western Empire and sends it teetering on

the brink of complete and total collapse. With the realm's eastern regions dangerously underpopulated and left with the flotsam of an impotent and demoralized army, hordes of Ores and Goblins, led by Ogre tribes, ravage and destroy many weakened settlements along the Empire's eastern border. The border's incompetent garrisons spend more time waging a "defensive battle" — running away from the invaders — than fighting them. This inspires banditry and total chaos. The success of the monster hordes creates an infusion of monster races to join their brethren in the Old Kingdom, making it the unofficial domain of monsters.

The Middle Kingdoms, exploiting the Empire's weakness, revolt again. Without Imperial authorization, a large force of elite troops, warlocks, wizards and summoners invade the Middle Kingdoms, destroy its armies, and kill or capture every rebel leader in the region. *House Esteche*, which funded the invasion, names itself the regional power. Too weak to oppose House Esteche, the Emperor begrudgingly recognizes its ascension.

The Civil Wars: 602 - 88 years ago.

602 years ago: Infighting among the Imperial family over succession rites leads to a minor civil war among the Western nobility ("The War of the Gryphons"). A new Imperial House is named, but its members are depraved, villainous cowards with no real sense of leadership or responsibility.

548-544 years ago: A three-year-long drought and crop blight known as "The Feast of Bones" causes the worst famine in the Empire's history. A series of plagues also sweep across the land, worsening the death toll. Riots erupt throughout the Empire as people rise up to purge the kingdom of its many Death Cults believed responsible for the onslaught. Thousands of temples and shrines are decimated and the blood of tens of thousands of cultists and worshippers of death gods and demons fill the gutter. Although most scholars and historians insist it is pure coincidence, the tide of death is stemmed, the plagues vanish, and some semblance of normalcy is restored.

485 years ago: After centuries of mining, the Koerdi Lode finally runs dry. When the Imperial Mint puts a hold on any new currency production for five years, the resulting financial panic causes rioting and widespread havoc in many cities.

413 years ago: In a last, desperate bid for world power, the *Summoner-Emperor, Fimosob Hazo*, launches a campaign of global conquest that would later become known as "Fimosob's Folly." Armed with a fleet of Demon Black Ships, Hazo blockades the Land of the South Winds, the Timiro Kingdom, and the Floenry Islands. The Imperial Army advances into the Old Kingdom where it is stopped and forced to retreat against an insurmountable wave after wave of Ore, Ogre, Goblin and Kobold attackers. The Western Empire's attempts to invade Phi and Lopan are repelled without support from the Army trapped in the Old Kingdom. The assault against the Timiro Kingdom and the southeastern corner of the Eastern Territory, even with demon minions to bolster their forces, fails miserably.

Western morale disintegrates when Imperial Summoners lose control of their summoned demons and devils, which run amok and destroy Emperor Hazo's home city of Escandel.

409 years ago: The Land of the South-Winds, the Timiro Kingdom and Byzantium join forces to make the West accept defeat. A condition of the surrender is the signing of the "White

Paper," by which the Western Empire promises to never again build or use the Demon Black Ships. All other nations sign and agree to enforce the "White Paper." Emperor Hazo refuses to sign and disappears (taking a huge chunk of the remaining Imperial Treasury with him), never to be seen again. Hazo's replacement, *Emperor Chuliyi XII*, signs the "White Paper," scuttles the Black Ship fleet, and banishes the Imperial Corps of Summoners from the realm.

406 years ago: Fimosob's Folly costs the Empire most of its eastern colony areas along the borders of the Old Kingdom, which are retaken by inhuman barbarians and raiders.

Just three years after taking the throne, Emperor Chuliyi XII commits suicide after claiming he can no longer bear to rule over a ruined Empire. Chuliyi XIII lasts four years before he is assassinated by his sister. She rules for two years before dying of a drug overdose (some say at the hand of an assassin). During this time, post-war hardships and trade embargoes by the "White Paper" nations reduce the Empire to pauper status.

404 years ago: The Year of Seven Emperors. In just under 12 months, Imperial power changes hands seven times from an assassination, coup d'etat or civil war. Western historians consider this year to be the lowest point in Western history.

400-88 years ago: Most of the records of the next three centuries were destroyed during prolonged periods of civil conflict. Surviving texts have been re-written so many times that their authenticity is in grave question. At least 41 major civil wars were fought within the Empire, and no single alliance or power bloc lasted for more than three years. During lulls in the fighting, the *Yin-Sloth Periphery* region was founded and the disastrous "Orcish Empire" campaign was carried out in the Yin-Sloth jungles.

The Reconstruction: 88 years ago - present.

88 years ago: *Merkedi Leopold I*, presiding noble of House Leopold, emerges from the west commanding a massive army of crack soldiers armed with Cyclops-made lightning weaponry. Cyclops advisors accompany the army as it sweeps across the land. Leopold offers all nobles he encounters two options: Complete surrender or annihilation. Region after region falls to Leopold's army. By the time he reaches the Middle Kingdoms, entire regions have surrendered without a fight.

83 years ago: Having reconquered the Realm in an amazing five years, Emperor Leopold I establishes a new system of noble houses. He promotes many lower houses to fill open positions above them and has his advisors pick worthy merchant clans, military families, and other notable groups to act as ground-level nobility.

77 years ago: Leopold II ascends to the throne after his father dies of consumption. He continues his father's policies and rebuilds the Empire's shattered roads, waterways and cities. Emperor Leopold II also re-establishes naval trading routes and rebuilds many of the West's traditional industries.

68 years ago: Leopold II dies in a horse-riding accident, leaving no heir. While many expect a new round of civil wars to break out, the work of Leopold II and his father have had a great calming effect on Western politics. The senior members of House Leopold moderate the proceedings among House Leopold's closest affiliated houses, and name House Zeketri as the new imperial power.

45 years ago: In response to renewed rebellion from the Middle Kingdoms, *Emperor Altai Zeketri* dissolves the Middle Kingdoms' regional house and appoints House Kaze to the regional seat. While not as dynamic or efficient as his two predecessors, Zeketri proves to be an able and deserving Emperor credited with returning the West to some of its previous prosperity.

20 years ago: Emperor Zeketri's son catches "Goblin Fever" and dies. The heartbroken Emperor soon follows him, but not before issuing orders to dissolve the noble house upon his death, and to confer all Imperial authority to House Itomas, a long-time friend and ally of House Zeketri. Lord Itomas, elder of the house and just barely old enough to rule, ascends to the Imperial Throne. Emperor Itomas continues Zeketri's reconstruction programs and launches his own reform programs.

10 years ago: Emperor Itomas' financial and military reforms bear fruit, and the Imperial Treasuries are in the black for the first time in centuries. The Emperor shrewdly invests this money in a variety of ventures to help pay for his increasingly grand plans for restoring the Western Empire to its past splendor. While he repairs the damage of the past, he so strains the Imperial Treasury that he must acquire new sources of wealth if his reform plans are to continue.

The present: Emperor Itomas has proven to be an astute leader and politician, as well as an excellent tactician with an eye for the "big picture" and "long term." Until recently, few have realized just how powerful the Western Empire has become. Its armies have been replenished (and some fear, bigger than any time in the past), the Navy is strong (and the Demon Black Ships illegally reinstated), and small, carefully calculated campaigns to reclaim lost lands along the eastern borders and new lands in the Yin-Sloth Jungles have proven extremely successful. Rumors of new alliances with the Cyclops and demonic forces also abound, but such rumors always seem to circulate about the "Empire of Sin."

Geographic Overview

From west to east, the Western Empire stretches about 1,200 miles (1920 km), not counting its lands in the Yin-Sloth Jungles and Ophid's Grasslands. In terms of sheer land area, the Western Empire is the largest (arguably) civilized kingdom in the known world. While other regions or territories such as the Old Kingdom, Eastern Territory, Yin-Sloth Jungles, and Great Northern Wilderness may be physically larger than the Western Empire, 65-90% of these territories are unpopulated and often disputed wilderness. These lands are up for grab by anybody who can hold on to them, with numerous nations, fledgling communities, entrepreneurs and individuals laying claim to particular parcels of land within that territory. Unlike these wilderness territories, the Western Empire is a large, comparably densely populated land area held and controlled by one central government. While its borders have grown and shrunk over the centuries, the Western Empire has remained a global power and even in the worst of times, is indeed an Empire.

Yet even in this bastion of human civilization, with its roads, aqueducts, sprawling ranches, farms and grand cities, there are huge areas of desolation and wilderness. Stretches of wilderness can span several hundred square miles and be inhabited by as few as 100 citizens of the Empire (usually farmers, wilderness

settlers and trappers). Likewise, the land between one city and another is likely to be largely unpopulated farms, forests and grasslands, making travel, even on roads, potentially dangerous. Such lightly populated wilderness regions will be claimed and controlled by a Provincial and Regional House, and its roads and places of importance occasionally patrolled by the authorities, but overall, they are just big, empty farm or wilderness areas. The environment is diverse as a result of natural conditions, location, geography and extensive cultivation of the land. Of course, large areas of forests and grasslands have been cleared away over the millennia to make room for human settlers, farms, ranches, roads, towns and cities. In the **northwest** are dense deciduous and coniferous forests thinning out to meadows and marshlands near the coast. **The center** of the mainland is flat and covered with a mixture of forests and open fields of tall grass and flowering plants (much of it used as cattle land). **The southern portion** becomes hilly and is dominated by grasslands with patches of light deciduous forests.

The eastern arm of the Empire that bends toward the Old Kingdom is mostly hilly grassland and prairies broken by the occasional thin deciduous forests. This is one of the least settled regions of the Empire. As one of the more remote and desolate regions, it is subjected to raids and incursions from the inhuman barbarians and bandits from the Old Kingdom, and pirates from north.

The Koerdian Mountains, in the west, are nearly half the height of the Old Kingdom mountains, and are a separate environment to themselves, having a gradual shift from lowland prairies to low mountain forests around its base, to upper alpine pastures and scrub. Fierce winds and bitter cold await anyone who reaches the top of these mountains. The **Scarlet Mountains** in the southeast are similar, although the southern lowlands along this mountain range are rocky scrub lands and stony desert, while the northern end turns into dense, untamed deciduous forest.

Climatically, the northern half of the Western Empire is rather mild (similar to the mid-Atlantic United States) with hot summers and warm winters (temperatures rarely drop below 45 degrees Fahrenheit (7 C) at its coldest or rise above 90 (32 C); median temperature is around 78 degrees Fahrenheit (26 C)). These ideal temperatures, fertile lands (farming) and lush forests (lumber) are some of the important reasons why humans have flourished here for so long. The Western Empire experiences four seasons, but each of them is fairly mild, leading to consistent year-round weather. This is a great boon to the land's farmers, who don't have to deal with severe heat, cold or storms ruining their crops, although the Empire does get ravaged by some strong storms and the occasional hurricane in the fall and winter months. This also makes it possible for military campaigns to be carried out year round, adding to the Western Empire's long history of conquest and civil conflict.

A note about Wilderness Encounters

I (Bill Coffin) usually don't incorporate random wilderness encounters into my adventures, which is the reason why you won't find any such tables in this book. For those of you who do like having random wilderness encounters, and/or would like to see a range of creatures (intelligent and animal) common to the region, consult Palladium's **Monsters and Animals™** sourcebook. It will provide a good idea about the kinds of wild things romping about in this part of the world.

In general, the threat of encountering hostile wild animals and monsters is lower in the Western Empire than almost anywhere else in the Palladium world. This is particularly true of areas in and around cities and agricultural centers. Yet even in those areas, there is a prevailing danger from the likes of Ratlings, goblins, ores and other nonhuman criminals and low-lives, as well as the occasional Boogie-Man and vampire. Then there are the unpredictable pirate raids along coastal communities and trouble from adventurers, mercenaries, practitioners of magic, rowdy sailors, foreigners, slaves (mostly nonhumans) and political intrigue (a constant). Potentially dangerous animals in the city include scavenging wolves, coyotes, wild dogs, rats, snakes, scorpions, Devil Diggers, Grunnor, Serpent Rats (a big problem in some of the oldest and largest cities), and the occasional wayward bear. However, most *animals*, except the aggressive Serpent Rat, won't attack humans unless the animal is sick or feels threatened.

In the plains and farm regions, wild canines, felines, the occasional bear, and snakes may be a problem, as might more exotic and dangerous creatures such as Hoppers, Floaters, and Nippers, among others. Small flocks of Harpies sometimes target farms and can be found in the plains, forests and mountain regions. Likewise, the plains are home to Chimera, Sphinx, Thorny Sun Devils and Worms of Taut, although all are comparatively uncommon.

The greatest danger lies in the largely uninhabited forested and mountain areas where one might encounter just about anything, especially along the *Scarlet Mountains* and northeastern section of the Empire closest to the Old Kingdom. The *Vequerrel Woodlands* and the *Old Kingdom Frontier* are largely wild and are populated with all manner of odd creatures, so G.M.s, you can go nuts.



Politics of the Western Empire

The Western Empire is said (with some dismay) to be the heart of the "Domain of Man." It is a predominantly human kingdom that has been a world power for thousands of years. Unfortunately, it does not present the image most humans, especially those in other kingdoms, would like to epitomize human civilization. The Western Empire seems to have always been corrupt, decadent and conniving to some degree or another, and these attitudes and loose morals found their way into Western politics. Under the table deals, bribes, favored treatment (for a price), secret pacts, exploitation of loopholes and the letter of the law (when it serves them), and the selective enforcement of the law, trade agreements, pacts, and borders are all part and parcel when dealing with the fabled Empire.

Corruption is rampant, although usually very organized, orderly and gentlemanly. Satisfactory bribes in the right hands can expedite almost everything, as well as circumvent taxes, tariffs, fees, fines, imprisonment, penalties and proper procedure. Not all nobles, leaders, and bureaucrats are corrupt, but, for the right price, at least 60% will look the other way or make exceptions to minor, "harmless" matters. However, a good 25% are rotten to the core and can be paid off, bribed, or hired to do just about anything within the range of their influence. This can include tampering with (or stealing) evidence, paying off officials, forging documents, spreading gossip, helping "friends" avoid criminal charges, and smuggling goods and people (perhaps wanted for murder or some other terrible crime) in and out of a city.

A favorite, arguably harmless, bit of political chicanery is to alter documents to show less volume or value on taxable trade goods. Pay the official 20% of the normal fee and he'll usually reduce the recorded value by 50-60% percent, saving the individual 30-40%. Of course, this cheats the city and Imperial governments, but many corrupt officials justify their actions by sighting how rich (and greedy) the nobles are already and how strong the Empire is doing, thus, no harm in skimming a little extra for themselves. Frequently, loyal "friends and associates" who are regular clients (and making the official a lot of money) may get an even better deal (+10-20% knocked off the taxable value), especially if they are polite and generous with other favors (i.e. offers of little gifts, contraband, women, invitations to parties, introductions to influential and famous people, helping them out of trouble, providing an alibi from time to time, valuable tips, information and rumors they can use to their advantage, etc). A popular saying throughout the known Palladium World is that, "everything and every person in the Western Empire has a price." Among some opportunists, scoundrels and crooks, this saying is the credo they live by.

Western Society

The Western Empire grew from clans of powerful Warlords and elite castes of warriors who brought relative peace to the land, protected the realm, enforced its laws, and expanded its territorial holdings through conquest. Eventually, Warrior-kings

united to create a powerful nation under their joint rule. The generations that followed became more "civilized" and rulers commanded their armies from afar rather than personally leading them on the battlefield. Thus, the West's Warlords turned from warrior-kings who earned their power, to a noble class that inherited power and position.

Western nobility is organized into family clans called "Houses." The average "Noble House" is an extended family led by the oldest "core" family (father, mother, and their children). The sizes of Noble Houses vary considerably, depending on family history, longevity, prosperity, military or political achievements and other factors. Most Noble Houses consist of clans of direct descendants and have 50 to 160 immediate family members with a confirmed lineage and family heritage. Third cousins, bastard children and such are poor relations beneath their notice.

The Noble Houses are the backbone of Western power and government. They administrate its cities. They establish and enforce the laws of the land, create trade agreements, restrictions, rules, regulations and conduct, as well as levy taxes, import and export tariffs, and other fees. Most own vast amounts of land and dominate businesses and industries in their part of the realm, as well as holding a strong place in politics. The noble families each have a family representative who (presumably) has their best interests at heart, and who advises the Emperor in matters of State, including trade, economics and war. Nobody else in Western society commands even a hundredth of the power held by the nobles for so many generations.

Although a true nation with a powerful Emperor, each Noble House has a great deal of control over its land holds and sphere of influence, which means some places are nicer and enjoy more civil liberties than others. Some are under strict, even cruel rulership, others are very free and liberal, some are decadent and violent, others peaceful and kind, or focused on culture and learning, others war, etc. Each is a reflection of the Noble family currently in control of that region.

Social Classes

Many outsiders argue that the Western Empire's system of government is blatantly unfair, with a super-rich and powerful elite, aristocracy and disproportionate poor common folk. While there are some appalling ghettos and slums in the Empire, most common people earn very good livings, whether they are farmers and laborers or skilled craftsmen or merchants, and feel safe and happy. Merchants, practitioners of magic, select guilds, and many churches comprise the middle class. They are moderately wealthy and influential compared to the nobles of the Western Empire, but are considered very to extremely wealthy by the standards of most other kingdoms, especially places like the Land of the South Winds and Old Kingdom. Generally speaking, the style of living in the West (with a few, horrible exceptions) is better than any place in the world, with the possible exception of the Timiro Kingdom.

It is the very poor, sick or crippled and slaves who live in abject poverty and appalling, squalid conditions. Not all Western towns and cities have these poor, but the ones who do are terrible. Most live in slums, shantytowns or crumbling ruins. The majority are condemned to lives of begging, scavenging, and the most menial and unpleasant (and low paying) labor. Many



(40-50%) will supplement their income with petty crimes, mostly thefts of food and minor goods, rolling drunks for money, clothes and possessions, or fortune-telling, cheating at cards, selling snake oil, buying and selling stolen goods (common stuff at a 40-50% discount) and similar things. However, as many as 33% may turn to a life of crime and the majority (80-90%) of these seasoned crooks will be card-carrying members of a thieves' guild (there can be 1-4 different thieves guilds, plus smuggling rings, and forger and assassin guilds). Their crimes involve purse snatching, pickpocketing, mugging, breaking and entry, armed robbery, con games, fencing stolen goods, racketeering, assault and murder. These poor have been largely abandoned by society as low-life scum with little or no value.

In many cases, the authorities avoid going to the slummy parts of town, as do tourists, visitors, merchants, respectable citizens, and even priests. Consequently, the worst brigands and most reprehensible and dangerous dens of iniquity are found there: Taverns and gambling halls exist by the cartload, pawn shops (lending 10-20% of the true value), drug dens, houses of prostitution (all races; usually ugly and worn out, so they are cheap 10-25 gold, sometimes a drink or act of kindness), death cults and other forbidden cults and churches, privately owned and illegally operated arenas (bloodsports are commonplace), and meeting places of gangs and criminal guilds where one can openly hire thieves, thugs, forgers, assassins and other scum bags. Robbery, duels, brawls, murder, dangerous magic, illegal practices, the black arts, and drunkenness are everyday occurrences in most slums. **Note:** Ratlings and other monster races are frequently seen walking among men and acting like free citi-

zens in these parts of town. From time to time, the magistrate or ruling body will dispatch a large force of police or soldiers to purge the place, raiding illegal operations, imprisoning crooks, seizing valuables (often an important reason for the raid) and to quell criminal activity leaching into the nicer parts of the city. Occasionally, the most lawless and wild slum citizens become too brazen and dangerous. If the chaotic powers that be in these hell-holes refuse to cooperate with authorities, the entire slum will be razed to the ground via military might, magic, and fire. Only so much crime, decadence and indiscretion will be tolerated even in the Western Empire.

Ironically, 20-30% of the slaves, mainly educated and skilled servants and craftsmen, live better than these poor, and nearly on par with the average citizen. On the other hand, the vast majority of slaves live hard, pitiful lives and are subjected to squalid living conditions, inhumanity and frequent abuse. Slaves have no rights or protection under the law. As property, the slaves' masters can do with them as they please.

Political Structure

There are four clearly distinguished levels of Western nobility: the Imperial House, Regional Houses, Provincial Houses, and City-State Houses.

The Imperial House

The Imperial House is the supreme power of the Western Empire. Whoever runs the Imperial House is Emperor of the entire nation. This concept stems from the Western Empire's early days, when the realm's warlords fought among themselves to determine who would rule over them all as the ultimate leader.

Usually, the strongest warlord acted as Emperor until somebody unseated him. In essence, this hasn't changed much over the last 6,000 years. The Imperial House is still the mightiest Noble House in the land, asserting its power over the other nobles for the "greater good" of the Empire. Sometimes, a rival Noble House might usurp Imperial power, but more often, power is transferred to a named heir (usually somebody in the same noble family). So while individual Emperors come and go, Noble Houses can hold on to the Imperial Seat for generations. Whenever the Imperial Seat (i.e. Emperor's throne) becomes vacant, it is almost always filled by the next most powerful *Regional House*; the lesser Houses, like the Provincial or City-State Houses, simply don't have the military power to defend any claims to the throne.

The current Imperial House is *House Itomas*. When the previous Emperor, Cialan Zeketri IX died, his family line died with him. Having no heirs, Zeketri named his closest supporter, young *Lord Voelkian Itomas II*, as Emperor. Thankfully, Itomas had just come of ruling age when Zeketri died, thereby avoiding the messy problem of appointing a regent to rule in Itomas' place until the lad grew up.

Like all Noble Houses, the Itomas clan has its share of friends and enemies. Regional Houses *Ne'klosh*, *Oslof* and *Inindri* have been loyal supporters for generations. *House Kaze*, of the rebellious Middle Kingdoms region, has been a long-time enemy of whomever occupies the Imperial Seat. Just as House Kaze opposed House Zeketri, so does it now oppose House Itomas. While House Kaze has no outright support from other Regional Houses, it is rumored to have strong ties with *House Valocek* of the Scarlet Mountains region. It's also rumored that Regional Houses *Wenglid* and *Clynn* are too scared of House Kaze to oppose it, and are easily bullied into doing their bidding.

Regional Houses

Also known as the "Houses Major," these second-tier noble powers each control one of the Empire's Twelve Regions. The complexity of regional politics and administration make regional nobles almost as busy as the Emperor himself. However, not all Regional Houses take their duties as seriously as they should, and it is among these nobles that one starts to see some of the legendary Western selfishness, in-fighting, and depravity rise to the surface.

The Regional Houses constantly struggle for power over each other in the hopes of one day ascending to the Imperial Seat. If not for the Imperial House's vaunted military superiority — the Imperial Army and Navy are separate from, loyal to, and under the direct command of the Imperial House alone — the Regional Houses' rivalries would keep the Western Empire in a constant state of civil war and tear the Empire apart.

Each of the twelve Regional Houses is required to finance, support and manage its own standing army. These armies are intended for the protection of the 12 regions, each Regional House and its possessions, as well as oppose to and defend against the enemies of the Empire as a whole. Thus, as much as 75% of the Regional Standing Armies can be called upon by the Imperial House and its legions — and no matter how powerful the Regional House and its Army may be, all recognize the Emperor as their Commander-in-Chief and the Imperial Army and Navy as the ultimate powers in the nation.

Unfortunately, since each Regional House is an independent power unto itself, the size of their army, the level of quality, power, experience and competence can vary dramatically from Regional House to House, as well as from generation to generation within the same House. Furthermore, weak leadership from the Imperial House can lead to serious inequities between these House Armies and allow warfare and competition between rival Houses to erupt into bloody civil war. Conflicts that, in the past, have brought the Western Empire to the brink of self-destruction.

Despite the inherent problems with this political system, it does seem to work most of the time. The Regional Houses provide a check and balance against each other as well as the lesser Houses and the Emperor. The Emperor needs at least partial support from the majority of Regional Nobles before carrying out any serious plans for the Empire, particularly military expansion. Without their support, the Regional Houses can simply stop providing Imperial levies of troops, money and resources, as well as consider challenging the Emperor and his Imperial Army. Of course, such action is extreme, and without good cause and the support of other Regional Houses, the noble family who challenges the Emperor (especially Itomas) is flirting with treason and repercussions that could destroy them. Typically, if the Emperor has the support of six or seven Regional Houses, the others will grudgingly fall into line, or voice protests, but do nothing to interfere with the Emperor's plans. It's important to note that just because half the Regional Houses are opposed to an Imperial decree, it doesn't mean that those six stand united, quite the contrary. Seldom do more than three Houses ever stand united (more or less). The others will stand alone and apart, making opposition to the six supporting the Emperor impossible. Furthermore, majority rules, and the Emperor's Imperial House counts as the 13th and deciding factor, so if the Regional Houses are split down the middle, the Emperor wins and all, including those opposed, must grudgingly submit to his will. As a matter of politics, some Houses will side with the Emperor to win his favor or to hurt or annoy a rival.

The most dangerous aspect of the Regional Houses is that they all have just enough power to think that they are "the" second (or even true) power in the Empire and can, someday, take the Emperor's Seat for themselves. This notion has plagued the Regional Houses for eons and has caused more than a few civil wars. Since the Reconstruction period, the Great Emperors have kept this rivalry and powermongering to a minimum, but many fear that these quiet times of mutual cooperation and prosperity are just the calm before the storm.

The 12 Regional Houses are listed in rough order of current political power and influence. Most are actually fairly equal to one another, so this list is a bit deceptive, with the Emperor's favor giving some the edge over others. Furthermore, just because a House may not presently have a strong political presence or close ties to the current *Imperial House*, it does not mean they are without power or resources, or that their armies are inferior. Many keep strong armies, spies and "friends" close at hand to take advantage of shifting political winds and unexpected opportunities. It is said, "Political favor is like a fickle woman whose whims can shift suddenly and blossom into love where none existed moments before."

The Current Imperial House:

House Itomas

12 Regional Houses:

House Ne'klosh

House Oslof

House Inindri

House Taerea

House Jaoradon

House Kaze

House Krugazi

House Valocek

House Wenglid

House Clynn

House Belopo

House Glaverius

Provincial Houses

There are 49 of these "Houses Minor." Each governs a single *province* within a particular region of the Empire. The Provincial Houses of a particular region may all vie for power against each other, but must show loyalty to the Regional House whom they serve (and are related to). Each reports directly to the presiding Regional House. Like the Imperial House's role among the Regional Houses, it is the Regional Lord's responsibility to keep the Houses Minor in line; i.e. paying their Regional and Imperial taxes, obeying Imperial troop levies and mandates, contributing to the Regional Army and working for the greater good of the Region and the Empire. This means keeping the economy strong, business healthy and avoiding damaging fights and rivalry among each other. Rebellious, uncooperative and openly brazen Provincial Houses risk obliteration by their presiding Regional House, which keeps most of the Houses Minor relatively well-behaved.

Provincial Houses tend to the matters of regional business, trade, economics and the day to day routine of running of their province. Any crises the City-State Houses can't handle, but are too insignificant (or embarrassing) to involve the Regional House, are dealt with by the Provincial House. Such problems are rare, so provincial nobles craving action often meddle in the affairs of one or more of their city-states for excitement.

Provincial Nobles aren't usually closely watched by the presiding Lords of the Region, which encourages these lesser nobles to do as they please with little fear of retribution. It is generally understood that as long as a province is prosperous, its debts to the Regional and Imperial Houses paid, and scandal is kept to a minimum, most Regional Houses turn a blind eye to the goings-on within their domain. Profit and prestige are what matters, so if they are getting that, they are happy to stay uninvolved with local affairs. The Provincial Houses went spiralling out of control during the Civil Wars period of the Empire's history, when they plundered their City-States for money, troops, and anything else that would finance the provincial war efforts.

Since the Reconstruction, Provincial power and abuses of power have been seriously curbed and relations much improved. And as much as old-timers grouse about not being able to abuse their station as easily as they did in the old days, the truth is that not even Emperor Itomas can change a dark tradition that's as old as the Empire itself, so abuses of power do persist. Since the Provincial Houses are kept in line by their Regional superiors,

however, these houses are comparatively impotent, and can't do much against the Emperor and his Imperial mandates other than voice complaints, whine and shout at the annual Court of Nobles in Caer Itom.

City-State Noble Houses

On the bottom rung of the noble ladder are the City-State Houses, better known as the "Local Houses." A City-State House's jurisdiction typically covers a single city or 1-3 large towns and/or the surrounding villages, farms and lands of a particular, small region. Due to the heavily urbanized nature of the Western Empire, City-State jurisdictions often come right up to each other, forming a patchwork quilt of small noble territories. On average, there are roughly 21 City-State jurisdictions per province, for more than 1000 city-states throughout the realm.

This number fluctuates as City-States sometimes merge or are captured and integrated into one another's territory, get dissolved by their Provincial masters, split into two or three new city-state territories, etc. While Local Houses have the smallest amounts of power and wealth, they tend to do the most work and have the most character — the nature of one of these Houses typically mirrors the character of its home City-State. As a result, these lesser noble houses are extremely varied in their goals, motives, dispositions, alignments, and other such characteristics.

City-State Houses control what would be the modern-day equivalent of a U.S. County. Thus, these nobles involve themselves with the day-to-day minutiae of their territories and city life. That means making sure the roads are repaired and free of bandits, that the sheriffs department periodically gets new weapons and armor, that the street lights are lit on time and the streets are washed of debris and filth at least weekly. Provincial Houses generally don't care how the local houses conduct themselves as long as they pay their provincial taxes, fulfill their political and bureaucratic duties, avoid scandal and loyally support them. This gives Local Houses a lot of leeway in governing and managing their territories. Unfortunately, this also encourages Local Houses to abuse their power and resort to violence to settle disputes.

Warfare between rival City-States gets Provincial and Regional Houses involved in local politics more than they care to, and leads to scandals and/or disfavor with the Imperial House. This can bring serious repercussions and harsh (Regional) military intervention. Especially belligerent or habitually troublesome Local Houses are often dissolved or destroyed by the presiding Provincial or Regional House, which then determines a replacement of the local leadership. More often than not, the replacement is a relative, rich merchant family or prestigious military family. This loss of power and position provides the ultimate check against most Local House bureaucrats because they don't want to face humiliation or loss of prestige, wealth and power.

A Quick Breakdown of Western Noble Houses

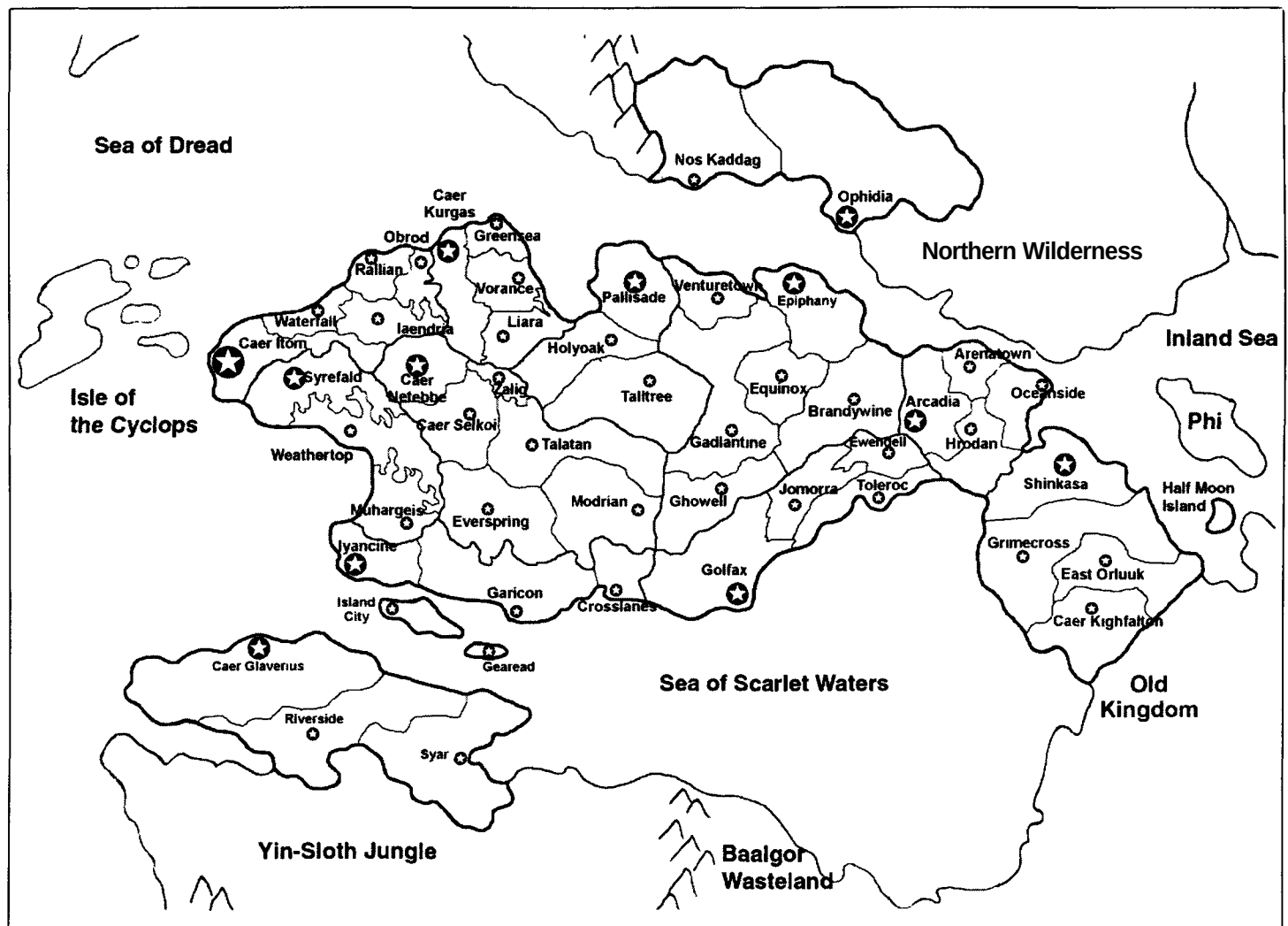
Imperial House: House Itomas (West Kighfalton)

Regional Houses (12):

House Ne'Klosh (Upper Kighfalton)

House Oslof (The Koerdian Mountains)

House Inindri (Kighfalton Plains)



House Taerea (Lower Barraduk)
 House Jaoradon (The Vequerrel Woodlands)
 House Kaze (The Middle Kingdoms)
 House Krugazi (The Middle Kingdoms)
 House Valocek (The Scarlet Mountains)
 House Wenglid (The Tarldet Plains)
 House Clynn (The Old Kingdom Frontier)
 House Belopo (The Ophid's Grasslands Colonies)
 House Glaverius (The Yin-Sloth Periphery)

Provincial Houses (50):

West Kighfalon:

House Itomas (Imperial House, Regional House)
 House Decurance
 House Gioto
 House Paaslaan
 House Milaszcz

Upper Kighfalon:

House Ne'Klosh (Regional House)
 House Amberhall
 House Csusk
 House Zietich

The Koerdian Mountains:

House Oslof (Regional House)
 House Pascale
 House Nugent

Kighfalon Plains:

House Inindri (Regional House)
 House Ker
 House Selkoi
 House Quozadda
 House Nereus
 House Ironwolf

Lower Barraduk:

House Taerea (Regional House)
 House Barraduk
 House Cord
 House Zansha
 House Jonin

The Vequerrel Woodlands:

House Jaoradon (Regional House)
 House Rylan
 House Toth

The Middle Kingdoms:

House Kaze (Northern Regional House)
 House Krugazi (Southern Regional House)
 House Hihhod
 House Cureau
 House Skryme
 House Elial
 House Alragin

The Scarlet Mountains:

House Valocek (Regional House)
 House Braska
 House Ewendell
 House Nodd

The Tarldet Plains:

House Wenglid (Regional House)
 House Marsa
 House Haishe
 House Bereggia

The Old Kingdom Frontier:

House Clynn (Regional House)
 House Barbadic
 House Kohugan
 House Grishop

Ophid's Grasslands Colonies:

House Belopo (Regional House)
 House Miagina

Yin-Sloth Periphery:

House Glaverius (Regional House)
 House Durning
 House Longacre



Additional Notes on Western Nobility

Rules of the Game

In Western Noble Houses, power is held by the oldest male, upon whose death that power transfers to a previously named heir. If no heir is named, power is supposed to go to the next oldest male lord of the House. Rival siblings often go to war with each other over who will rule the House. Such conflicts can end up with unusual results, like women running noble families or noble regents ruling the House until the legitimate heir comes of legal ruling age (16).

Prolonged family squabbles usually prompt the House's Regional Overlord to step in to remove the current, troublesome Noble leader, and name a new heir. Sometimes, the heir is a member of the same Noble family currently in power, but depending on the intervening authority's political leanings and obligations (such as owing favors to another family in the Noble House), the Lord might select somebody else in the family (younger sibling, uncle, distant cousin, etc.). The Regional Lord can make selections from any of the lesser Noble Houses, from Minor/Provincial to Local/City-State (a selection from a Regional "Major" House for a position in one of the lower Houses is generally considered a slight and demotion, although not always, and the Lord of a House Major has the privilege of *declining* the offer). Furthermore, if he deems it appropriate, the Regional Overlord can elevate a "common" family that has dis-

tinguished itself in some way to one of the lesser Houses, typically the Local House. In the latter case, the recipient of this tremendous (and rare) honor is usually a member of a wealthy merchant family or distinguished war hero; practitioners of magic and clergy are never considered because they wield too much power already, or so the conventional wisdom goes. This is the only real form of upward mobility for many members of the lesser Noble Houses — to serve their Overlord faithfully and win his favor so that if an opening ever comes up in the level above them, they might be picked for it. In such cases, the member of the Noble House being "promoted" effectively elevates his entire immediate family (wife and children) and he can pick a successor to his seat of power from them. This can mean a new legacy of power and position that can span generations, sometimes a millennium. Ironically, this process also maintains some measure of loyalty and control over the lesser nobles vying for the attention and rewards of their superiors. In general, one will see no greater fawning and sucking up than among the lesser nobility at the court of their presiding Regional and Provincial lords. On the other hand, such demotions of one noble and the elevation or reassignment of another has sometimes resulted in court treachery, murder, and civil war.

When a new presiding Lord comes into power within a Noble House, he is required to pledge his personal allegiance to the presiding Lord, his House and family. A City-State House's Overlord, for example, would be directly answerable to the presiding Provincial Family and their Overlord (the head of the House). Of course this also makes the lesser noble answerable to the Regional House as well, but indirectly. So, for example, when a city-state lord comes to power, he must personally pledge his allegiance to the presiding Provincial Lord. When that Provincial Lord came to power, he swore allegiance to the presiding Regional Lord, and the Regional Lord to the Emperor and his Imperial House. If an infraction or problem comes to the attention of the Emperor or Regional House, they turn to the Provincial House to investigate and resolve the problem, because each "Local" City-State House under this family's jurisdiction is answerable directly to him.

Noble Overlords (the heads of a ruling Regional or Provincial House) may refuse to acknowledge a new Lord who comes to prominence in a Noble House. This can also be extended to an entire Noble House. This is more of a political and social snub reserved to show one's disapproval of or disdain for the new power. This usually translates into refusing invitations by that family, ignoring them at court and at social gatherings, callously dismissing that House's suggestions (often voting against even good ideas), and so on. Such carryings on for more than a year tend to draw a lot of criticism from the Regional and Imperial House, so prolonged disdain (lasting for years) is exercised only when there is a very good case for it. The higher powers feel such childish rebuking only creates long-lasting dissension and can lead to ruthless rivalry, political intrigue and civil war that can hurt the nation. Not that their disapproval and encouragement to mend fences puts a stop to more than 30% of these shenanigans. What often happens is that a polite face is put over people's feelings. Thus, the antagonistic nobles tolerate each other and exhibit a reasonable degree of (cool) civility and decorum while they quietly seethe with hatred, envy, contempt, thoughts of revenge, and similar feelings. This often turns into subtle games of political one-up-manship, reputation smearing and campaigns to undermine one's rival, enemy or inferior. In the Lower Barraduk region, the animosity and petty politics between the nobles there is so constant and extreme that nobody takes them seriously and the Imperial House has given up trying to force them to reach any type of resolve.

A tradition of favors and paybacks has existed between Western nobles for centuries. Basically, most of the Noble Houses owe several of the other Houses, high and low, a number of favors. By calling in these markers, a Noble House can get itself out of serious scrapes, topple enemies, or swing a crucial power struggle in the direction they want. Giving and receiving favors is an incredibly important component in making effective power-plays in the Western Empire. Any Noble House that isn't good at it will find itself in a subservient role. To this end, Western nobles expend an enormous amount of energy getting dirt on each other, jumping in to help even (especially) an old rival out of serious trouble, and extending favors to Houses in need, so that they can cash in on these favors when the time is right. One of the reasons why House Itomas has such a strong grip on the Imperial seat is because it has nearly 2,000 years worth of favors among most of the Regional and Provincial houses of the realm. And the savvy Emperor continues to rack

them up with strategic political maneuvers, trade agreements and other actions that have indebted the majority of the Houses to his. Thus, the few who might oppose him know that whoever attacks the Imperial House will find themselves fighting everybody who owes House Itomas a favor.

This brokering of political favors and paying of debts through political and public support also extends to the common man. Merchants, guilds, sorcerers, public figures (heroes, priests, wise men, outspoken leaders, etc.) and other powerful and/or respected groups and individuals are often courted by the Noble Houses, giving them connections to important people throughout the kingdom. Such favors can include social prominence, special deals and exemptions, getting people out of trouble (social and criminal), getting a "friend's" enemies into trouble, patronage (supplementing a large portion to completely subsidizing a particular charity, foundation, guild, artist, etc.), and similar things to win favor, support or strong-arm those who can be of use to them. When the nobles call in their markers, they expect their friends and associates to do as they are told — which might include giving false testimony against somebody, spreading lies and rumors, supporting a particular issue or movement, or even theft and murder. To do otherwise is to invoke the wrath of that noble and his immediate family, and depending on how high up one has been playing, the wrath of a Local, Provincial or Regional House. Making such powerful enemies usually leads to financial and social ruination, and sometimes, a loss of life.

Show Me The Money

Remember that old saying about death and taxes? Well, that goes double for the Western Empire. City-State Houses take 33% to 50% of their subjects' income, in addition to any other supplemental taxes or levies. These Local Houses kick 33% to 50% of their take to their presiding Provincial Lord, who kicks an equal percentage to his presiding Regional House, who gives an equal percentage to the Imperial House. The latter is in addition to 25% of all profits made from business holdings of nobles which also goes to the Imperial House and a 10% tribute that goes directly to the Emperor himself.

The remaining tax money is supposed to be used for the upkeep of Regional Armies, defenses, civil improvements, and maintenance of roads, sewers, public works, and affairs of the Region. Of course, a large amount (50-70%) typically goes into improving and increasing the personal holdings of the Noble Houses in power and maintaining the lavish lifestyles to which they have become accustomed. As long as the local economy thrives, the communities are reasonably well maintained, defenses are strong, and the majority of people are happy, the Emperor and his Imperial House don't care.

The decadent and extravagant lifestyles of Western nobility are legendary. They spend their money on opulent palaces, huge staffs of servants, costume balls, parties and galas with hundreds to thousands of guests, long vacations to Phi and Lopan, expensive imported goods from around the world, fine food, clothing, jewelry, magic items, drugs (and plenty of them), and other things to amuse themselves and show off their wealth and power. Overspending has led some noble houses to bankruptcy, but that never lasts for long. Either the house gets back on its feet, or it becomes so financially ruined that it can't afford to maintain its responsibilities and the Noble House is replaced

with a (hopefully) more fiscally responsible noble family. Surprisingly, most nobles who have risen to head a political House are adequate administrators and business people, if not leaders, who serve their family and kingdom well, and maintain their position for generations, despite their spending and unfair use of revenues. Most Regional Noble Houses are dominated by shrewd and ruthless Overlords (and/or other influential family members) who have built and maintained mini-empires of their own, landholdings and estates that would be considered major kingdoms in their own right anywhere else in the world.

A Growing Darkness

Western nobles generally are a craven lot more interested in satisfying their own greed and appetites than in serving the people of the realm. There are a few nobles strong-willed, disciplined and good enough to avoid falling prey to these moral pitfalls (Emperor Itomas and the majority of his allies are notably among such figures) — corruption and decadence are not as all-pervasive as many outsiders believe. However, a large percentage (45-50%) of Western nobility does, indeed, wallow in a swamp of spiritual and moral decay, while a quarter are self-serving powermongers. Unless this trend of behavior is reversed, the Western Empire will be in serious trouble. All of Emperor Itomas' reforms will mean nothing if the Noble Houses crumble under the weight of their own self-indulgence. If that happens, the fabled kingdom will certainly fall into chaos, splinter, and enter a new age of civil war. For now, Emperor Itomas has done a great deal to stem the tide of demoralization, and the rotten nature of the Western nobles lies well-concealed under a thick gloss of prosperity and apparent power. The Emperor hopes that new social and political reforms and strong leadership will help to lift the next generation from the moral trepidation of the past and insure the Empire's future.

In the sinister and treacherous environment of the current hierarchy, truly good and honorable nobles are frequently undermined or succumb to foul play before they ever come to power. Therefore, Western nobles generally are split evenly among the selfish and evil alignments — 19% unprincipled, 19% anarchist, 19% miscreant, 19% aberrant and 19% diabolic; 5% other. Many (45%) of the most powerful nobles tend to be aberrant, since this seems to be a moral mindset that combines a lust for power and acceptable ruthlessness with some measure of honor, integrity, justice, and the discipline to avoid self-destructive behavior. Unprincipled nobles are often considered "soft" by the more wicked and self-indulgent nobles who scoff at their annoying tendency to "do the right thing." Anarchist and miscreant nobles fit the classic stereotype of the Western Noble — self-serving, often brutal and decadent, freewheelers to whom privilege, power, and people are just playthings to be exploited and abused. Diabolic nobles epitomize the tyrannical worldbeater intent on owning it all and willing to do whatever it takes to get that which they desire. They tend to be among the most merciless, sadistic, vindictive, and treacherous of the lot. These cutthroats have little regard for others, seeing most people as either a symbol of power ("I have subjugated more than you have") and/or pawns and playthings. These black-hearted souls have grown to alarming numbers over the last several generations. A troubling sign for Western culture and a serious hurdle for Emperor Itomas. Thankfully, most diabolic nobles destroy themselves before they rise too high in political power. Unfortu-



nately, even those who blaze through their short lives or careers like a meteor in the night sky, can ruin many, many lives before they are gone. And there are powerful, diabolic individuals who hold high positions within the ranks of the nobility.

Player Character Note: If the G.M. allows it, a player character can be a member of one of the (probably lower) Noble Houses or families of the Western Empire. In most cases, such a player character will have little political clout and will be considered one of the young and/or lesser, insignificant nobles in the family. The character is just as likely to be a family member who has lost rank and privilege (probably due to the sins of his father or grandfather) and who has noble lineage, but no political power and few family ties, if any. The character can also be a member of a *past* Noble House that has fallen from grace, power and fortune into shame and poverty. In this latter case, the character may be determined to restore honor to the family name by becoming a famous adventurer or hero, or by acquiring fame and new fortune, probably in a foreign land. The alignment of a character linked to Western Nobility can be *any*, but the most likely are scrupulous, unprincipled, anarchist, or aberrant — miscreant and diabolic characters are usually too wrapped up in their schemes and power struggles to go out adventuring, or to work well within a group, especially if the majority of other players are of a good alignment.

The Military Forces of the Western Empire

Today, the Western military is separated into six basic groups: The Imperial Army, The Imperial Navy, Regional Armies, Provincial Forces, City-State forces, and mercenary forces.

Each Regional House is required to maintain its own army (and navy, if it has coastal territory). These troops are drawn from the Minor and Local Houses who usually do the actual recruiting and training. A portion of these troops, equipment and resources are committed to the *Imperial House* and sent to the Imperial Army. Under the leadership of the Imperial House, they are used to conduct Imperial business, enforce Imperial will, and to defend the Western Empire.

This arrangement has two functions. First, it forces the Regional Overlords to maintain an army strong enough to protect their holdings and keep their subjects in line. Second, it creates diverse but cohesive Regional and Imperial Military force. By the time these conscription levies work their way to the Imperial level, you've got a massive fighting force that represents every single noble house, yet fights under a single banner for the greater glory of the Western Empire. Many outsiders speculate that the conscription system is a big reason why Western Armies and Navies are so powerful. Unified under a common goal and led by the Imperial House, the military is exponentially stronger than if every Noble House fought the same war using its independent armies. Of course, internal conflicts within the Empire have undermined the efficiency and morale of the amal-

gamated Imperial forces, as loyalties and rivalries from a particular Region are carried into the Imperial Army. Strong leadership can usually curb most trouble, and differences are usually forgotten on the field of battle where one must count on the soldier next to him, wherever he hails from. Combat and close interaction help warriors from many diverse regions come to respect and accept each other.

It hasn't always been this way. Imperial military patronage all but stopped during the Civil Wars era, leaving city-state armies as the strongest singular powers in the realm. Since the Reconstruction and the resurgence of strong Regional and Imperial powers, city-states have once again returned to the bottom of the military and political ladder. Thanks to Emperor Itomas' reforms, Western armed forces have become tougher, leaner and more efficient. As long as this trend continues, the Empire's military strength should reach its full potential in another 10 or 15 years (possibly sooner). At that point, Emperor Itomas is likely to make his move to take over another hunk of the world, starting with the Eastern Territory. If his initial forays into the world around him are successful, there is no telling where this campaign may lead. Timiro and the Old Kingdoms will certainly be attractive.

Note: All the Western Empire's military forces are, in many regards, an extension of the Noble House that sponsors them. Which means their sense of morality, conduct, level of sophistication, experience and goals will be reflective of the Noble House that has created the army. The Noble House's commitment to the army, personal needs and goals will also dictate how well supplied and organized these military force will be.

The Imperial Army: Imperial forces are, far and away, the Empire's strongest, single military entity. Over 500,000 troops currently serve in the Imperial Army. That's a LOT of soldiers in Palladium terms. Keep in mind that the entire population of the Island Kingdom of Bizantium is only about 600,000. Puts it in perspective, doesn't it? Plus the Empire could assemble another 250,000-500,000 reservists and militia men in a matter of a week (100,000 in 24 hours). And this does not include the Regional Armies, roughly another 300,000 to 500,000 troops.

Not all of these troops are concentrated in one place, however. To make his presence felt throughout the Empire, Itomas has built Imperial garrisons in every region of the realm so "his" troops can keep an eye on things, keep a strong line of communication with the Imperial House and respond quickly to trouble. These garrisons can also provide local armies with reinforcements and/or leadership in the event of a foreign invasion or other major crisis.

A typical Imperial garrison is 1,500 soldiers, 500 craftsmen and 250 other servants. Of the combat soldiers mentioned, roughly 750 are infantry, 300 are cavalry, 300 archers, and the remaining 150 are combat engineers who run and maintain the garrison's siege weaponry and/or communications. Most garrisons also tend to have between 10 and 20 men of magic (1D4+3 level experience); Wizards and Warlocks are most common. Summoners were once a big part of the Western military, but since the Reconstruction era the use of these "circle mages" has been widely discouraged. The garrison buildings themselves are extremely sturdy and easily-defended fortresses. Major cities and trouble zones may see two or three times this number of soldiers, sometimes more.



The bulk of these are troops provided by the 12 Regional Houses. All are sworn to fight and die for the greater glory of the Western Empire, even those from Regional Houses who resent, dislike or oppose House Itomas, are reasonably loyal to the Emperor and committed to the protection of the Western Empire as a whole.

Imperial troops receive additional training and are organized, well-equipped, disciplined and loyal. However, the majority are relatively inexperienced (not including the Janissary force, 43% are 1st and 2nd level, 30% 3rd level, 20% 4th level and only 7% are 5th level and higher). Since the Reconstruction began, there have only been border skirmishes along the Old Kingdom, minor civil disturbances, and limited engagements with pirates, as well as military exercises and war games — a sign of the peace and prosperity currently enjoyed by the Western Empire, but a problem when it comes to building seasoned troops. If the West were to get into a major war, this lack of experience could be their Achilles' heel.

There is an exception to this. Within the Imperial Army is an elite corps of crack troops known as the **Janissaries**. These shock troopers are experienced veterans from House Itomas' Regional Army and warriors from throughout the Empire who have proven themselves to be loyal and courageous. The Janissaries receive the very best equipment and training that money can buy. We're talking dwarven weapons and armor, the absolute finest war horses, cyclops-made lightning javelins and arrows, and even distribution of minor magic items. Moreover, they have the most actual combat experience; average level of

experience is 5th to 8th (1D4+4) level. Janissary units are like U.S. Navy SEALs or Rangers who can take on the most difficult challenges and still walk.

Of the half million troops in the Imperial Army, 125,000 are *elite* members of the Janissary Corps, the best of the best and all (well 98%) are completely loyal to the Emperor, Imperial House Itomas, and the nation. No fewer than 70,000 of these "elite" are garrisoned in and around the Imperial City. Some Janissaries serve among normal Imperial troops as special advisors, combat officers or Platoon or Squad Leaders of special teams and strike forces. As a fighting force, the Janissaries truly are impressive to behold, at least equal to the best Eastern or Wolfen soldiers.

Across the world, Janissaries are known as absolutely fearless and merciless opponents who would rather die than accept defeat. Of course, this reputation spawns some outlandish stories, like Janissaries eating the flesh of their fallen opponents and consorting with demonic powers, which are not true — Janissaries are above such vulgar behavior and tend to avoid atrocities. Nonetheless, they rather enjoy their fearsome and frightening reputation. Less disciplined opponents, especially ore and goblin units, will often break and run when they realize they are facing the elite Janissaries. **G.M. note:** Most (not all) opponents will regard a group of Janissaries of equal size to 50% smaller than their group to be so unnerving as to give the Janissary force a collective Horror Factor of 12! If the battle goes against the opposing force, they are much more likely to break ranks and retreat.

The Imperial Navy. Most of the Empire's great wars have been fought on land, so the Imperial Navy has never gotten the respect it deserves. As a result, it has been considered a lesser branch of the Imperial military for generations, even though it has always been the strongest arm of the Imperial forces. The dark times for the Navy were during the last Global War, when summoners and other spell casters virtually took over the navy with their Demon Ship programs. While most sailors and marines resented this demonic influence, they were in no position to argue.

When the last civil wars came the Navy remained intact, although still gutted from the *White Paper Treaty* of years before, forever banning the use of the dreaded *Demon Black Ship's*. While most Western sailors were glad to see the demon ships go, it left them with a comparatively threadbare force.

When Leopold I took over, the Navy quickly allied itself with him and gave critical support during the invasions of coastal territories. Since the Reconstruction, the Imperial Navy has been remembered for its loyalty and has been given substantial funding. Today, the West has a strong new fleet consisting of ships of nearly every size, type and make (for more information on Western ships, refer to the **Adventures on the High Seas, 2nd Edition** sourcebook).

Further revitalized by Emperor Itomas, it has approximately 200,000 sailors, but two thirds are only 1st and 2nd level, the rest are 3rd to 5th level (1D4+1), with those of higher experience serving as officers and advisors. In case of trouble, large Western ships now carry complements of 24 Imperial Marines. These Marines are Janissaries who have been trained in amphibious assaults and boarding actions. Additionally, the Navy maintains a special branch of Air, Water and Fire Warlocks (mostly 2nd-5th level) who serve as magical artillery pieces on Imperial warships. These individuals are highly respected Naval personnel and are granted more personal liberties than ordinary sailors or marines.

The Regional Army is assembled, controlled and maintained by each of the twelve Regional Noble Houses. As such, this force serves that Regional House and noble family, and protects and defends that particular region. More importantly, they enforce the will, laws and interests of that noble family. In addition to defense of the region, this army can be used to squash a civil war between City-States, stop rioting, strike at bandits and enemies of the Region (or Empire), conduct subversive and undercover operations (spying), and raid homes and businesses anywhere in the Region, provided they have good reason to believe that subversive action is being plotted against the Emperor, Empire, Region, Noble Houses, or one of the provinces or city-states in the encompassing Region. The Regional Army engages in regular patrols of the territory and communities under its jurisdiction, defends its borders from monsters, bandits and other enemies, and may assist local forces in matters of national security or local problems concerning criminal activity, pirates, raiders, monsters or any reasonable requests for assistance made by the local authorities. However, since this is effectively the *private army* of each of the 12 most powerful Noble Houses in the Empire, it is left exclusively to the Regional Overlord (elder and ruling member of the elite House) to determine when, where and how "his" forces are used. Depending on the Overlord, the pleas of lesser nobles and small communities may fall on deaf

ears, and they may have to fend for themselves. The size, resources and experience of such an army varies dramatically depending on the ruling Regional House, and can be small or large, well equipped or slipshod.

One of the reasons the Imperial Army is so strong and at the ready for trouble is because they are spared many of the day to day, internal peace-keeping duties that go on within each specific region. This job falls to the Regional forces.

Most regional forces consist of an Army only. Although those regions with a strong ship trade and expansive coastlines will maintain a Navy as well (typically 2nd-5th level). The simple fact is that building and maintaining a respectable Navy is simply too expensive. This is one arena where Regional lords tend to defer to the Imperial military.

These forces see the most action along the borders of their Region and Provinces. Sadly, the Western Empire's tradition of inter-regional warfare is not dead, only suppressed by Emperor Itomas' vast military supremacy and strong leadership. As a result, long-standing grudges and feuds continue to simmer between Noble Houses that feel they have unfinished business to attend to. Periodically, border skirmishes and regional wars flare up, often until the Emperor puts an end to them. As long as the regional houses have their own militaries — which the Western political structure dictates they must — regional warfare will always threaten the Empire's stability.

The Provincial Force is typically a small, private army (1000-5000 troops) that is sponsored by the Provincial Noble House to protect its holdings and interests, help maintain peace, and assist the Regional Army. The composition of this Army is typically 50% local people loyal to the Provincial House, 15% ex-Imperial and/or Regional soldiers, and 35% mercenaries and adventurers for hire. During times of trouble it can include a militia collected from all the communities under its jurisdiction, typically doubling the size of its force.

Keeping tabs on potentially rebellious City-States is the best way for a Provincial lord to stay in power, and that means maintaining large intelligence networks. While these shadowy operatives tend to be pulled from the ranks of the military, many Provincial lords hire adventurers for this kind of work. That way, if things go wrong, the lord can always disavow the freelancers and keep himself politically safe.

For many Provincial Houses, establishing firm and trustworthy alliances is necessary for survival. If Provincial militaries constantly antagonized each other the way Regional militaries do, then none of them would have the resources to keep their own City-States in line. Over the years, most Provinces have cultivated strong ties with neighbors within the same Region. In fact, it is common for Provincial forces to come to the aid of their neighbors in times of dire need. As with Regional forces, the strength, skill and experience of these forces vary dramatically from place to place.

City-State forces are largely police and militia of each individual community. Small communities may not have such a force, but most medium and large towns and all cities will. They sometimes include mercenaries, mages, retired soldiers and adventurers looking to settle down a bit, maybe raise a family, or who see life as a law enforcement officer as being comparatively quiet and safe.

Mercenary Forces. Powerful merchant families, lesser noble families and/or city guilds looking to protect their own interests, deal with a rival, or, sometimes, to take over a City-State, frequently hire mercenaries to do the job. It is common for lesser noble houses, especially Local City-States, to hire mere companies to supplement their own forces. This may be done as a way to replenish depleted numbers, make up for poor overall troop quality, or simply to use the sword arms of non-citizens, foreigners, monster races, and roughnecks rather jeopardize the lives of more worthy local men. There is an old Western saying: "Fresh recruits come cheap and the dead come even cheaper." Typically, a mere who dies in the line of duty has no known relative, so there is nobody to give the fallen soldier's pay to. Another way the Western Nobles save money and cut comers.

Western mercenary companies often have questionable training, experience and discipline. Plus, they are notorious for changing sides in the middle of a battle if enough gold is dangled in front of them. On the upside, mercenary companies are the quickest, easiest and cheapest kind of military to muster.

These freelancers can be hired by any of the military branches except the Imperial Army, although it does sometimes hire special, freelance scouts, privateers and warriors for small squad operations and foreign incursions. **Note:** The Imperial Navy is another story entirely. Three percent of the "Navy" consists of experienced seamen to help train and manage the unseasoned sailors of the Imperial Fleet. However, the Western Empire has a long tradition of secretly hiring pirates and privateers to attack and undermine foreign ships. All the waters around the Western Empire are known to be "pirate waters." This arrangement is ideal for the Empire because it can attack, rob, delay, and sink enemy ships (most every other kingdom in the world) without its apparent involvement and without breaking any treaties. The "payment" to pirates is safe harbor all along the Western coasts, (unofficial) military and political support, and unlimited trade at most Western ports. This means the Empire or its merchants buy stolen goods from pirates without question. They pay fair wholesale prices and resell them, which is great for the port merchants because they get the goods at slightly lower prices; great for the pirates because they get much higher prices than most fences and smugglers are willing to pay, plus they can sell anything in any quantity; and great for the Western Empire, because the rival kingdom whose ship has been robbed doesn't get the revenues from the stolen goods and Western merchants profit from their loss. A win, win situation for everybody except the poor ship(s) that have been robbed. The pirates are given an amazing amount of latitude by the Imperial House and Navy, under the condition that these brigands *never* attack a Western ship. Those who break this agreement are hunted down like the sea dogs they are, and destroyed, often by fellow pirates out to get the sizeable bounty that is usually put on their heads.

Note: Most mercenary companies are temporary entities — they do a few jobs and then either get paid, disband and leave, or get wiped out on the field of battle. A few have earned reputations as heavy hitters and enjoy "celebrity" status. The weight of their reputations can fetch them two or three times the going rate for their services. Here are a few of the more notable players in the freelance warfare market:



- **Hadregal's Horde.** A 10,000 man force complete with infantry, archers, cavalry, sappers, and siege weaponry. "The Horde" has been operating most frequently in the southern region of Lower Barraduk, finding steady work among the

warring merchant cities along the Western Empire's richest trading route.

- **The Kighfalcon Marksmen.** A group of about 250 that specializes in archery, sniping, and other forms of long-distance combat. Because of their incredible skill, these guys are always in demand. Their high cost is prohibitive to some, but every one of their clients says the price is worth it. The Marksmen are primarily made up of humans, elves, and a smattering of centaurs. Nearly all are Long Bowmen, with a few mercenary fighters. All are 5th-8th level.
- **The Skullhunter Society.** A large assassins' guild that used to work in Caer Itom, but have since given up working that city (for reasons unknown) and ply their trade as spies, thieves, assassins, and covert soldiers throughout the realm. They are distinguished by the black and red leggings they all wear; when on secret missions, they often wear stylized skull masks for shock value (Horror Factor: 10) and as a way of spreading their reputation. Especially zealous Skullhunters have their faces branded with their group's logo, and it is customary for all members of this group to bear a skull tattoo on their ankle, identifying them as such. As they say, "live a Skullhunter, die a Skullhunter". Their exact numbers are unknown, and typically they take small squad missions, acts of sabotage, assassination and revenge that require 1-6 men.
- **The Army of Shmalk.** A bizarre and brutal, brigade-sized company (1,500 troops) who are all militant fanatics of the otherwise unheard-of Cult of Shmalk. Nobody has been able to discern who or what exactly Shmalk is, but it certainly drives this crew into fearsome killing frenzies. Working with these folks can be dangerous, because they can turn on an employer if he offends them (typically leaving the fool high and dry after raiding his armory and/or treasury). However, if one stays on their good side, these wild men will fight valiantly and cannot be bought off. The Army of Shmalk has been in operation for over 35 years and is the oldest mercenary company in the Western Empire. Average level is 4th-10th level.
- **Barrett's Privateers.** A naval mercenary group that had once been a large pirate fleet. The group eventually found itself on an Imperial payroll to sink Eastern and Bizantium merchant ships and then sell the plundered goods at the Gryphon's Nest bay pirate town on the *Isle of the Cyclops*. Eventually, Captain Barrett (a 12th level pirate with minor psionics and a rune sword named Nightmaker) grew tired of this arrangement and began selling his fleet's services to the highest bidder. This freelance navy is most commonly found along the southern shore of the Western Empire, using Bizantium Corsairs and Western War Galleys to blockade trade ports on behalf of rival ports looking to deny their competitors any business. Barrett's Privateers have done work for the Imperial Navy in the past, but are currently considered an enemy of the Western Empire. Any Noble House caught doing business with them will be disavowed and its members will be executed, by order of the Emperor! They are currently "independent," but are trying to strike an agreement with Bizantium and Timiro to finance a pirating campaign against the Western Empire.
- **The Bloodwings.** A clan of Gromek warriors from the Baalgor Wastelands and a 5th level Nightstalker dragon

(studies Wizard magic) who work along the Empire's eastern frontier and Old Kingdom. They hate humans and the Western Empire more than anything in the world, so they hire themselves out exclusively to nonhumans and specialize in revenge. For years they were dismissed as unprincipled raiders and brigands, but recent events (several town burnings and reports of their involvement at a recent City-State siege) have marked them as professional soldiers. Rumor has it that Emperor Itomas is considering having this group tracked down and destroyed. Rumor also has it that Gra'anaash, renowned leader of the Bloodwings (a 10th level Gromek soldier with superhuman strength), is aware of Itomas' intentions and welcomes such a challenge. As news of this showdown heats up, the City-States and provinces in his company's range of operations worry that their homes are about to become a bloody battleground when Imperial forces roll through, chasing after the Bloodwings.

- **Thanarl's Raiders.** This motley group of killers, brigands and thieves fluctuates wildly in size and efficiency (2D4x10+12 members). They're more of a roving horde of bandit raiders than anything else, really. The wild changes in the group are caused by frequent changes in leadership and their recent successes. Thanarl, the ogre Warlord who founded the group, is believed to have died long ago. Somehow, his mercenary company carries on without him, with each successive leader renaming himself after the group's original leader. The Raiders are a rag-tag group of humans and nonhumans (mostly the latter) who are poorly disciplined, dishonorable, and likely to flee in the face of serious opposition. They make their living raiding small towns and border cities when they can't find employment as meres. One third is 2nd to 5th level meres, one third 1st to 4th level thieves, and one third a mix of other 1st to 4th level O.C.C.s. The leader is typically a powerful, 6th-8th level man at arms, practitioner of magic or monster. Rumor has it that the current leader is a wicked, 6th level Za.

One Last Note About Mercenaries: Freelance warfare is one of the oldest and most respected professions in the Western Empire, and there isn't a single noble house, merchants guild, church or other powerful group that is above hiring meres to further their own interests. It is common knowledge that adventurers looking for some quick gold can hire out their skills and swords to the highest bidder in any of the realm's larger towns and cities. After all, such "disposable heroes" are prime tools for carrying out secret or illegal missions, and just the kind of work some adventurers live for.

Imperial Soldier O.C.C.

Title/Rank: Private (1st-3rd level), Corporal (2nd-3rd level) Sergeant (4th level), Lieutenant (5th or 6th level), Captain (7th or 8th level), Major (8th or 9th level), Colonel (8th-10th level), General (10th level and higher). The rank of a soldier is dependent on more than just experience. The level of experience in the parentheses is the common level one must be to attain that rank. However, exceptional ability and bravery can see characters promoted sooner, just as lack of initiative, poor performance, cowardice and behavior unbecoming an officer (or soldier) can keep a warrior at the rank of Private, Corporal or Sergeant regardless of his experience level.

O.C.C.: Soldier

Alignment: Any, but a common breakdown is 35% Aberrant, 20% Principled, 10% Scrupulous, 10% Unprincipled, 12% Anarchist, 8% Miscreant, 5% Diabolic.

Attribute Minimum Requirements: I.Q. 8, P.S. 10, P.E. 9 or higher, and a desire to fight and/or serve the Western Empire.

NPC Hit Points Average: Private: 25, Corporal: 30, Sergeant: 35, Lieutenant: 45, Captain: 55, Major: 60, Colonel: 65, General: 75.

NPC S.D.C. Average: Private thru Sergeant: 25; Lieutenant, Captain: 35; Major thru General: 40

NPC Attacks per Melee Round: Private thru Sergeant: 2; Lieutenant thru Major: 3 or 4; Colonel to General: 5-6.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14; plus +2 on initiative and +1 to strike. These are in addition to Hand to Hand and other skill and attribute bonuses.

S.D.C. Bonus: +15 for Imperial Soldiers because of their superior training and conditioning.

O.C.C. Skills:

Climb/Scale Walls (+10%)

Running

Swimming

Forced March

Body Building & Weight Lifting

Languages: Native Tongue at 98% plus one of choice (+10%)

Military Etiquette (+20%)

Wilderness Survival (+5%)

W.P. Shield

W.P. Knife or Sword (pick one)

W.P. Spear or Pole Arm (pick one)

W.P. one of choice

Hand to Hand: Basic; this can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert for the cost of one "other" skill, or to Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil) for the cost of two "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select two additional skills from the category of Military or Espionage, and five other skills of choice at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Sign language only (+5%).

Domestic: Any

Espionage: Any (+5%)

Horsemanship: General or Exotic only (+5%)

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: Any (+10%)

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Rogue: None

Science: Mathematics only.

Scholar/Technical: Any (+5%)

Weapon Proficiencies: Any

Wilderness: Carpentry and Land Navigation only.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select four secondary skills from the previous list at level one, and two at levels four, eight and twelve. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in the parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited (any, only, none) as previously indicated in the list.

Standard Issue Weapons: All Imperial soldiers carry a long sword, dagger, and medium-sized shield. In addition, foot soldiers carry a large shield and a pike or pole-arm of choice. Cavalrymen carry a small shield, short sword and a war hammer. Archers carry a crossbow and 30 bolts, plus a dagger (elite companies of Long Bowmen are also used).

Field Equipment: Backpack, sacks, bedroll, and other equipment is provided as necessary. Likewise, additional or special weapons, magic items, equipment, disguises, and riding animals may be supplied depending on the assignment and circumstances.

Personal Weapons: Officers, small squads and members of special teams may carry 2-4 additional weapons of choice, which may include weapons and magic items the soldier "acquired" on his own.

Standard Issue Armor: Imperial Soldiers all wear full suits of chain mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 44); officers, double mail or scale mail.

Magic Items: Usually reserved for officers and special operations. Captains and higher often possess one magic weapon and one to a few minor items (like a potion or scroll).

Money and other equipment: Imperial soldiers generally don't carry cash while on duty. When in the field, they carry all of their gear back in overstuffed backpacks containing all field equipment, food, clothes, and other military supplies, such as torches, rope, iron spikes, tinderboxes, etc. Imperial soldiers get paid twice as much as soldiers in most other armies.

Imperial Janissary O.C.C.

Title: Private (1-3rd level), 1st Echelon (4th-7th level), 2nd Echelon (7th-10th level), 3rd Echelon (9th and up), Commander (9th and up), General (10th and up).

O.C.C.: Soldier, but a military specialist.

Attribute Minimum Requirements: I.Q. 10, P.S. 12, P.E. 10 or higher, and a fierce loyalty and desire to serve the Western Empire.

Alignment: Any, but a common breakdown is 45% Aberrant, 15% Principled, 8% Scrupulous, 5% Unprincipled, 10% Anarchist, 10% Miscreant, 7% Diabolic.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13 and 15; plus +3 on initiative, +1 to strike, and +1 attack per melee round. These are in addition to Hand to Hand and other skill and attribute bonuses.

S.D.C. Bonus: +20 for Imperial Janissary Troops because of their superior training and conditioning.

NPC Hit Points Average: Private: 25, 1st Echelon: 40, 2nd Echelon: 60, 3rd Echelon and up: 80.

NPC S.D.C. Average: Private: 30, 1st Echelon: 35, 2nd Echelon: 45, 3rd Echelon: 55.

NPC Attacks per Melee Round Average: Private: 3, 1st & 2nd Echelon: 4-5, 3rd Echelon: 5-7.

Special Horror Factor: 12 for large groups of Janissaries.

O.C.C. Skills:

Climb/Scale Walls (+10%)

Running

Swimming

Forced March

Body Building & Weight Lifting

Basic Math (+15%)



Languages: Native Tongue at 98% plus one of choice (+10%)

Military Etiquette (+30%)

Intelligence (+15%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+10%)

W.P. Shield

W.P. Sword

W.P. Three of choice.

Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (or Assassin if evil).

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select two additional skills from the category of Military (+15%), and two from Espionage (+10%) or Physical (Boxing and Prowl are two favorites), plus four other skills of choice at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any

Domestic: Any

Espionage: Any (+10%)

Horsemanship: General or Exotic only (+10%)

Medical: First Aid only (+5%).

Military: Any (+15%)

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Rogue: Any

Science: Mathematics and Astronomy only.

Scholar/Technical: Any (+5%)

Weapon Proficiencies: Any

Wilderness: Carpentry and Preserve Food only.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select four secondary skills from the previous list at level one, and two at levels four, eight and twelve. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in the parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited (any, only, none) as previously indicated in the list.

Standard Issue Weapons: All Janissaries carry dwarven long swords (2D6+4 damage, +1 to strike), knives (1D6+4 damage, +1 to strike) and large shields, plus three weapons that match their W.P.s. When fighting with sword and shield, Janissaries love to use their shields as bashing weapons — the Janissary shield is specially designed to do extra damage, and inflicts 2D6+3 per strike, but you need a P.S. of at least 20 to wield one efficiently, otherwise -2 to strike.

Field Equipment: Backpack, sacks, bedroll, and other equipment is provided as necessary. Likewise, additional or special weapons, magic items, equipment, disguises, and riding animals may be supplied depending on the assignment and circumstances.

Personal Weapons: Janissary soldiers may carry 2-4 additional weapons of choice, which may include weapons and magic items the soldier "acquired" on his own.

Standard Issue Armor: Imperial Janissaries usually have a choice between a full suit of scale, splint or plate and chain body armor (most wear plate and chain: A.R. 15, S.D.C. 100). Janissary commanders wear full suits of plate mail (A.R. 17, S.D.C. 160).

Magic Items: Usually reserved for 1st-3rd Echelon soldiers and special operations. 1st Echelon soldiers often possess one magic weapon, 2nd and 3rd Echelon, have one magic weapon plus one to a few minor items (like potions or

scrolls). High ranking officers will often have a Holy Sword or other major magical weapon, a second minor magical weapon or magic armor, and 2-6 additional items (potions, scrolls, flying carpet, etc.).

Money and other equipment: Unlike Imperial grunts, Janissaries often travel light so they can move quickly once they hit hot zones. When Janissaries go on the march, they bring support trains with them consisting of carts and pack animals to carry their supplies and extra equipment.

Starts with 2D4x100, and gets 500 gold a month, plus hazard pay and other bonuses per rank; generally gets paid 150% more than the average soldier elsewhere.

The Imperial Navy

Basically the Sailor O.C.C. as found in **Adventures on the High Seas, 2nd Edition**. +1 on initiative, +15 S.D.C., and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Half of the Officers are the Sailor O.C.C. and half are the Mariner O.C.C.; +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +20 S.D.C., and +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Regional Overviews

The Western Empire has an especially keen sense of its internal borders. Thousands of years of political struggles, bargains, treaties, civil wars and Imperial edicts have carved out sharply defined possessions and borders within the political hierarchy, i.e. Noble Houses. Only severe events, such as extreme unrest or civil war, will change them.

The territorial breakdown of the Western Empire is as follows: There is first and over all, the Western Empire — an Imperial nation. The Western Empire encompasses the entire western peninsula of the Palladium World, the southern coast of the Ophid's Grasslands, the northern peninsula of the Yin-Sloth Jungles, and the two islands in the strait leading to the Scarlet Sea. That breaks into 10 semi-autonomous regions:

West Kighfalton	The Vequerrel Woodlands
Upper Kighfalton	The Middle Kingdoms
The Koerdian Mountains	The Scarlet Mountains
Kighfalton Plains	The Tardet Plains
Lower Barraduk	The Old Kingdom Frontier

Plus there are two colonial regions: The Ophid's Grasslands colony and The Yin-Sloth Jungles colony.

Each region breaks down into three to five provinces, on average, with a current total of 49 provinces in the Western Empire.

Each province then breaks down into a number of city-states (about 21, on average, for a total of about 1,000 throughout the Empire). The amount of territory controlled by a single city-state depends on a number of things, including considerations for farm and grazing lands, overall population, etc. Western and southern provinces, for example, are so heavily urbanized that city-states often bump up against each other, so the land controlled by a single city-state stops at the city's border. In less developed areas, like the Old Kingdom frontier, a city-state may control a large expanse of farm or grazing land or forest around it.

Regional Overview: West Kighfalton

Racial demographics for West Kighfalton:

43% Human
19% Elf
14% Dwarf
10% Ore
4% Goblin
10% other

Note: This does not include the massive slave population which is equal to approximately 50% of the free population, or transients (visitors, adventurers, etc.), which is roughly equal to 20% of the overall population at any given time! Nor does it include the massive number of Ratlings that plague the sewers and catacombs of every city and town, equal to roughly 30% of the free population.

This is the oldest, richest and most powerful region in the Western Empire. It's where the first Kighfalton lords settled and has been the seat of Imperial power for 6000 years. The Empire has undergone many changes since those early days, but West Kighfalton always seems to remain pretty much the same — a major, bustling metropolis with massive buildings, golden towers, and paved streets filled with people, shops, magic, strangeness and laughter. It has always been the heart of the Western Empire and the political and military center of one of the most influential civilizations in the Palladium world.

West Kighfalton is completely developed. Any land area not covered by a city or town is used for farming or raising livestock. A network of roads crisscross everywhere, connecting every major city, town and port. The streets of most Kighfalton cities and towns are paved with concrete or interlocking bricks.

West Kighfalton is a center of industry and commerce, but its huge population and concentration of government as the throne of the Empire are what make this place so famous, wealthy and powerful. In all the years of civil unrest and wars within the Western Empire, West Kighfalton has never been overrun, sacked, or otherwise defiled. Even when weak Emperors have been thrown out of power, the concentration of soldiers, people, and other factors have made certain to preserve this region.

When Leopold I reunified the Western Empire, he started with Kighfalton. Emperor Leopold already had Caer Itom (known at the time as Caer Leopoldi) under his control, so the rest of West Kighfalton capitulated to him without much of a fight. During the rest of the War of Reunification, West Kighfalton flourished while the rest of the realm battled amongst itself, struggled to survive, or burned. After the worst of the crisis was over, West Kighfalton and the Imperial House made a fortune selling building materials, food, and supplies, and provided advisors, builders, craftsmen and manpower to the other regions as they rebuilt themselves. The Imperial House also earned vast numbers of favors, and since then, life in West



Kighfalton has been more comfortable than ever, and it remains without question, the most powerful region in the Empire.

Today, nearly five million people live here — approximately three million in the major cities and the rest in the towns, ports and farms in the outlying country. Even the "rural" areas of West Kighfalton are dotted with farmhouses, fairly large villages, towns, and cultivated land. The region is controlled by *Noble House Itomas*, the current Imperial House, which also controls the province in which the Imperial Capitol is located and also controls the Capitol itself.

Imperial House Itomas

Along with being the Imperial House, the Itomas family is also the Regional House of West Kighfalton. Its family also holds the Provincial House for the territory containing Caer Itom, and members of this prestigious Noble House rule over the great City-State of Caer Itom. House Itomas was named to the Imperial seat by Emperor Zeketri, who died without an heir. House Itomas was named as a successor house as a reward for its intense loyalty to House Zeketri.

Before ascending to the Imperial seat of power, House Itomas ruled West Kighfalton for over 300 years. When the House was promoted to Imperial Status, it retained its particular regional control, per custom. Since the Noble House also controls the City-State of Caer Itom, it has become the most powerful ruling family in a thousand years. House Itomas rules West Kighfalton from the Regional, Provincial, and Imperial Capitol, *Caer Itom*. Emperor Itomas delegates regional, provincial and local matters to trusted members of his massive family and a staff of governmental ministers, administrators and advisors, so that he may focus entirely on Imperial affairs.

While House Itomas may be a new Imperial power, it has a well-deserved reputation for being a highly successful Regional power. As Regional Overlord, House Itomas has kept taxes from rising, maintained a fair to high standard of living, exhibited an uncommon sense of justice (uncommon for the Western Empire, that is), and most importantly, it has kept civil unrest to a minimum. Any signs of serious crime, cultism, or rebellion are crushed so swiftly that the crisis tends to end before anybody notices it had begun. Oddly enough, the people of West Kighfalton don't mind House Itomas's heavy-handed methods for keeping the peace, probably because the House only flexes its muscle when it really needs to. Emperor Itomas is an astute administrator with a talent for recognizing top talent and selecting the most qualified people for the jobs they are most suited for. His political acumen smooths over disappointments and keeps most members of the Imperial House and lower bureaucrats happy and motivated. Corruption in the Imperial House and lower levels of government is kept to a minimum, and most serve the Empire with commitment and loyalty. In fact, this Emperor has brought a new era of positive thinking, patriotism and sense of adventure to the Empire.

Key members of House Itomas



Emperor Voelkian Itomas II

Emperor Voelkian Itomas II is a five foot, ten inch (1.75 m) tall, 38 year old human of slight build and fair complexion. His most distinguishing features are his copper-red hair and emerald green eyes common to the Itomas bloodline. Voelkian's "classic Itomas" features are sharper and more pronounced than most of his other family members. His hair, thick and vibrant, cheekbones a little higher and pronounced, his nose longer and thinner, and his eyes piercing in their intensity.

Voelkian is a rare combination of military genius, political mastermind, and a downright incredible gambler. In his 20 year reign, he has done as much to rebuild the Western Empire as the great Leopold I did in his entire reign as Emperor, and he is considered one of the great ones. Through a series of military reforms, Emperor Itomas II has tripled the size of the Imperial Army and Navy while getting rid of corrupt personnel. In many regards, he has made the fighting forces leaner and meaner and better prepared than they have been in centuries. Likewise, he overhauled the Imperial tax laws, vastly reducing the amount of corruption in the system and lowering everybody's taxes by 10-15%. He has also launched a bold series of expansion campaigns, renewing colonies in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, Ophid's Grasslands, and the Old Kingdom, and is eying the Baalgor Wastelands. But most importantly, Emperor Itomas has spurred a new era of reconstruction and renewed spirit. In addition to building many new roads, aqueducts, ports, open-air markets,

arenas and sewers, he has rekindled the spirit of the people. He has gotten them to examine their lives, abandon (some of) their decadent ways, and look at life with renewed enthusiasm (he hopes to launch a subtle campaign against drug use in the near future, and never uses them himself). He has imparted among them his dream for a new era of greatness and power through military conquest and expansion. He has convinced them that the Western Empire is the greatest civilization in the history of the world, and is destined to rule it all. And this is what makes him the most dangerous Western Emperor in a millennium.

The greatest threat to Emperor Itomas' legacy is his lack of an heir. Rather than take a wife, he has three concubines: Chassa Itomas Zeketri (25), granddaughter of the previous Emperor; Ubdia Itomas Ne'klosh (23), eldest daughter of regional lord Foressa Ne'klosh; and Gievi Itomas Decurance (18), the only daughter of House Decurance, a long-time friend and political ally of House Itomas. So far, each of his concubines has borne him a son, but none of them are technically considered legitimate heirs since the Emperor isn't married to any of these women. If Voelkian were to die without "naming" an heir, a savage war would most likely ensue between the Noble Houses of each of his concubines, all pressing for their "legitimate" claim to the Imperial Throne. The friends and allies of the now defunct House Zeketri would fight especially hard on behalf of Chassa Zeketri and the memory of the last great Emperor. Already, the side halls of the Imperial Court buzz with rumors of intrigue and House espionage. There is no love lost between any of Voelkian's women, and all three must consider "their" future if their lord were to unexpectedly die or disappear.

Personally, Voelkian Itomas is a severe and hard man who holds unswervingly to a twisted code of honor in which loyalty and one's word of honor stands above all else. It doesn't matter if you lie, cheat, steal, or murder — so long as it's in the name of a friend, ally, or justice. This is a principle followed by all of House Itomas, but Voelkian is almost obsessed with this concept, ready to punish severely anybody he thinks has committed the slightest act of betrayal. Thankfully for the Emperor, his allies and minions are also fanatically loyal to him, so he rarely feels the need to lay down his law or use his formidable psionic powers to destroy a traitor.

Although the Emperor can rum on the charm, he is normally introspective and has little tolerance for fools and self-serving wretches. He is always thinking about some matter or another, or developing some new plan or strategy. He can be a cold and distant individual, so consumed by his duties and responsibilities as Emperor that he finds it difficult to find time for little else. Even his own plans for military expansion take a back seat to matters of State, management of the Empire and the protection of "his" people. The welfare of the Western Empire is his life, and everything he does, is done in the context of how it furthers the glorious Empire and the great name of House Itomas. While others may see this as megalomania, Voelkian doesn't care. He's got an Empire to run and a world to conquer.

One of Emperor Itomas' greatest strengths and defenses is his vast psionic power. Being a natural Mind Mage with triple the normal amount of I.S.P. (Voelkian is apparently a mutant of some kind), the Emperor has a dramatic edge over many of his rivals. After all, dealing with the many challenges of Imperial politics are much easier when you can read minds, kill people

with your thoughts, and stop an assassin's arrow in mid-air with telekinesis, to name but a few of his abilities. The Emperor is no fool, and he realizes that if he makes use of psionics too much, the other noble houses will cry foul and the people may come to fear him. Consequently, he is so discreet that most people don't know he possesses any psionic powers whatsoever.

Titles: Emperor/Supreme Lord and Ruler of the Western Empire, Presiding Overlord of the West Kighfalcon Region, Lord of Ikanria Province, and Elder Noble of House Itomas.

O.C.C.: 10th level Mind Mage and Noble

Alignment: Aberrant

I.Q.: 18, **M.E.:** 22, **M.A.:** 20, **P.S.:** 13, **P.P.:** 12, **P.E.:** 14, **P.B.:** 15, **Spd.:** 19

Hit Points: 58, **S.D.C.:** 26

P.P.E.: 16

Attacks per Melee: 4 hand to hand or psionic attacks.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to parry/dodge, +4 pull punch, +5 roll with punch, fall or impact, needs a 6 or higher to save vs psionic attack because he is +4 to save vs psionic attack, +4 to save vs insanity, +4% skill bonuses and a 60% chance to evoke trust or intimidation.

Other Combat Info: Hand to Hand: Basic, kick attacks; Body flip/throw; Critical hit on natural 18, 19 or 20; W.P. Sword (+5 strike, +4 parry, +3 throw); W.P. Knife (+4 strike, +5 parry, +5 throw).

Weapons: Emperor Itomas doesn't carry any weapons for his protection. When protocol requires it, he carries an ancient pair of dwarven blades (a long sword and a dagger) that have been in House Itomas' possession for over 1,000 years. Both blades are covered in gems and precious metal inlay and are virtually priceless. With him at all times is the ceremonial dagger of House Itomas a long, thin, rapier-like dagger meant more for show than for fighting. Like the other blade is covered in precious metal and gems.

Magic Items: Disdainful of carrying many magic items, the only items Emperor Itomas has on his person at all times are a pair of magic rings his father owned. The first gives him an A.R. of 15. The second gives him a +4 bonus to all saving throws other than psionics. These simple devices have saved his life from more than one assassination attempt, and he won't part with them for sentimental reasons.

Money and Other Equipment: Between the treasure vaults of the Imperial Palace and House Itomas, Voelkian has access to virtually any type of weapon, armor or magic item imaginable (magic items that you'd find in an alchemist's shop, that is). As for money, the Emperor has a personal fortune worth at least 500 million in gold, jewelry and artwork stored away in various vaults, safes, and magically protected hiding places, plus untold millions in land and business holdings, and political favors. Practically speaking, his personal resources are effectively unlimited. He is Emperor, after all.

Psionics: I.S.P.: 544!

Healing Powers: Bio-Regeneration, Detect Psionics, Psychic Diagnosis, Psychic Purification, and Suppress Fear.

Physical Powers: Alter Aura, Impervious to Cold, Impervious to Fire, Impervious to Poison/Toxin, Resist Fatigue, Summon Inner Strength, and Teleport Object.

Sensitive Powers: Astral Projection, Clairvoyance, Object Read (Psychometry), See Aura, See the Invisible, Total Recall, Sixth Sense, Meditation, Mind Block, and Telepathy.

Super Psionic Powers: All! Favorites include Bio-Manipulation, Empathic Transmission, Insert Memory, Mind Block Auto-Defense, Mind Bond, Psi-Sword, Psi-Shield, Telekinetic Force Field and Telekinesis (Super). **Note:** Emperor Itomas is always careful not to make flashy displays of power, so abilities like Telekinesis, Teleport Object, Empathic Transmission and sensitive abilities which can be used subtly, are favored.

Skills: Standard fare for nobles, with an interest in history, lore about magic and geomancy, strategy and tactics, and falconry.

Lady Lasha Itomas

Lasha Itomas is Voelkian's beautiful, charming and intelligent younger sister. She stands five feet, six inches (1.7 m) tall and is of slight build. Lasha also has the Itomas copper-red hair, green eyes and fair skin.

Thirty year old Lasha has a unique perspective on the Emperor. For much of Voelkian's childhood, Lasha was his only companion around his age, and during that time, these two were inseparable. As Voelkian grew to manhood and realized his unique powers, responsibilities and opportunities, brother and sister drifted apart, a separation that has left Lasha sad and a little bitter to this day. She is completely loyal to Voelkian and would gladly kill or die for him (she has already done the former), but the two practically live in separate worlds. While Voelkian tends to matters of state, Lasha has no such responsibilities and must content herself with a life of endless leisure and luxury. To most, this would be a paradise, but to Lasha, who is just as smart and driven as her older brother, this life is a cruel prison.

She finally decided that she would prove her use to the Empire, one way or another. What has worked best so far is using her incredible beauty, charm and major psionics to mix among the various members of the Imperial and Regional Court to catch up on the latest rumors, gossip and generally gather intelligence. Between her mixing at social functions, intercepting private messages, and seducing people who possess important information, Lasha has become one of House Itomas' greatest spies. And nobody suspects her in the least! She may be trapped in a world that doesn't really appreciate her, but at least some of the Imperial advisors she confides in realize that she is doing something important, and that acknowledgement is a start. In fact, *General Rotha* has taken an especially keen eye to Lasha, first out of respect for her espionage work, but second, out of a genuine romantic interest. Lady Lasha is also interested in the handsome warrior, but she keeps him at arm's length so she can maintain her image as a freewheeling diva. But who knows? Perhaps if Lasha wearies of playing "Mata Hari" she will settle down with the famous general and bear him a child. Given the uncertain heritage of Voelkian's sons, House Itomas might have to skip to the next oldest child in line to assume the throne, which would make Lasha Regent Mother. A tempting prospect indeed.

Title: High Duchess of House Itomas

O.C.C.: 9th level Noble

Alignment: Aberrant

I.Q.: 19, **M.E.:** 18, **M.A.:** 20, **P.S.:** 13, **P.P.:** 14, **P.E.:** 10, **P.B.:** 22, **Spd.:** 18



Hit Points: 39, **S.D.C.:** 18

Attacks per melee: 3

Bonuses: +1 strike, +2 parry/dodge, +2 roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 pull punch, +2 damage, needs an 8 or higher to save vs psionic attack because she is +4 to save vs psionic attack,

+4 to save vs insanity, +5% skill bonuses, a 60% chance to evoke trust or intimidation and/or charm and impress.

Other combat info: Karate kick (2D4+2) or Snap kick (1D6+2); Critical strike on natural 19 or 20, Body throw/flip; W.P. Sword (+4 strike, +3 parry, +2 throw); W.P. Knife (+3 strike, +4 parry, +4 throw); W.P. Paired Weapons.

Weapons: Lasha always hides on her person a pair of thin daggers coated with Basilisk's Eye poison. In addition, she always carries a House Itomas ceremonial dagger with her.

Magic Items: Like her older brother, Lasha has access to pretty much whatever she wants. One of the few items she tends to have on her is an amulet that can cast a blinding flash 3 times a day and turn her invisible. She also possesses an arsenal of high-powered scrolls and potions, but only uses them as the situation dictates.

Money and other equipment: Lasha has a personal fortune of at least 100 million in gold and jewelry. Among her particular treasures is a massive (1,500 carats!) cut emerald named the *Eye of Itomas* that is rumored to be worth no less than a million gold. She has several "lesser" pieces of jewelry and gems, each ranging from 100,000 to 250,000 gold in value, and several dozen other pieces worth from 10,000 to 100,000 gold. Most prized among Lasha's possessions, though, is a small collection of "war trophies" she's taken during her various espionage jaunts. These include small items of personal jewelry and items of clothing (ties, scarves, hankies, etc.) taken from important people she's spent the night with, and an especially large collection of Noble House daggers, and other such items. Lasha's treasure trove would incriminate House Itomas in a fair deal of dirty politics if somebody ever got their hands on it. Most of them suggest liaisons, and not necessarily espionage.

Psionics: 51 I.S.P.; a major psionic with the following abilities: Healing Touch, Induce Sleep, Lust for Life, Suppress Fear, Bio-Regeneration-Self, Levitation and Mind Block.

Skills: Standard fare for nobles, with a few special skills, including Seduction, Pick Pockets, and Intelligence.

Lords Skordi and Kieju Itomas

Skordi and Kieju are identical twins, and the younger brothers of Voelkian and Lasha. This pair are easily the oddest members of the Itomas clan, never leaving one another's sight, and acting almost as a single consciousness split between two bodies. Although neither brother is psychic, their mutual intuition seems to border on the telepathic. Some speculate that the mutual bond of these two is to compensate for neither of them ever knowing their parents — the twins' mother died in childbirth, and their father had died three months before that.

Skordi and Kieju's symbiosis makes them especially dangerous foes, for to threaten one is to threaten the other, and there is nothing, absolutely nothing, either brother wouldn't do for the other. Each sees himself as an extension of the other and as a result, both consider protecting and serving their counterpart to be their primary duty in life. Moreover, whenever these two are in a fight, they will gang up on a single opponent and attack ruthlessly as a team. In fact they work so well together on the battlefield that when the two are fighting the same opponent, they each receive an additional +2 on initiative, +3 to strike and +1 to parry!

Physically, the twins appear distinct from Voelkian and Lasha, having dark skin, dark brown hair with tints of red and smokey blue eyes instead of the classic Itomas features; they inherited their looks from their mother. They are also large framed compared to other Itomases (six feet tall, 220 lbs. each) and have fairly unremarkable looks, aside from their identical nature. Compared to their brother and sister, Skordi and Kieju are sullen, secretive and downright temperamental.

The twins, knowing early on that they would probably never have a shot at the highest seats of power, became squires among the knights of the house, learning the ways of the horse and sword, and, later, became knights themselves. After earning their right to bear arms, the pair went on a crusade and adventures abroad for a few years, honing their combat skills. They have since returned to stay with their family and oversee the training of new knights to serve the Imperial House. They also command the Imperial Guard (the bodyguards for the Emperor and members of the Imperial House) and maintain security at the Imperial Palace. So far, their appointment has been eventful — they've helped thwart four assassination attempts on Voelkian's life, and have bailed their sister Lasha out of trouble a few times, too.

Skordi and Kieju have earned a reputation as being Voelkian's "Twin Furies" or the "Enforcers," and rightly so. They are ruthless, sometimes brutal individuals who care little at all for their enemies or anyone associated with them. They are also easily insulted and extremely vengeful. If Voelkian and Lasha weren't around to keep these two in line, all hell would break loose the next time Skordi and Kieju felt their honor was at stake.

NOTE: Skordi and Kieju have identical statistics.

Titles: High Dukes of House Itomas and Knights of the Realm; each holds the rank of Colonel in the Army.

O.C.C.s: 3rd level Nobles, 6th level Knights.

Alignments: Aberrant

Age: 23

I.Q.: 11, **M.E.:** 12, **M.A.:** 10, **P.S.:** 22, **P.P.:** 15, **P.E.:** 24, **P.B.:** 9, **Spd.:** 21, **H.P.:** 58, **S.D.C.:** 31

Attacks per melee: 5, including Boxing bonus.

Bonuses: +2 strike/disarm, +3 parry/dodge, +3 roll with punch/fall/impact, +3 pull punch, +9 to damage, +5 to save vs magic and poison, +18% to save vs coma & death.

Other combat info: All kick attacks. Critical strike on a natural 18, 19, or 20. W.P. Pole Arm (+3 strike, +3 parry, +2 damage, +1 throw). W.P. Shield (+3 parry, +2 strike). W.P. Sword (+3 strike, +2 parry, +1 throw). **SPECIAL:** When attacking the same opponent, Skordi and Kieju both get an additional +3 to strike, +1 to parry, and +2 on initiative.

Weapons: The twins both have magical berdiches (pole arms) that are indestructible and do 5D6 damage. Both have magical long swords (Skordi's can spit fire three times daily and does 3D6+4 damage, while Kieju's can spit lightning three times daily for 3D6+4 damage), and magically indestructible shields. The twins also carry their ceremonial House Itomas daggers prominently on their belts.

Armor: Both twins wear suits of magical plate mail that are A.R. 18, S.D.C. 300, silent, and are a nonreflective jet-black color. On each shoulder pad and on the chest plate of these suits, in silver, is the insignia of House Itomas.

Magic Items: The twins also each own a bundle of 20 heavy lightning javelins (!D6x10 S.D.C. per strike), but they are saving these for when they really need them. Otherwise, these guys aren't in the habit of caring about magic items that aren't weapons or armor. Besides, they have grown quite attached to what they already have and don't wish to expand their personal arsenals.

Money and other equipment: Skordi and Kieju have personal fortunes into the tens of millions, and access to virtually unlimited resources and equipment. They don't care about money much, so they haven't amassed huge personal estates.

Psionics: Nothing normally recognized as normal psionics, but the two share a strange bond and seem to know exactly what each other is feeling or thinking as well as when the other is in peril or injured.

Skills: Standard fare for the knight O.C.C.



Lord Aromus Caldram Itomas

At 60 years old, this elder uncle of the Imperial House has had an eventful life. He was born to House Caldram, which eventually married into the Itomas family and was absorbed by it. As a result, he was on the "wrong side" of the family and ineligible to rule the House. Thus, when Emperor Zeketri passed the Imperial seat to House Itomas, it was young Voelkian who became emperor, not Aromus. This was especially hard for the elder Statesman to take since he had run House Itomas as the House Regent for a number of years before Voelkian Itomas reached the minimum age to rule. Ever since, Aromus has been an advisor to the Emperor and treats him with utmost respect, but Aromus sees this as an empty title. The old man has no formal responsibilities, and is angry and embittered. At this stage, he has lost reason and hopes to undermine and embarrass the Imperial House out of some misguided sense of revenge.

Years of overindulgence and drug abuse have reduced Aromus to a burnt-out husk of his former self. He is hooked on Hungerblood, which makes him crave raw flesh and blood. Aromus has tried keeping his grisly habit a secret, but more than one kitchen maid has seen him raiding the meat lockers in the dead of night, gnawing on raw carcasses.

Slippery, smart and paranoid, Aromus keeps his contacts and lackeys to a bare minimum, often killing henchmen after he is done with them to prevent anyone from implicating him of treason. Aromus has already engineered two attempts on Voelkian's life and has begun leaking top-secret military plans and diplomatic secrets to House Kaze, the sworn enemy of House Itomas. Aromus hopes this information will help the rebels lead its re-

gion, the Middle Kingdoms, in a successful civil war that would break apart the Empire. Unbeknownst to him, Emperor Itomas knows about his Uncle's plots against the house. He blames his actions on the drugs and refrains from punishing the man for two reasons; out of loyalty to his father and the memories of his Uncle during a different age (the Emperor used to care about him very much), and because he is using Aromus by slipping him false information. This carefully planned misinformation is designed to ferret out Kaze agents and sympathizers in the Imperial Court and to mislead the rebel House.

Title: Ex-Regent of the Empire; High Lord of House Itomas, and Senior Advisor to the Emperor.

O.C.C.: 10th level Noble

Alignment: Miscreant

I.Q.: 17, **M.E.:** 15, **M.A.:** 14, **P.S.:** 9, **P.P.:** 5, **P.E.:** 7, **P.B.:** 10, **Spd.:** 6; Note: Aromus' physical attributes used to be 4-7 points higher, but age and drug addiction have taken a heavy toll.

Hit Points: 38, **S.D.C.:** 10

Attacks per melee: 2 (NOTE: Aromus's combat abilities are far below what they should be because his bad lifestyle has left him nearly an invalid. Aromus will only fight if his life is endangered. Otherwise, he will let others do his dirty work for him.)

Bonuses: -1 to strike, parry, and dodge, -3 damage.

Weapons: Aside from the ceremonial Itomas dagger he carries on him, Aromus wears no weapons.

Magic Items: Aromus used to have a huge arsenal of items, but he has pawned them to support his various drug habits over the years.

Money and other equipment: Aromus has squandered his fortune away in recent years, and in fact owes a gross amount of money to several prominent thieves' guilds in the capitol city. Sooner or later, they are going to collect on him. But until that happens, Aromus keeps living on credit to hide the fact that he is broke from the rest of the Itomas clan.

Skills: Standard fare for a Noble.

"The Slayer of Mountains"

By Kevin Siembieda & Bill Coffin

This legendary wizard and hermit has, for reasons unknown to the rest of the world, come out of solitude to pledged his allegiance to Emperor Itomas. Since then, lots of stories have circulated about him, ranging from the questionable to the absurd. All of them have a common thread: That nobody, not even the Emperor, knows who or what this person really is, where he comes from, or even whether or not this is the genuine legendary mage.

The Slayer of Mountains appears as an ancient elf, with a short, stooped-over posture, deeply wrinkled skin, white hair, neatly trimmed beard, and a high, cracking voice. In reality, he's an 8,500 year-old Great Horned Dragon whose true name is Sessenun. While The Slayer of Mountains has traveled all over the world, he has spent most of his life living in isolation in one Mountain range or another. For most of the last one thousand years he has lived in the Great Northern Wilderness and is said to have once aided the legendary Defilers and was a friend of the mythical, god-like mage known only as the Nameless Lord. Intensely interested in humanity, he was involved in the Elf-Dwarf wars, an experience that left him emotionally scarred.

Although lost in the annals of history, he helped to establish the Western Empire and has observed the Empire since its inception, taking part in a few things here and there under various identities (never as king or nobleman), but never really getting seriously involved, believing it best that mankind learn and grow on its own merit.

Eons ago he crafted a mortal alter-ego for himself, that of an ancient elven wizard, as a means of mixing more easily with humans. This identity is so comfortable for him that it is literally a second skin and the way he honestly thinks of himself. He got his name long ago, when he and the Nameless Lord clashed with a group of insane Summoners intent on awakening an Old One. The pair felt compelled to act against this plot. In the epic battle that ensued, he destroyed the Summoners, caused a volcanic eruption that blew away half the mountain and survived to tell the tale. Witnesses to the battle dubbed the mysterious Wizard "The Slayer of Mountains" as a testament to his power and force of will. The name stuck and other feats of incredible magic power have proved it is a name well deserved.

When the Western Reconstruction began, he realized that brilliant individuals like Emperor Leopold the First could lead the Empire back to its former glory, but at the same time, on a crash course with self-destruction. The Slayer of Mountains is also dismayed with events unfolding between the Wolfen Empire and the Eastern Territory; events all too reminiscent of the Elf-Dwarf Wars. Thus, he decided it was time to make a reappearance to see if he might ever so subtly help set things right. He has no intention of upsetting the delicate balance of power on the Palladium world and clearly has his own secret agenda. He comes and goes from the Imperial Court and West Kighfalton as he pleases and is something of a recluse. He is both respected and greatly feared by all but Emperor Itomas. To those he dislikes, he can be aloof and patronizing, and even those whom he likes find that he seems absent-minded and speaks in riddles and disjointed statements.

The Emperor is in awe of this enigmatic man. Even with his impressive psionic abilities, Itomas cannot get a true reading on the aura of the mage (other than immensely powerful and old), nor can he pick up his thoughts or emotions. Yet, he does not feel threatened by the wizened mage and finds most of their discussions stimulating, provocative and insightful. The Emperor feels the old man has helped him to learn more about himself in the last year and a half than he had ever known before. One of the things he likes most is that the mage never tells him anything directly, but helps to put him on track to figure things out for himself. Likewise, The Slayer of Mountains makes no attempt to usurp control or to take action on things that are none of his affair. While some have criticized the mage (in quiet whispers when he is not present) for taking advantage of Imperial hospitality and talking philosophy (presumably he could destroy an entire enemy army single-handedly, build great citadels, summon forth legions of supernatural beings to fight for the Empire, assassinate the Empire's enemies, etc., but does none of these things), Emperor Itomas is very pleased with him, and appreciative that he has not performed tremendous feats of magic.

The Slayer of Mountains tries to take a back seat because he feels it is important that the Emperor and the people of the Empire must do for themselves. They must not become reliant upon him and the Emperor must be a confident power unto himself. A



power recognized as such by his people and the outside world. However, he will take a direct hand in protecting the Emperor from all evil and assailants. If and when he feels it necessary, he will also step in to help stop the monster hordes gathering in the Old Kingdom before they topple the Empire (he will not let them get beyond the Vequerrel Woodlands). However, he will stay completely out of the Middle Kingdom rebellion and Faerie War (although if things get too crazy, he'll be tempted to help the Faerie Folk).

The Slayer of Mountains has chosen to stand with Emperor Itomas because he sees true potential for greatness in this unusual man. He hopes that with some guidance, he will learn to be a magnanimous leader and use his powers for good and not evil. As far as he is concerned, a big shakeup is what the Empire needs to become a stronger, better place. It's time for the Western rulers to remember that it is best to earn one's position rather than inherit it. Unknown to anybody, The Slayer of Mountains is privy to knowledge about an impending danger of cataclysmic proportions. A danger that can only be overcome by a strong and powerful Western Empire. A danger that will pit him, a cadre of remarkable heroes, and the Emperor himself face to face with evil incarnate and raw power that the gods have nightmares about. The Wizard hopes that he and the young Emperor (very young by his standards) will be up to the task. He cannot tell what this crisis will be, but he knows there are dark clouds on the horizon, and that if he is to help the world survive, he must be ever-watchful and prepared to act. And so it is, the that a living legend stands with the Western Empire.

True Name (unknown to anybody): Sessenun

Title: Advisor to the Emperor, High Mage of the Imperial Court, and the greatest living Wizard of this day and age.

O.C.C.: Unknown to most. Believed to be a superhuman elven Wizard known to have lived for ages and to possess incalculable power. He is at least a 20th level Wizard and probably much more.

Alignment: Unprincipled

I.Q.: 25, **M.E.:** 26, **M.A.:** 28, **P.S.:** 44 (not that he displays it, except under the most dire circumstances or to drive home a point or intimidate an opponent) **P.P.:** 21, **P.E.:** 28, **P.B.:** 21 in elven guise, **Spd.:** 40 (running), 800 (flying).

Hit Points: 4,528, **S.D.C.:** 2,500; never wears armor.

P.P.E.: 900, **1.S.P.:** 186

Size: A frail looking, 140 pound (63 kg), six foot (1.8 m) elf bent over with age (really a 25 foot/7.6 m tall, 60 foot/18.3 m long Great Horned Dragon with a wing span of 120 feet/36.6 m, and weighs 30 tons; but he has not taken his natural dragon form for 3,000 years).

Natural A.R.: 15

Awe/Horror Factor: 16 as the Slayer of Mountains (18 in dragon form).

Natural Abilities: Nightvision (100 feet/30.5 m), see the invisible, turn invisible at will, prehensile tail, bio-regenerates !D4x!O S.D.C. per melee round (!D4x!O hit points per minute), fire and cold do half damage, metamorphosis at will, teleport self 92%, dimensional teleport 88%, fire breath (100 feet/30.5 m, 4D6, up to three times per melee round, can hit 2-6 opponents in a single blast if they are closely huddled together).

Attacks per melee: Six physical or psionic attacks, or five physical/three fire breath, or three magical attacks. Favorite mode of attack is by magic.

Bonuses: +4 initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +4 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, and +4 on all other saving throws.

Damage: 2D6 S.D.C. on a restrained punch, !D6x!O on a full strength punch, or 2D6x!O on a power punch (counts as two melee attacks).

Magic: All Wizard spell magic! Plus all known Spells of Legend!!

Psionics: A master psionic who possesses all sensitive, physical, and healing psionic powers; also knows bio-manipulation and psi-sword super-psionic powers. Rarely obviously uses the powers, and even Emperor Itomas is not aware of them.

Weapons: The Slayer of Mountains owns a veritable arsenal of weaponry in his lair deep within the Koerdian Mountains, but has very little of it with him now. To maintain appearances, if he ever were to be attacked while in human form, the Slayer would use a Greater Rune Staff named *Izanbal the Persuader*. It possesses all eight abilities common to rune weapons and has the ability to cast the following six wizard spells and possesses healing abilities: Extinguish Fires, Turn Dead, Weightlessness, Fingers of the Wind, Sense Traps, and Breathe without Air. It does 6D6 damage as a blunt weapon.

The Slayer also keeps a variety of magical daggers on his person, including one that returns when thrown, a flame-blade dagger (4D6 damage), and a silver demon slaying dagger that does 1D6 damage to mortal opponents but 5D6 damage to demons and vampires.

Magic Items: The Wizard's "travelling" collection includes a crystal ball, a true rune book, a cape of dimensions, a gem of reality, a demon guardian stone, and a flying carpet. He usually keeps these things in a very well hidden and well guarded treasure vault concealed in his private chambers. Anybody caught tampering with this vault will suffer a most hideous death at the hands of The Slayer.

Money and other equipment: Approximately 500,000 in small coinage, another 500,000 in Old Kingdom Dragon Coins, 2 million gold in raw gems, and another three million in fine jewelry. Being a dragon, of course, he constantly strives to increase his personal fortune, but is only interested in truly rare and unusual items. His ties with the Emperor gives him access to many of the resources of the Empire, including the Imperial Court, up to 100 million in gold, and command of one full Field Army (25,000 troops) or a fleet of six warships.

Skills of Note: All those associated with the Wizard O.C.C. and all lores.

General Nos Rotha

General Nos Rotha is the High Commander of the Imperial Army. His primary duties include maintaining peace throughout House Itomas home province and region, as well as organizing and executing all Imperial war and defense efforts.

General Rotha is a tall, muscular, dark-skinned native of the Yin-Sloth Jungles who was introduced to Western culture when

he was 6 years old and joined a provincial military in the Yin-Sloth Periphery at 16. He was promoted to the Regional military soon thereafter, and had joined the Imperial Janissaries at age 25. Rotha was a picture-perfect janissary, and after three successful peacekeeping campaigns, Imperial advisors offered Rotha the chance to become the Emperor's personal military advisor.

General Rotha, intelligent as he is ambitious, jumped at the chance. He was wanted for his battlefield experience and superior service record, but also because of his strength of character and willpower (high mental endurance). The reason: to bond his mind and spirit with an extremely powerful rune sword in the possession of House Itomas for over 1,000 years.

The rune sword, Tycho, has been owned by every military advisor of House Itomas; each time it bonds with a new owner, the personality of the sword melds with the owner, and as a result, each of House Itomas' top Generals gains the knowledge and experience of every one of his predecessors. The price for this is that the current owner loses a little of his personality as a fragment of his soul is exchanged with that of the sword's. To some, this is a horrifying prospect, but to others it is a form of immortality. Rotha is of the latter camp.

Since bonding with the sword, General Rotha has become slightly more outspoken and authoritative. His vast, new insight makes him easily frustrated with others who cannot see patterns of history emerging or the big picture. Nor can he stand the petty-mindedness of the over-ambitious individuals making up the officer corps of the various branches of the military. Moreover, Rotha no longer yearns as much for personal combat as he once did — he is now of the mind that individual efforts are meaningful only in how they play against a wider backdrop.



The sword-bonding has added an alien glamour to Rotha, making others a little afraid to deal with him (he has a natural Awe/Horror Factor of 10). Previously, this valiant warrior had lots of friends and received accolades wherever he went. But now, he is removed from both the common world and the way he used to be, he has become intensely lonely. Since moving to the Imperial palace, he has fallen for Lasha Itomas, and it pains him that she holds herself at arm's length from him, even though he is certain she has some feelings for him. Thus, he loves her from afar. If anyone were to hurt her, they could never run far enough or fast enough to escape his terrible vengeance.

Other than conferences with Emperor Itomas and his military staff members, the only person General Rotha speaks with on a regular basis is the Slayer of Mountains. To Rotha, the Slayer is the only person in the palace who sees the world in a similar way as he does. The impenetrable air of mystery surrounding the Wizard makes Rotha uneasy at times, and he often wonders what the mage's real motivations may be. For now, it is enough just to know that somewhere in the world there is somebody who is at least a little bit like him.

Title: High General of the Imperial Armed Forces, Supreme Janissary Commander and hero.

O.C.C.: 9th level Knight

Alignment: Prior to his sword-bonding experience, Rotha was Principled. Now he is drifting toward Unprincipled or Aberrant. The next year or so will be the most trying time for the General, while his "true" persona does battle with the honorable but ruthless, aberrant persona of the sword. During this period, the million plus monster hordes of the Old Kingdom will invade the Empire, the Faerie War will intensify and the Middle Kingdoms will continue to cause trouble. If Rotha can ride out this transition period, he will return to his Principled alignment and seem more human and approachable again. He will also feel comfortable with himself and his responsibilities. If not, he will become Unprincipled or Aberrant and develop 1D4 insanities (roll on random insanity table).

I.Q.: 13, **M.E.:** 19, **M.A.:** 17, **P.S.:** 20, **P.P.:** 18, **P.E.:** 19, **P.B.:** 9, **Spd.:** 21

Hit Points: 65, **S.D.C.:** 40

Attacks per Melee: 5

Bonuses (includes bonuses from the sword and the past experience of the many other Itomas Generals): +5 on initiative, +6 to strike and disarm, +5 to parry and dodge, +8 to damage, +6 to pull punch, +5 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to save vs mind control, +7 to save vs Horror Factor, and is impervious to possession.

Other combat info: Critical strike on a natural 18-20, All kick attacks, leap attack, W.P. Paired Weapons. W.P. Sword (+4 to strike, +3 to parry, +2 to throw). W.P. Shield (+4 to parry, +2 to strike). W.P. Spear (+4 to strike and parry, +2 to throw). W.P. Chain (+3 to strike, +2 to parry).

Weapons: General Rotha's primary weapon is the rune sword Tycho, detailed below.

Magic Items: Rotha wears a suit of magical plate mail (A.R. 18, S.D.C. 300, impervious to fire). During serious combat missions, he carries a bundle of 10 heavy lightning javelins (1D6x10 S.D.C. per hit) and a small magical shield (indestructible, returns when thrown, and has a wicked buzz saw-blade around the outer edge, causing 3D6 S.D.C. on a hit). In most fights, the warrior likes to use the shield for dis-

tance attacks, throwing it like a discus or frisbee, until able to close in for hand to hand fighting. He sometimes also uses magic scrolls for the power of flight, armor of Ithan, and long-range attacks.

Money and other equipment: Virtually unlimited access to conventional weapons, armor, equipment, siege weapons, and steeds. Has an unlimited expense account from House Itomas, but he rarely uses it except in the service of his country. Since his work is his life, General Rotha doesn't find much to spend his money on, explaining why he's got over 150,000 in gold saved up in a Caer Itom bank. He has command over the entire Imperial Army, influence with the Navy, and direct command of 100,000 elite troops (4th to 8th level).

Skills: Those common to a knight.

Rune Sword: Tycho

Type: Long Sword

Damage: 6D6

Alignment: Aberrant but compatible with any alignment. It will try to change the alignment of that individual to match its own.

Powers: All common rune weapon powers plus the following Wizard spells at 6th level proficiency: Armor of Ithan, Energy Bolt, Fire Ball, Impervious to Fire, Invisibility (simple), and Telekinesis. Tycho has 90 P.P.E. and recovers it at a rate of 10 every three hours.

Tycho also can cast the following Air Elemental spells at sixth level proficiency: Vacuum, Mist of Death, Electrical Field, Electro-Magnetism, Whirlwind, and Call Lightning. For casting elemental spells, Tycho has 90 P.P.E., which it recovers at a rate of 10 every three hours.

Personality: Extremely intelligent and strong-willed, Tycho also is a ruthless warrior and cunning warmonger. Its hard-core Aberrant personality will usually warp the alignment of whoever it bonds with it within the first 18 months. Failing to do so, the weapon becomes less assertive and submissive. Although Tycho is arrogant, smug, and self-important, it takes pride in the role it plays for House Itomas. While it has been bonded to more interesting hosts than Rotha, it has already grown rather fond of him and is even a little protective.

Father Lamriel

Once a promising figure in the Church of Light and Dark, Father Lamriel was sent to Enry Island, in the Floenry Island chain, to oversee the growth of the Church's efforts there. Things didn't quite go as well as planned, and a major religious war broke out over the debate of whether or not the god Thoth was really an Old One. (For more information on this religious crisis, refer to **Adventures on the High Seas, 2nd Ed.**). By the time the smoke cleared, Enry Island had pretty much been laid waste. The Church of Light and Dark had won its war against the island's heretics, blasphemers, and unbelievers, but at a terrible cost. The populace was shell-shocked and war-torn; the land was ravaged and ruined. As the Church moved in to clean things up, Father Lamriel was transferred to the Western Empire for a few years of "quiet duty" until he could figure out what he wanted to do next. While Father Lamriel wasn't the cause of the religious war on Enry (actually he did a good job of preventing it for as long as he did), he blames himself for the cultural holocaust that took place there.

When he first arrived in the Western Empire, he saw a spiritual landscape as fractured and battle-scarred as Enry Island. As part of his self-inflicted penance, he dove into his new job running the High Temple in Upper Kighfalcon's capitol city. Nobody knows why Father Lamriel's campaign to convert nonbelievers and strengthen the church was so successful, but most attribute it to his rare ability to accept non-believers as equals, not as enemies or ignorant know-nothings. He is devoted to never again allowing another situation like Enry Island to arise, and soon his name spread far and wide as a shining voice of tolerance and understanding.

As relations worsened with the Middle Kingdoms region because of religious differences, Emperor Itomas began looking for an open-minded person of the cloth who could be a kind of spiritual diplomat to this troubled region. After going through a short list of candidates, Lamriel came up as the only sensible choice. Father Lamriel protested at first (he figured he didn't have what it would take to make this mission work), but Itomas insisted, so he accepted.

Now, Father Lamriel spends half of his time in the Middle Kingdoms on goodwill missions and half of his time back in Caer Itom, discussing intelligence reports with the Emperor and devising peacekeeping strategies. Because of the importance of his mission, Father Lamriel has the rare privilege of traveling between Caer Itom and Epiphany (the Middle Kingdoms' capitol city) by way of a large supply of Teleport: Superior scrolls. This keeps him from being waylaid or delayed while traveling.

Physically, Lamriel is an old-looking elf. He is about 450 years old and has begun to show signs of aging, looking about as old as a 60 year old human. He is mostly bald headed, except for thin, dark brown hair, cut monk-style. He wears the simple robes of a preacher and does not wear any ostentatious jewelry, unlike most of his colleagues within the Church of Light and Dark.

Personally, Father Lamriel is a dark, severe, and troubled man haunted by his past. He used to be of Principled alignment, but the emotional fallout he's undergone since the fiasco on Enry Island has driven him to a more Anarchist leaning. To distract himself from the memories of Enry island, he spends his spare time learning new languages and becoming an authority on dozens of different religions and pantheons. He also knows a great deal about racial histories and has studied the topic of dragons extensively, and has his suspicions about the "Slayer of Mountains."

Title: High Priest of the Western Chapter House of the Church of Light and Dark.

O.C.C.: 8th level Priest of Light

Alignment: Unprincipled

I.Q.: 15, **M.E.:** 11, **M.A.:** 11, **P.S.:** 10, **P.P.:** 18, **P.E.:** 12, **P.B.:** 21, **Spd.:** 12

Hit Points: 45, **S.D.C.:** 22

P.P.E.: 66

Attacks per Melee: 3

Bonuses: +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to pull punch, +1 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, and +2 to damage.

Other combat info: Karate Kick (2D4), Body throw/flip, Critical strike on a natural 19-20. W.P. Staff (+3 to strike, +3 to parry, +1 to throw). W.P. Chain (+3 to strike, +2 to parry).

Weapons: If pressed into combat, Father Lamriel will rely on his oaken quarterstaff (2D6).

Magic Items: The good Father owns a magical mace and chain that he keeps packed away in his personal chamber at the Imperial palace in Caer Itom. The mace and chain does 3D6 damage and does double damage to demons and deevils. This is a reminder of his younger, more zealous days, and he will not break it out except under extreme circumstances. He would much rather talk his way out of situations, relying on his priestly powers to save the day.

Money and other equipment: Lamriel lives by a vow of poverty, and has no other possessions. What he needs, Emperor Itomas or the Church provides.

Magic Abilities: Aside from all of the normal Priest of Light abilities, Father Lamriel can cast the following Wizard spells: Tongues, Blinding Flash, Sense Evil, Sense Magic, Armor of Ithan, Energy Bolt and Sense Traps.

Caer Itom

Imperial Capitol

Population: 1,200,000

750,000 Humans

170,000 Elves

130,000 Dwarves

50,000 Ores

25,000 Goblins

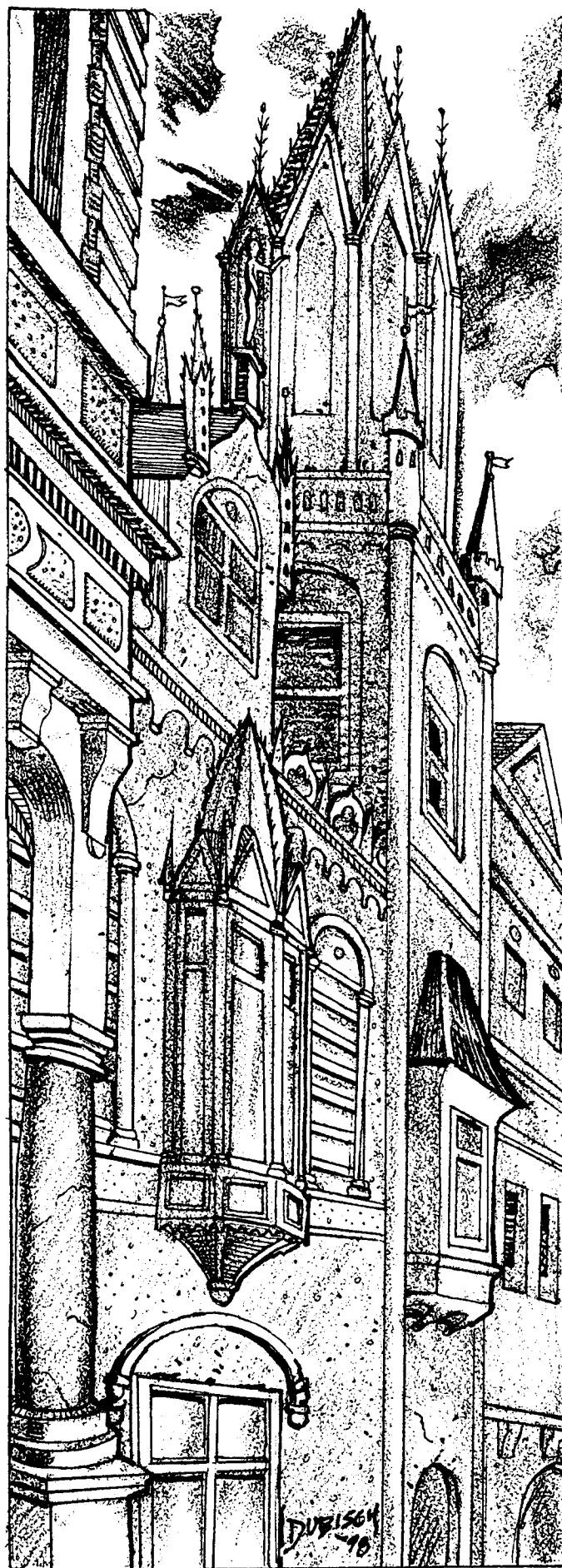
75,000 Other

Note: This does not include the 600,000 slaves (roughly equal to 50% of the free population), nor transients — sailors, visitors from other provinces in the Empire, foreign diplomats and visitors from other parts of the world, adventurers, mercenaries, etc., which is roughly equal to 20%-25% of the overall population (1.8 million) at any given time.

Caer Itom is the political, military, and commercial center of the Western Empire. It also is the Regional Capitol of the Province of West Kighfalton. The city's role as Provincial and City-State Capitol is unusual, but managed well.

As per ancient custom, the Imperial Capitol's name changes with each new Imperial Family. Thus, when House Itomas ascended to the Imperial seat, the city's name changed from *Caer Zeketrius* to Caer Itom. For the people who live here, this name-changing can be confusing, especially during the civil wars, when Imperial powers rose and fell all the time. Thus, many commoners refer to this city as "Caer Kighfalton," regardless of who rules it, in reference to the first and greatest leader of the Empire. It is to his memory, some say, that people hold their deepest and dearest loyalty.

Outside of the Western Empire, the only other cities that even approach Caer Itom's magnitude and level of development are *Credia*, the capitol of the Timiro Kingdom, *Bizantium*, capitol of the Bizantium Kingdom, and *Shadowfall*, the capitol of the Wolfen Empire (over the next decade, the Easlefh Territory may add a few to the list). Caer Itom harkens back to the great Elven and Dwarven cities destroyed in the Elf-Dwarf Wars. It is a place of almost immeasurable size, wealth, political and military power, magical practices and religious diversity. To those who live here, it's simply the greatest city in the world.





-DUBISCH 1998-

Caer Itom is a center of many trades and industries. Spice grinding and processing mills dot the industrial byways, as do glassblowing shops, tanneries, weaponsmiths and wineries. Another major industry here is magic. There are more alchemists in Caer Itom than in any other city in the known world. In addition, there are many men of magic whose magical abilities are for hire. Wizards, Warlocks and Diabolists are in particularly high demand, but Summoners and Psychics have their niche markets too.

This city is a major naval power with large shipyards, trading depots, and a sizeable dockside district, not to mention the Imperial Navy. The city's high population of transient sailors, merchants and other travellers makes it a haven for smuggling and espionage. This is ironic, since Caer Itom has a high degree of security (because of Embassy Row) and crime is comparatively low. All that really means is the thieves' guilds in town work more quietly and subtly than they might elsewhere. Indeed, stories abound about the sly, silver-tongued "gentlemen thieves" of Caer Itom.

Caer Itom is best known as the place where Emperor Itomas administrates his Empire and holds court with the rest of the world. In the famous "Embassy Row" can be found embassies for every major nation as well as the 12 Major Noble Houses. Embassy Row keeps a lot of service industries like restaurants, inns, tailors and weapon shops in business, and it is said that one can practically taste the power in the air in this part of town.

Most of the city's inhabitants live within the city limits, but clusters of homes and other small businesses radiate on every road out of town. For miles past the city walls are sprawling farms that grow fruits, vegetables, grains and spices, as well as raise livestock. Most farms here are large plantation-type operations with lots of slaves (To prevent "labor difficulties," the average Caer Itom plantation maintains a large complement of armed mercenaries or private armies). The biannual harvest seasons are extremely busy times here, with nearly constant traffic of farmers bringing their fresh goods to the city markets.

Since becoming Emperor, Voelkian Itomas has spent an incredible sum of money restoring and rebuilding parts of the city. He has completely rebuilt the sewer system, the city's outer walls, and the governmental district. If the Western Empire is to take its rightful place as the leader of the world, then its Capitol city should look the part. To get the rest of the city to follow suit, he has imposed a strict set of new building code standards — anyone who can't make the grade forfeits his building to the city and must pay rent on it. He didn't think this plan through too much, because a lot of folks in this city can't afford to rebuild their places. So, he has softened the impact of this rule by offering tax breaks and monetary subsidies to people who are rebuilding their homes, businesses, churches, etc. The end result is that Caer Itom is a really beautiful city, with magnificent, towering buildings made of the finest stone and brick, wonderfully paved streets, and numerous aqueducts carrying clean, fresh water to public fountains throughout the city.

All this construction is making the city go through another growth spurt, and it is quickly running out of room in which to grow! Much of the construction being done in town is handled by crews of Earth and Air Warlocks.

Caer Itom Description & Code Key

Note: These are only the most famous or notable places in the city. The G.M. is encouraged to add to this list as he or she likes.

Imperial Plaza

This is the grandest and nicest section of town. Nearly every intersection here is a small plaza with beautiful statues and fountains, groves of trees, shrubs and other botanica. The streets are cleaned religiously, and security is very tight here. No one patrol of city guardsmen is out of sight of another, so if there's trouble anywhere in the Imperial Plaza, it will be spotted and halted very quickly. Violence and other criminal activity is strictly forbidden in this section of town and will be severely punished.

1. Imperial Palace. The residence of House Itomas and the most important Imperial staff, such as General Rotha, "The Slayer of Mountains," Imperial advisors and other key personnel. It also contains the Imperial Court where Emperor Itomas and the Imperial family conduct business and entertain guests, diplomats and other VIPs.

2. Embassy Row. This large complex is a "village of diplomacy" where every regional and provincial house has an embassy. Although this part of town is supposed to be a cease-fire zone for hostile Noble Houses, embassies are built like small fortresses and a lot of "political homicide" goes on here. Embassy row is roughly separated into regional blocks, so Provincial Embassies can be closer together.

2a. West Kighfalcon Block. Embassies for Houses Decurance, Gioto and Paaslaan.

2b. Upper Kighfalcon Block. Embassies for Houses Ne'Klosh, Amberhall, Csusk and Zietich.

2c. The Koerdian Mountains Block. Embassies for Houses Oslof, Pascale and Nugent.

2d. Kighfalcon Plains Block. Embassies for Houses Inindri, Ker, Selkoi, Quozadda, Nereus and Ironwolf.

2e. Lower Barraduk Block. Embassies for Houses Taerea, Barraduk, Cord, Zansha and Jonin.

2f. The Vequerrel Woodlands Block. Embassies for Houses Jaoradon, Rylan and Toth.

2g. The Middle Kingdoms Block. Embassies for Houses Kaze, Hihhod, Cureau, Skryme, Elial and Alragin.

2h. The Scarlet Mountains Block. Embassies for Houses Valocek, Braska, Ewendell and Nodd.

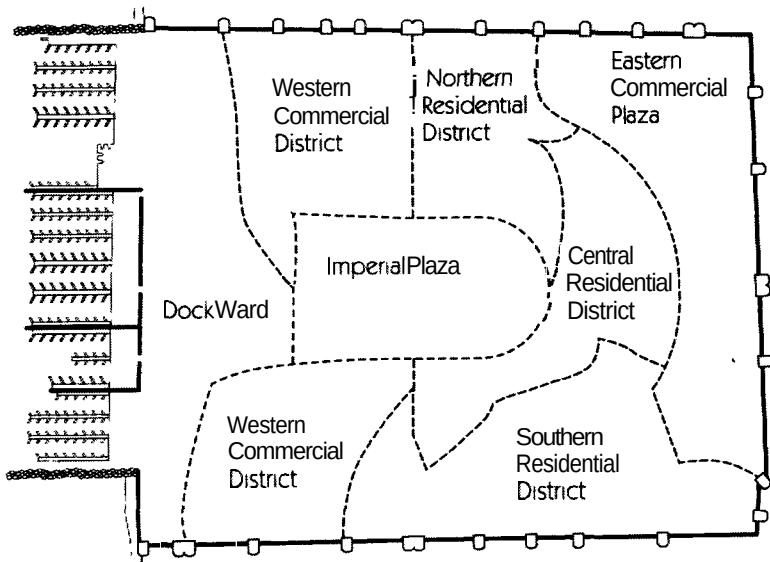
2i. The Tarldet Plains Block. Embassies for Houses Wenglid, Marsa, Haishe and Bereggia.

2j. The Old Kingdom Frontier Block. Embassies for Houses Clynn, Barbadic, Kohugan and Grishop.

2k. Ophid's Grasslands Colonies. Embassies for Houses Belopo and Miagina.

2l. Yin-Sloth Periphery Block. Embassies for Houses Glaverius, Durning and Longacre.

3. Imperial Mint. This massive foundry presses all official coinage for the Empire. Security here is unbelievably tight, and for good reason. At any one time, the underground storehouses contain millions of gold pieces' worth of raw gold and silver bullion, plus tens of millions more in stamped coinage awaiting



circulation. A watch of 128 Imperial Janissaries are on guard here at all times, as well as a large complement of Wizards, Warlocks and Diabolists. It is rumored that the innermost vaults are covered with defensive wards, sealed by extremely complex locking mechanisms, and are guarded inside by demons. Nobody knows the truth to such rumors because they're State secrets.

4. Imperial Barracks. The headquarters for the Imperial military commanders, three battalions of imperial soldiers and a battalion of Imperial Janissaries. The barracks here have their own armories containing **dwarven** and magical weapons, light and heavy body armor and other military magic items. This huge complex also has formal parade grounds and a series of training yards where troops are constantly honing their skills.

5. Department of Public Works. This administrative complex houses all of the offices for the various administrative agencies that run Caer Itom on a day to day basis.

6. Imperial Courtyard. A mammoth, open-air plaza with a big statue of Leopold I carved from a single slab of marble. The statue is encircled by a beautiful, doughnut-shaped fountain that perpetually bubbles and sprays, thanks to some unusual (and permanent) elemental magic. During the day, food vendors bring their carts here to feed the government workers and visitors.

7. The Flame of Victory. Another impressive public courtyard. This has an eternal flame in the center, commemorating all who died in the name of the Empire. It is a common wedding custom for new brides to come here and lay flowers at the base of the memorial. Then the newly married couples light candles off the flame to signify their eternal devotion to each other.

8. Royal Docks and Shipyard. This marina is specifically for the use of House Itomas. It contains several **Bizantium-style** corsairs ready to go at all times.

9. Imperial Naval Yard. This huge complex can house up to 25% of the entire Western Navy (Most of the Navy is usually deployed on patrols or docked at other ports). All naval ship construction and repairs are done here. Due to the ongoing project of building new, Bizantium-style corsairs, security is very tight, and there is usually a large number of military personnel on the premises.

10. Imperial Menagerie. One of the few major zoos in the Palladium world. It contains most of the large animals found in the **Monsters & Animals** sourcebook, as well as many monsters, including Tuskers, **Adram**, Silonars, Scorpion Devils, and others. A good number of these specimens are in poor health and the zookeepers are always procuring replacements. Many of the dangerous creatures are "retired" champions from the city's gladiatorial arena. Admission is free.

11. Waterworks Authority. This office used to be with the Department of Public Works, but since the sewers and aqueducts were rebuilt, it has gotten its own building. Caer Horn's massive sewer system is the perfect hiding place for Ratlings, goblins, runaway slaves, political renegades and other unsavory types, as well as sewer monsters like Serpent-Rats and **Grunnor**, and subterranean freaks of every kind. Periodically, the Authority sends quasi-military "Sweeper Squads" to survey the sewers and clear out any nasty critters living there. Sweeper Squads frequently hire mercenaries, mages, and adventurers as extra firepower for this work.

12. Constabulary. The headquarters for the Caer Itom City Guard. Basically an extension of the House Itomas military. City Guardsmen typically patrol in groups of four. Whenever trouble arises (e.g., street brawls, duels and riots), additional patrols will arrive on the scene within 1D4+3 minutes. Average level of experience ranges from 1st-4th.

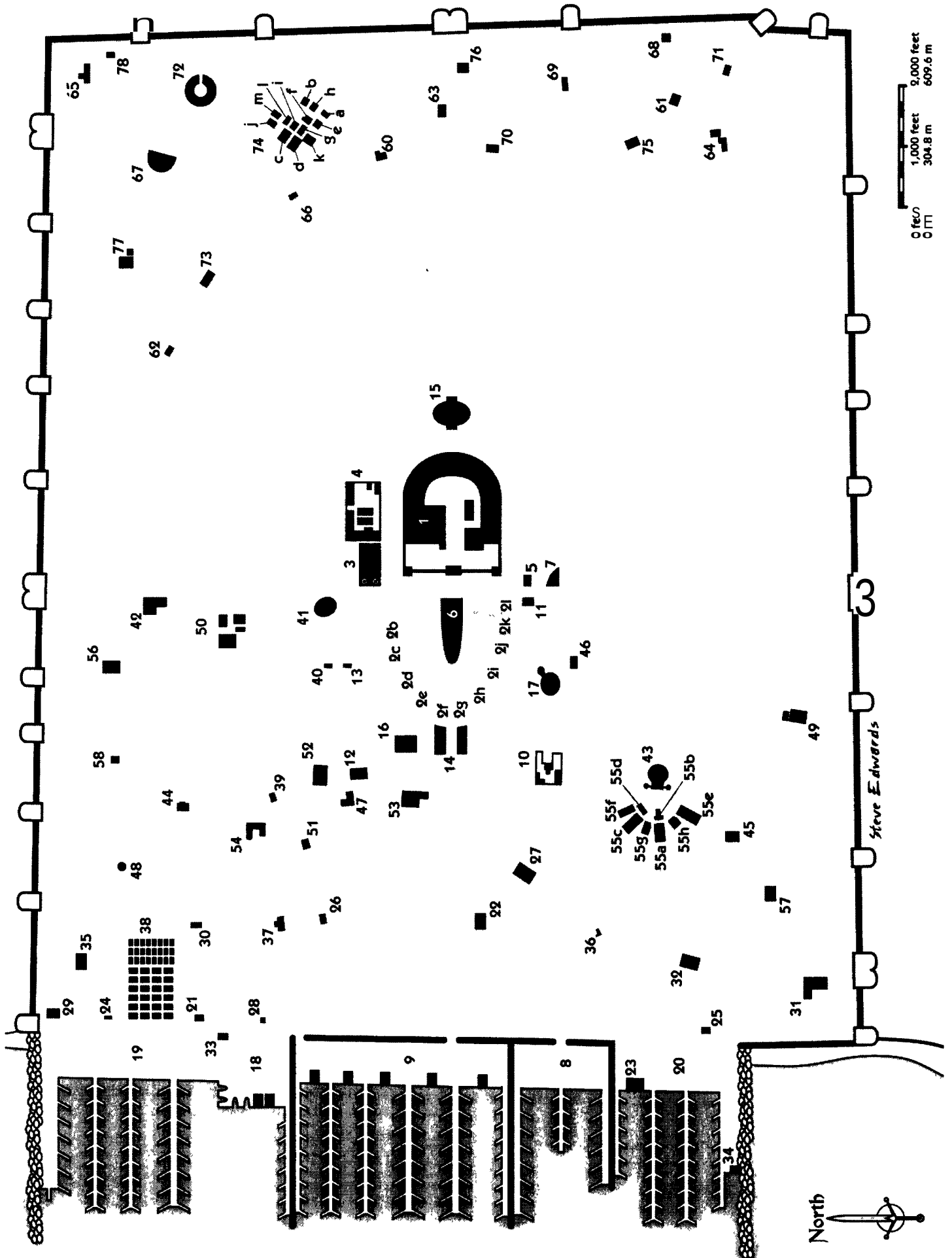
13. Imperial Museum. Full of precious paintings, sculptures, artifacts, and other items showing the Western Empire's history, accomplishments, wealth and greatness. Almost no security guards are present because the whole place is watched over by a very uptight curator (an 8th level wizard and master psionic) and his apprentices (mostly 4th or 5th level Wizards and Diabolists). All items here are warded to inflict death and pain upon who ever takes them from the museum (except the curator, of course).

14. Plaza of Emperors. Another open-air plaza. This one has 10 foot (3 m) tall marble statues commemorating over 1,000 prominent figures in Western history. Most of the statues are of old Emperors, but there are a good deal of military heroes, notable Wizards, Warlocks, and other "friends of the Empire." A few adventuring parties whose acts were especially appreciated by the Empire have also been commemorated here, including the legendary **Defilers** of Baalzebul. A statue of Emperor Itomas hasn't been placed here yet because it's considered extremely bad form to be commemorated before death. Locals refer to this place as the "Forest of Stone."

15. Imperial Arena. One of three arenas in town. This is the largest, and holds games once a month. In the downtime, Imperial troops use it as a training area. The arena has a large containment center underground where exotic animals, monsters, and criminals condemned to die in the arena are kept until showtime. Sometimes, a nearby aqueduct is tapped to flood the arena floor for small naval battles (a local favorite). Gambling offices are located throughout the building, and the city government gets a cut of all profits made.

Some notable personalities of the arena include:

- **The Reaver.** House favorite, even though he's an orc. 10th level gladiator (I.Q. 10, M.E. 13, M.A. 4, P.S. 21, P.P. 20, P.E. 20, P.B. 3 from intense scarring, Spd. 18. H.P.: 51, S.D.C 33).



- **George.** Also known as "The Ogre Who Won't Stay Dead," George has been put into a coma nine times during his six year career. Every time, though, healers bring him back and he seems to show no negative side effects from his numerous brushes with death. George is also known for dancing ridiculous little jigs whenever he triumphs, which makes him look like a real goof, but the crowds love him for it. 5th level gladiator, 2nd level thief.
- **Sir Vulkuran.** The top human gladiator. Shows no mercy. Always fights with paired weapons and tends to wear heavy half-suits of armor. An 8th level gladiator, he is The Reaver's chief rival, and he longs to fight him someday.
- **Sir Myslett.** The ladies' favorite. A strutting beef-cake (P.S. 22, P.B. 20) who's more concerned with his looks than his combat record. Although he's only a 3rd level gladiator, many insist he's destined for greatness.
- **The Seven Dwarves.** The house favorites for team combat. All seven of these dwarves are equipped with different weapons. The leader (6th level assassin) carries paired battle axes that are eternally sharp (+3 damage) and return when thrown. Three others (4th, 5th and 7th level mages) fight with long swords and shields, one (6th level soldier) fights with a berdache that's cut down to dwarven size. The final two fight with long, whipping chains that do 2D4+3 damage per strike, not including their strength bonuses (5th level gladiators).

16. Parade Ground. For Imperial troops to show off and drill.

17. Imperial Pantheon. This is where the Empire pays its respects to all of the major religions of the realm. It is a large, stadium-type building with small shrines to every major god and goddess of the Palladium world. This is more of a big monument than a place of worship.

Dockside

Note: All visiting ships must pay an entry tax of 50 gold for small vessels and 100 gold for large ones.

18. Shipyard. The largest public shipyard in town. Caters mostly to businesses and merchants. Also the best place for foreign ships to receive repairs.

19. Marina of Caer Itom. Can accommodate up to 100 vessels of varying size, up to frigates. The entry tax is 50 gold for small ships and 100 gold for large ships. Docking fees are 25 gold per day for small vessels, 50 gold per day for large vessels. The place is run by Gronch Mugilla, a foul-mouthed human who talks to himself.

20. Biboca Marina. The chief competition of the Marina of Caer Itom, but it's not as large and can't accommodate frigates. Charges a docking fee of 30 gold per day, regardless of vessel size.

21. Import/Export Firm. Specializes in the bulk shipment of spices and liquor; sells wholesale only.

22. Warehouse. A front company and hide-out for a small thieves' guild.

23. Joachim's Shipwrights. Joachim, a friendly dwarf, manages this large co-op of shipwrights who all share the same production facility. Only in business for a year and losing money fast.

24. Auntie Edie's Brothel. A favorite among sailors.

25. Tavern & Restaurant. Drinking on one side of the place, eating on the other. Offers a large selection of drinks from fine Western brandy and rum to different ales and wines.

26. The Hungry Hole. A restaurant owned and managed by Cambridge the Troll (8th level mercenary, P.S. 30, P.E. 29, .P.P. 18, and I.Q. 17! All other stats average), an ex-adventurer who made a lot of money in his younger days. Now that he's retired, he's invested in a number of businesses, but the Hungry Hole has been the most successful. It caters to ores, ogres, goblins and other nonhumans, but all races are welcome. Nobody starts trouble here, because if they do, Cambridge will cold-cock them. Fair prices, generous portions (almost exclusively meat). Elves and refined humans tend to avoid this rowdy place.

27. Gold's Mine. This place is called "the Mine" because most of the store is in a large basement. Its owner, Arnham Gold, sells dry goods and sailing supplies at reasonable prices. He yells constantly at his three idiotic, goblin-slave helpers.

28. Moneychanger. Charges an exorbitant 21% commission.

29. The Shelter Inn. A flophouse for sailors and other tired travelers. Charges only 10 gold a night, but the guests stay in big common rooms with lumpy mattresses on the floor. Check-out is at dawn, sharp!

30. Flotsam & Jetsam. A pawnshop where desperate sailors and pirates dump merchandise. Prices are generally 30% below book prices. Often has 2D4 minor magic items like low-powered magic scrolls (levels 1-3), and minor rings and charms at book prices.

31. The Grinning Goblin. A very successful franchise of tavern/inns throughout Caer Itom. The Grinning Goblin caters to adventurer-types looking for a warm fireside, good company, and lots of food. Costs 20 gold a night. This one's a little run-down but has got a lot of character. Run by Blotto, a fat human who refers to his even fatter wife as "Pumpkin."

32. U-Store-It. A self-storage place. For 100 gold a month, you can rent out a storage container that's about 20 feet (6 m) on a side. Security is questionable, and there are a few oddballs who actually live in these things, including a pair of prostitutes, a slightly crazy minstrel, and an out-of-work mercenary.

33. Going Somewhere? You can book passage here to almost anywhere, providing the price is right. The prices vary depending on what kind of vessel you want to travel on, how soon you want to get there, and how much the owner likes you. Ores and ogres can bet on playing 25% extra because the owner's a human supremacist. For a hefty bribe, fugitives from justice can book passage out of Caer Itom. Likewise, a similar bribe can arrange to have people smuggled into town unnoticed.

34. Used Boars. Really a used boat dealer, but somebody screwed up when painting the place's sign. Most of the boats here are in bad shape or of "questionable ownership," but can be bought for only 60% of their worth. Whaddya say? Is it a deal?

35. Boat Dealer. All boats are in top condition, and he sells nothing larger than a Caravel.

36. Hammock Dealer. This shop makes all manner of woven hanging chairs and similar rope-bound furniture. Sailors love giving this place business, since they can actually use this stuff on a ship. The owner, a crinkly elf named Eskler, is under the "protection" of the local sailors, and any harm that befalls

him will be avenged by the workers of Dockside. Which could be unfortunate, considering Eskler's growing gambling debts among the various thieves' guilds in town.

37. Cartographer. Great prices but poor quality. It seems this guy's never even heard of the Floenry Islands!

38. Warehouse Yard. Fifty warehouses for rent. Only 10 are currently unoccupied. Costs 1,200 to 3,000 gold a month depending on the size of the facility.

Western Commercial District

A heavily commercialized and wealthy part of Caer Itom. Most of the shop owners here live in the second and third stories of their places of business, or rent them out to "respectable" tenants. This section of town is especially busy on weekends and during festival times when it seems like the entire town goes on a spending spree (much to the delight of the city's pickpockets).

39. Bossic Tovo's Handiworks. This unusual shop fits amputees with prosthetic replacements for their lost limbs. The proprietor, Bossic Tovo, is an ex-Imperial Navy sailor who lost his left hand during a skirmish several years ago. Bossic used his retirement pension to open this shop, specializing in combat prostheses for veterans who don't want to give up their career. For 1,500 gold, Bossic will fit a customer and design a prosthesis for him. For an additional 500 gold, Bossic will design a combat prosthesis for hand or arm amputees. Popular models include grafted daggers, hand axes, and short swords. His house special is a combat hook that does 1D6+2 damage, and looks especially menacing. Pirates love it!

40. Fit for a King. A popular specialty restaurant that serves up all sorts of exotic animals and monsters. A house favorite is Wooly Dragon steak — years ago, the owner knew some adventurers who killed a Mighty Wooly Dragon but had to dispose of the less valuable parts of the body. The owner had the thing butchered for meat and salted all of it. It's still good, and people always keep coming back for seconds.

41. The Palladium Theater. This is the oldest theater in the Empire, and has been in operation for over 750 years. Lord Alston Hallsey, a castaway from a small noble house in the Middle Kingdoms, runs the theater and handles all booking. Hallsey is a snooty jerk, but under his management, the theater has become incredibly profitable. In fact, Hallsey must now hire mercenaries to escort him when he makes his weekly receipt drops to the bank.

42. The Civilized Rider. An upscale taxi company that uses luxuriously outfitted carriages. A ride costs from 100 to 350 gold, depending on the time of day and length of trip. Absolutely refuses to travel in any rough parts of town. (Which, depending on the driver's mood, could be just about anywhere.)

43. Pleasure Palace. High-priced bordello that treats its clients like kings. Guests check in for a night and have their every whim and fantasy indulged. Drugs, liquor, girls, you name it. Super-high prices (500 and up), but it's clean, safe and discreet.

44. Iron Gron Specialty Magicks. Dark, mystical and seemingly in possession of earth-shaking information, "Iron" Gron can satisfy almost any alchemical need. Any usual magic item can be found here at 33% higher than the book price. Gron will create commissioned weapons and armor, and he has many unique items you probably won't find anywhere else. He also sells obscure knowledge and lore, especially concerning the Old

Ones. He charges 100 gold per question, but he gives detailed answers. Rumors say Gron is in league with the Old Ones, something he himself neither confirms nor denies (it adds to the air of mystery he likes to maintain).

45. Caer Itom Travel Agency. For 450 gold, the Wizards and Summoners who run this place will cast mystic portals and teleportation spells or use circle magic on a client's behalf.

46. The Gods' Cabinet, Religious Supplies. Over the years, this place has become quite a hot spot for folks of rival religious factions to "accidentally" meet each other and start a fight. In recent years, the owners have required all visits to be by appointment, but this hasn't cut down on problems as much as they had hoped. Otherwise, this is a fairly nice supply shop, with a large inventory, good prices and a knowledgeable staff.

47. Acroyer & Tosk's Ironmongery. Very expensive (50%-100% higher than list prices) dwarven and kobold weaponry crafted by two of the most renowned sword makers in the Empire.

48. Magic Carpet Ride. Ur'drok, a Wolfen mage (rare for these parts outside of an arena or slave pen) of high standing, opened this business last year after a very profitable adventure in the Ophid's' Grasslands Colony. Ur'drok owns a huge flying carpet and can accompany up to four human-sized or two giant-sized passengers. His prices — 75 gold for human-sized passengers, 125 gold for giant-sized passengers — are fairly cheap, all things considered. Ur'drok mostly does this because he loves to fly, and likes the idea that he's making money at something he loves. Ur'drok will take passengers as far as 100 miles (160 km) out of the city. His business is open for 16 hours a day. He also has three assistants who can take people on magic carpet rides (on smaller, two-person carpets), and his shop offers magic powders and fumes for sale at 10% below book prices.

49. Crassio's Fire Brigade. A freelance fire-fighting service run by Crassio, one of the most affluent merchants in town and a real low-down S.O.B. Crassio's team of Water Warlocks will respond to any fire in town, then demand a steep price from the building's owner before battling the blaze. People who can't afford Crassio's rates often give him their building and then pay him rent for life. Crassio currently owns nearly 13% of all private residences in town.

50. Caer Itom University. One of the finest learning establishments (of non-magical disciplines) in the world. Until Emperor Itomas ascended, only human nobles were allowed to study here, but that rule has since been abolished. That still doesn't stop non-nobles or non-humans from getting terribly hazed during their four years here. The university has the grandest library on this side of the world. The sciences, particularly astronomy and mathematics, are the most popular areas of study here. Graduates often find work with noble courts as advisors, or find teaching positions at schools, universities and some monasteries throughout the realm. The cost for a year of study is 25,000 gold, but some scholarships and other forms of financing are available. Word has it that some of the thieves' guilds make money loaning out tuition money to students who fall on hard times, only to collect handsomely once they begin working for a noble court.

51. Steel Traditions. This famous combat training school has been a fixture in Caer Itom for over 700 years. For 5,000 gold, clients can undergo an intensive, two month long training

regimen that will give them W.P. Paired Weapons. The instructor, an 11th level assassin, trains his students mostly in sword and dagger fighting. Note: Every ex-student who has tried to set up his or her own training school in Caer Itom has met with disaster, including a few premature (and violent) deaths.

52. The First Imperial Bank of Caer Itom. Savings accounts here earn 4% annual interest, but this percentage is subject to change without notice. Security at the bank is second only to the Imperial Palace. Run by a noble family and an 11th level Mind Mage, it has a contingent of nearly 50 guardsmen (3rd level soldiers and mercenaries). The vault is built into the ground and is heavily warded. Also, a demon guardian stone is kept inside *each* of the vault's sub-chambers. The total cash reserve here is over 8 million in Western gold (varying denominations), over 4 million in Old Kingdom gold, over 10 million in gems and jewelry, and another 5 million in raw gold and silver bullion. Needless to say, many thieves have dreamed of knocking this place over, but none of them have the right mixture of brains, firepower, guts and inside information to pull the job off. The last attempt to rob this bank, during the civil wars, failed miserably.

53. The Bank of West Kighfalcon. The #2 bank in town. The cash reserve is only half of what the First Imperial Bank of Caer Itom has. For that reason, thieves seem to think security is more lax, but the truth is this place is just as hard to knock over. In fact, the security chiefs for both banks share trade secrets and information on the movements of known criminals.

54. The Four Corners Studio and Gallery. A painter, two sculptors and a mosaic maker bought this old warehouse and spent a fortune sprucing it up. Each of the artists has his own personal studio here. The gallery downstairs showcases everyone's very, very expensive work. These artists love to throw lavish parties which are must-attend events for Caer Itom's upper crust.

55. Guildsmen's Alley. The city's major commercial guilds are headquartered in this complex of converted apartment houses.

- 55a. Mercenaries' Guild.
- 55b. Performers' Guild.
- 55c. Grafters' Guild.
- 55d. Industrialists' Guild.
- 55e. Wizards' Guild.
- 55f. Warlocks' Guild.
- 55g. Psychics' Guild.
- 55h. Diabolists Guild.

56. Carpet Store. Imports fine carpets from the Land of the South-Winds and the Timiro Kingdom and marks them up 400%. Still a steal, considering what the nobles are willing to pay for them. The ore bouncer at the door prevents anybody who doesn't look rich from entering.

57. Oldarrag Junction. A nice little shop run by a dwarf and a few of his friends. This place is a good-hearted celebration of dwarven culture, selling every variety of dwarven food and drink as well as dwarven clothing, musical instruments (especially dwarven pipes) and some weapons. The owners will happily chat with any dwarf who enters, even if they don't buy anything. Humans and other "tall folk" will feel a little uncomfortable here because of the low ceilings. Elves will be glowered

at but not asked to leave. Since this store has been open, it has inspired many knock-offs, such as shops specializing in the various exotica of elven, orcish, kobold, Wolfen and Eastern human cultures.

58. The Brass Menagerie. Sells exotic pets/monsters, as well as runs a falcon-training service and a top-quality dog kennel. Many of the dogs sold from here are used as attack or guard animals. Nobles from Embassy Row often buy their hunting falcons here, too. Prices for dogs range from 200-500 gold, falcons: 100-250, and exotic animals: 1000 and up.

Eastern Commercial Plaza

Not quite as swank as the Western commercial district. This is where the middle-and lower-class people shop and meander. There are fewer specialty shops here, and the overall mix of shops is less human-dominated. On any given day, this part of town is about twice as busy as the Western commercial district.

59. Plumber. Argos D'Nattrey is an ace at finding and fixing people's plumbing problems. Nearly every residence in town is connected to the central sewer and many are connected with the city's aqueduct system, so there are lots of private waterworks in need of repair year round. Argos frequently subcontracts with the city's Waterworks Authority to help fix problems with the sewer system.

60. Iron Hill Textile Works. A small stone palace hundreds of years old. The lower basements haven't been visited in years because they are so rat-infested. The owner, a 4th level elven merchant named Colomun, is too cheap to hire an exterminator and too scared to clear the basements out himself. Moreover, Colomun's employees steadfastly refuse to enter the basement. If ever they did, though, they'd discover that the lowest chambers of the mill have been inhabited by a tribe of nearly 100 Ratlings and Rations. Anybody invading this space will be attacked immediately. The Ratling/Ratton dens have tunnels that connect the mill's basement with the local sewer system, and at night, the Ratlings sometimes foray into the city using this mill as their secret passage to the surface.

61. Crossbones Tattoo and Piercing Parlor. This place is popular with soldiers, sailors and thieves. The owner, an ex-pirate (5th level) named Corsair Havok, is an accomplished artist and can pretty much accommodate whatever body art his clients might desire. Havok charges 50 gold for a small tattoo, 100 gold for a large tattoo, and 250 gold for an extra-large tattoo (something that would cover someone's entire back). All body piercings are 15 gold each. Savvy customers will notice that Havok is especially easy-going for one who used to spread terror on the high seas. Although he will not go into details, the truth is that he was once part of a notorious pirate league that terrorized the Inland Sea until one night, Western agents picked him up while whooping it up in a coastal town. Havok was given the choice of either ratting out his comrades or facing the headsman's axe, so he did what any pirate would do — he ratted out his friends. He has lived in fear ever since that he would be discovered by one of his old mates, who would carry out murderous revenge.

62. Locksmiths. Sells a huge variety of magical and non-magical locks. Magical locks require a week's wait and must be custom-ordered. Non-magical traps, like poison dart-throwers and the like, require a three-day wait while the or-

der is filled. What nobody knows is that the humble husband and wife who run this place moonlight as cat burglars and are responsible for a series of recent second-story jobs. Their specialty? You guessed it — picking locks and safecracking. These guys steal for the thrill of it, as well as for profit. They have their steadily growing cache of loot stored in a secret compartment under the floor of their shop's back office. Since they began thieving, their locksmithing business has also gone up due to frightened shop and estate owners who fear that they'll get hit next. As a way of bolstering their locksmithing business, the thieves rarely hit any of their regular clients. That way, word spreads that whoever buys their locks here never gets robbed again.

63. Baere Hujilloth, Alchemist. On top of running a respectable alchemy business, this unscrupulous elf's store is a common destination for many stolen magic items which Hujilloth buys for 10% to 25% of their book worth — a fair price, considering how impossible these things are to sell at any other place without getting caught. Hujilloth's impeccable reputation among underworld figures has gotten every thieves' guild in Caer Itom to harass or steal for this fellow. Legitimate people (and pirates) like him, too, and it is said he can eat in any restaurant in town for free. Talkative and friendly (if a little condescending), Hujilloth loves to do favors for people in need so that he may collect a favor at a later date. If he were so inclined, he could become an unstoppable criminal mastermind, but thankfully for Caer Itom, he is content just to make, buy and sell magic items. Still, there's something sinister about him, like he knows something that he's not letting on about.

64. Drug Den. A seedy and disreputable place where droves of city folk blow their money on mind-numbing narcotics. The place is run in cahoots with the brothel next door, and a passage between the two businesses facilitates the movement of drugged-out clients from one building to the other. Clients can expect to be robbed and chunked out in the street if they're the slightest bit rude or violent.

65. Kadash Doll Works. Sculpts and finishes dolls for a medium-level price, considering the average workmanship. The proprietor harbors a secret dream of one day building a monstrous golem with which to strike down the world. Kadash has already built the golem body (it lies undisturbed beneath the building in an ancient antechamber); now all he needs is a way to transfer his consciousness into it. Kadash also harbors a dream of having a small army of doll-sized automatons overrunning the rest of the world, and has recently released a phenomenally popular line of children's dolls.

66. Lloyd's Coffeehouse. A small cafe that's been around for centuries. This place is the meeting spot for a group of wealthy and powerful merchants who track the comings and goings of the merchant ships visiting Caer Itom. These gents lay wagers on which ships will make it to their next destination and which won't. Many of these bets are on ships that are already overdue to come in to port. The betting here can reach the tens of thousands of gold pieces. A few of the merchants have laid the groundwork to turn this betting pool into the Palladium world's first overseas insurance company. If they get it off the ground, they'll make a fortune. The people behind the idea are in the process of recruiting psychics and other foretellers of the future to aid their business venture.

67. Slave Market. This old amphitheater was recently bought and renovated by a slaving ring. Ores comprise about 80% of the slaves sold here (for about 1,000 gold each). Also sold are ogres (2,000 gold each), kobolds (750 gold each), goblins and hobgoblins (250 gold each). The slavers keep their "merchandise" in the jail cells underneath the amphitheater (added during the renovations). At any given time, there will be 100-150 slaves waiting to be sold. Most of them have already had their wills broken. Security is overseen by a massive ogre named Grona (7th level mere), who wears a suit of studded leather and wields a giant-sized Goupillon flail that is enchanted to be indestructible and to inflict an extra die of damage (for a total of 5D6). Grona is backed up by 12 human mercenaries (4th level), who all wear studded leather and fight with a variety of nonmagical weapons. The entire operation is overseen by the sinister *Epollit Ictivvi*, who is from a long-dead noble family. Ictivvi obtains his slaves from slaving operations in the Yin-Sloth Jungles. He wastes most of his personal earnings in drug dens, brothels and other vices.

68. Harrow Street Pawnshop. Your average pawn shop. Buys items for about 40% of their worth. However, the owner is an informant for the City Guard, and will report the sale of any obviously hot merchandise.

69. General Store. This place is very ordinary except for the fact that it's being run by a diabolic Summoner who uses the place as a front operation. The basement of the store is a hideous realm of twisted magic and other unspeakable horrors.

70. East End Library. A modest library but with a decent selection. The place was started 23 years ago by a very wealthy merchant with a penchant for altruism. The merchant's estate now keeps the place running, and it is overseen by four very honest, very upright book lovers. They treat this library as if it were their own, and they will let no harm come to it. One of these librarians is a minor psychic.

71. The Festering Toe. The nasty name of this bar keeps away most respectable customers. Good thing, too, since illegal bloodsports are held nightly in the basement, where unarmed combatants fight each other to the death while onlookers cheer and bet on the outcome. Most bets start at 100 gold but they quickly escalate as the night progresses. Many drug addicts and other broken souls are shanghaied for the nightly combats, and their dead bodies are carted to the edge of town and thrown down a deep crevasse. The current "house champion" is a nameless human who appears to have had some extremely traumatic experience, or is locked in a permanent state of drug stupor. Whatever his condition, he has won the nightly combats for over a month with nary a scratch on him. He fights as a 9th level soldier, and is rumored to have been an AWOL Imperial Janissary with connections to a major noble family in the Scarlet Mountains region.

72. Alchemists' Collective. A cabal of eight alchemists occupy this jointly owned and operated workshop. Each alchemist has one particular specialty, but together, they can provide any standard magical service. This shop is much larger than average and offers a huge selection of pre-made magic items. These alchemists also have a huge supply of special ingredients and magical supplies, such as powdered dragon bone, faeries' wings, and the largest selection of tongues in the Western Empire.

73. Brothel. A high-class joint for this part of town. Lots of weary financiers from the local money-managing operations come here on weekends to blow off steam. The madam is extremely cunning and is always fleecing her clients for inside investment information, which she then uses for her own profit. A portion of all of her girls' money that kicks back to her is put into an investment fund. With her inside knowledge, the madam has become a silent partner in a dozen legitimate businesses in town, and she periodically buys into large merchant runs departing from Caer Itom and are to return in a year's time. From these, she often makes 20 times what she puts in. The madam is worth millions but feels a very maternal connection to her girls and stays in this business to keep a watchful eye over them. While she is not a combatant, she has many underworld friends who owe her favors, which she will call in if anybody ever threatens her or her girls.

74. Industrial Row. Contains a number of manufacturing facilities.

74a. Tannery and Leatherworks.

74b. Silk Shop.

74c. Foundry.

74d. Paper and Pulp Mill

74e. Brewery and Distillery.

74f. Lumberyard.

74g. Fine Stonecutting.

74h. Spice Grinding and Processing.

74i. Armor and Weapons Production.

74j. Rope Manufacturing.

74k. Textile Mill and Silk Production.

74l. Furniture Manufacturing.

74m. Salt Processing. Receives all raw salt from three salt mines approx. 30 miles (48 km) outside of town.

75. Temple to the Pantheon of Taut. This old warehouse is the secret meeting place for a violent and unpredictable cult devoted to the gods of darkness: Set, Anubis, Apepi, Amon, Anhur and Ammit. It is located near Industrial Row's bulk storage yards and warehouses.

76. Heroes for Hire. Inside this unassuming storefront is a small shop run by a party of experienced but jaded adventurers who have made a lot of money in their travels, and came home to retire. After a few months, the idle life drove them nuts, so they began selling their skills to anyone who's interested. So far, their business has really taken off, and they have received a lot of work locating missing persons, retrieving stolen merchandise, carrying out missions of revenge, and spying on important persons. The initial consultation is 100 gold, and the mission thereafter will be priced according to the perceived level of danger. Most jobs don't cost any less than 5,000 gold — 1,000 per hero. The heroes for hire include a elven Mind Mage, an ogre mercenary, a human fire warlock, a goblin (cobbler) thief and a Wolfen long bowman. The exact statistics, possessions, motivations and power levels of these guys are left to the G.M.'s discretion.

77. Ffudd Beer. This place has been in business for awhile. The owner, a slightly crackpot human, is in the midst of constructing a massive (6 stories tall!) brewing vat so he can produce beer in such vast, cheap quantities that he'll put his

competitors out of business. Little does he know that the metal sides of this vat were poorly cast and will crack the first time the thing is filled with beer. Considering how much brew this vat can hold, the spillage could flood out the surrounding city blocks.

78. The Black Adder. This smoke shop is one of the only businesses in town run by a free ore. He imports an obscure species of tobacco from the Yin-Sloth Jungles, processes it himself, and sells it as "Black Adder Tobacco." Black Adder products are extremely harsh and potent but are becoming increasingly popular.

Northern Residential District

This quarter is home to Caer Itom's richest and most powerful people. Most homes in this section are like country estates somehow crammed into an urban environment. Most are two to three stories high (as opposed to the four-, five- and six-story buildings in the Central and Southern Residential Districts). In addition, northern houses are surrounded by high stone walls, have large metal gates, and often have armed guards to patrol the premises (Hey, if you can live in the Northern District, then it's safe to say that thieves are gonna scope your place out, so security is a must.)

Notable residents of the district include:

- A rich merchant with a drug habit.
- An underworld kingpin trying to look respectable.
- A peasant who got lucky at a casino and is trying to upgrade socially. Will do anything to get in the favor of the nobility.
- An unassuming scholar who's a distant relative of a long-dead Western noble house. Born into considerable wealth, and really doesn't have to work, since he lives off the interest of his money in the bank.
- A mysterious human who has recently moved in. Her neighbors have got all sorts of rumors buzzing about her, but she doesn't seem to want to stop them. It is rumored that she is everything from a spy to a Summoner.
- A holy man fleecing his flock to get rich.

Central Residential District

This is where most of the common folk of Caer Itom live. While it's not as nice as the Northern Residential District, at least it's not as bad as the southern residential quarter. For the most part, people here are hard-working and try not to cause much trouble. Since the folks from "center town" are located in the heart of Caer Itom, they are used to a lot of noise, activity and seeing some pretty strange stuff. Most people here live in large multi-family dwellings. After a series of catastrophic fires several hundred years ago, city mandates require all residential buildings to be made of stone, so future blazes won't spread so quickly. Notable residents of the Central Residential District include:

- A vile witch using her home as a base of operations. She has an alu demon as a major familiar, and is working on summoning more of his kind.
- A knight who was expelled from his order for theft. Still lives well from the fruits of his labor.

- An honest merchant with a penchant for taking in strays and runaways. A recent convert to the warrior goddess Rurga, the merchant burns with the desire to right the world's wrongs and to combat evil. Only he's way too old to do the job himself. So, he's taken to training his "family" of young runaways into becoming stealthy warriors of the night who prey upon the scum and villainy of Caer Itom. For nearly a year now, these kids (there about 15 of them) have terrorized the Caer Itom underworld with their hardcore vigilante tactics. They have gotten enough notice now that both the city's constables and head thieves want to apprehend the "Nighthawks," as they call themselves. Whether or not they actually succeed remains to be seen. People in the district's worst neighborhoods love the Nighthawks and will do anything to help them.
- A merchant who is quite genteel and normal, except that he is a cannibal.
- A minor city official who is a werewolf but doesn't know it. Every full moon, the guy has a blackout and awakes the next morning outside, naked and confused. The poor fellow thinks he's going mad and is afraid to mention his condition to anyone. If he ever did, people might begin to think it's actually him who's been killing sheep (and their farmers) outside of town.

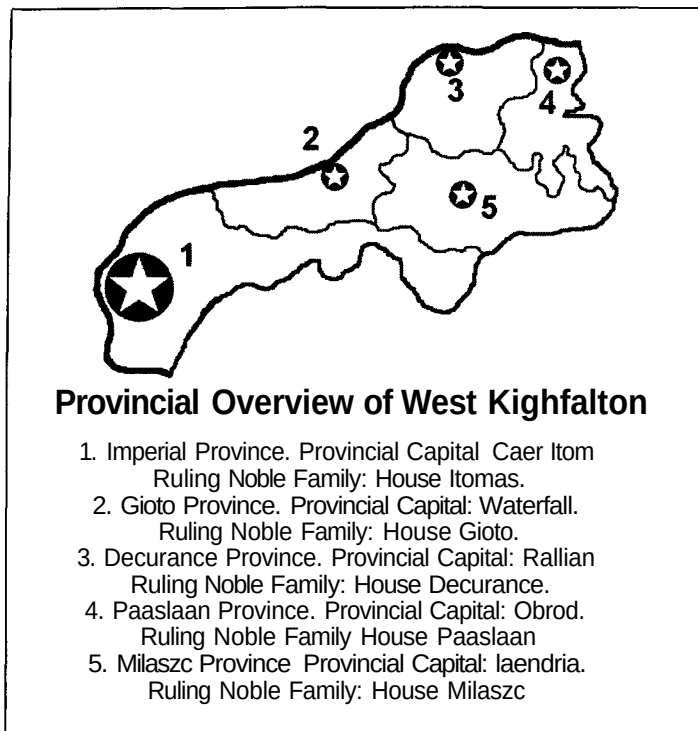
Southern Residential District

Also known as "South Town," this quarter is the poorest part of Caer Itom. Given the incredible wealth of this city, this "bad side" of town is nicer than many other cities' more prosperous districts. But that still doesn't mask the fact that the Southern Quarter is poor, dirty, crime-ridden and just plain dangerous. Due to segregational housing laws, most nonhumans are required to live here. As the numbers of freed slaves and other non-humans have grown, this district has gotten more and more overcrowded. Now, most people here live in dangerously cramped tenements. A good number of the buildings are wood, so everybody keeps waiting for a major fire. South Towners like to stay outside to keep cool, so the streets here are often filled with pedestrians and street merchants hawking all sorts of everyday wares. It easy to get lost in South Town, which is why many fugitives from justice make a beeline for it. That, and also the fact that several prominent thieves' guilds and other outlaws reside here.

Notable residents of the District include:

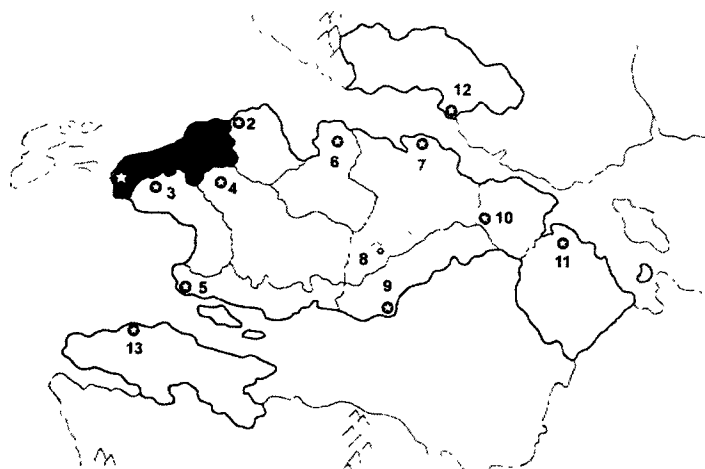
- An infamous bounty hunter who wears a suit of magical armor with all sorts of powers, gimmicks and pop-up weapons. Does a lot of work for the Western Empire, and recently bagged a notorious smuggler.
- A noblewoman from Lower Barraduk who's lying low to escape her enemies. Back home, there is a reward of 250,000 gold on her head.
- An alchemist who accidentally disfigured himself during a magical experiment. A shut-in who generates lots of weird rumors.
- One of the city's biggest non-noble landowners. Owns 25 apartment buildings and a few businesses. He lives sparingly and sends most of his money to House Kaze, since he's an avid Middle Kingdoms supporter.

- An alcoholic ex-hero who used to be a great swordsman but now is fat and lazy. Trouble continues to find him, and staying alive has become a real hassle.
- The Rat King. An insane Beastmaster who controls a huge swarm of rats and bats and uses them to terrorize a portion of South Town. Apparently in league with the Ratlings who live in the sewers below.



Provincial Breakdown of West Kighfalton

West Kighfalton breaks into five provinces. The province containing Caer Itom is controlled by House Itomas and is known as the Imperial Province. This province is comprised of the Imperial Capitol, Caer Itom, and its surrounding lands. For miles outside of the city walls, the land is covered with vast orchards, nut and spice groves, produce farms, and grain fields. Major highways radiate out from Caer Itom through the province and to surrounding lands. The province is along one of the most heavily visited ocean fronts in this part of the Empire, and dozens of smaller fishing and sailing facilities dot the coastline.



There also are a large number of small rivers and streams crisscrossing the province, from which Caer Itom draws most of its water. Most of these waterways have been dammed, creating substantial reservoirs.

The other four provinces of West Kighfalton, like provinces throughout the Empire, are named after whatever noble family rules them. They are: Gioto Province, Decurance Province, Paaslaan Province and Milasz Province.

Provincial Overview: Gioto Province

An agricultural area and one of the leading producers of Western spices. Most spice harvests are sent to Caer Itom and the Provincial Capitol, Waterfall, for processing and exportation. Although Gioto Province is another seaside area, the coastline is comprised of sheer cliffs that are virtually unscalable. The rivers in the area all drain toward the seacoast and cascade over the edge, creating spectacular waterfalls. With the aid of Earth and Water Warlocks, the capitol city and other settlements in this province have managed to harness these waterfalls as perpetual energy sources to drive grinding mills and other mechanisms. Politically, this province is somewhat unstable thanks to rising tensions with neighboring Decurance Province. Although outright war between the two houses seems unlikely, tension is high and each constantly bothers the other.

Provincial House: House Gioto. One of the richest houses of West Kighfalton, House Gioto is at least 4,000 years old. It has never moved from the region for a variety of reasons, most of them having to do with its proximity to the Imperial Capitol. Gioto nobles are staunch supporters of the Emperor. Recent diplomatic troubles with House Decurance are straining House Gioto's otherwise famous sense of civility. It seems a street brawl between several younger members of both houses has caused a feud that is growing out of control.

Provincial Capitol: Waterfall (350,000 people). Waterfall is a magnificent city of water-washed stone rising straight out of the largest river in the province and perched right on the edge of the seacoast cliffs. Earth and Water Warlocks, aided by Wizards and some Diabolists, managed to craft the city's foundation and outer walls in the middle of the river. Imperial engineers built an ingenious series of waterwheels and telescoping bridges that both connect the city to either side of the river and harness the great power of the waterfall. All 12 of the city's major spice grinding factories use waterwheels to power their massive grinding apparatuses. Moreover, waterwheel power also energizes a brilliant pump system that redirects fresh water to many of the buildings in town, as well as routinely flushes out the sewer system.

In recent years, Waterfall's post-Reconstruction prosperity has caused it to grow, and now the city limits have spread along the roads leading into town. If this growth continues, the fortress-like city-island in the river will become an interesting core of a sprawling metropolis.

Overall, Waterfall is a prosperous and clean city plagued only by the growing strength of the spice-grinding guilds and the specter of civil war between Houses Gioto and Decurance.

Provincial Overview: Decurance Province

This inland province is the premiere spot for growing the grapes and other fruits that make the Western Empire's famous

champagne and liquors. The dozens of wineries dotting the landscape are the province's number one industry. The glory of it is that so many of these wineries and distilleries are small, private operations, so all the noble house has to do is sit back and collect taxes. This easy life has made the Decurance nobles a bit headstrong and jaded, so they started a street brawl with some Gioto nobles. Since then, the resulting fracas has grown more and more out of control.

Provincial House: House Decurance. Similar to House Gioto in size, age, and wealth. Also a long-time ally of House Itomas.

Provincial Capitol: Rallian (125,000 people). Although the farms and orchards supplying this province's wineries, distilleries and breweries are all over the countryside, most of this alcohol production goes on in the capitol city of Rallian. The well-established Distiller's Row is a large section of town reserved for the wine, liquor and beer-making operations. Rallian also has many impressive greenhouses kept in town by "city farmers" who grow their own small crops of fruit for independent brewers. The winery, distillery and brewery guilds have great strength in Rallian, but House Decurance keeps them in check. Rallian has wide open streets and plazas, and its people are fond of holding frequent parties, festivals and celebrations. In Rallian, any excuse to drink good wine is excuse enough. Drinking games are almost a city-wide obsession. They also make a variety of fruit juices, jams and jellies.

Provincial Overview: Paaslaan Province

Paaslaan province is a relatively narrow area hugging the coast. It used to be much larger, but a good deal of the territory was lost during the civil wars and the turbulent trading of lands that preceded them. When Emperor Itomas verified House Paaslaan's claim to this land, the Paaslaan nobles figured that if they wanted to repay the Emperor's good favor, they had better find a way of making lots of money so the Imperial tax coffers would always stay full. The Paaslaan nobles noticed an abundance of sand in the area, so they made a major business of glassblowing. So far, it's profited the region and House Paaslaan greatly, adding one more world-famous commodity to the products Western merchants trade abroad.

Provincial House: House Paaslaan. This provincial house, which hasn't had a serious crisis since the Reconstruction, is content to oversee the coming and going of merchant vessels from its ports of call. Recently, Paaslaan nobles have begun sponsoring exploratory voyages into the Sea of Despair.

Provincial Capitol: Obrod (100,000 people). Obrod is a major industrial center for this region. Aside from many large glassblowing operations, the city has numerous quarries, metal-working shops and stonemasons. While a lot of these products are manufactured for export, particularly window glass, they are also available in town. It's said that nowhere else in the realm can you buy weapons or armor cheaper. It's also said that the dwarven guildmasters who run the workshops here have an unusually strong alliance with House Paaslaan. So much so that widespread discrimination against elves and kobolds is commonplace. Also, fully 60% of Obrod's population is comprised of slaves (mostly ores), most of whom toil in the various workshops. Poor treatment of these slaves will probably incite a major revolt sometime soon. In fact, an elven terrorist group

currently supplies orcish dissidents with weapons in hopes of breaking the power of Obrod's dwarven guildmasters.

Provincial Overview:

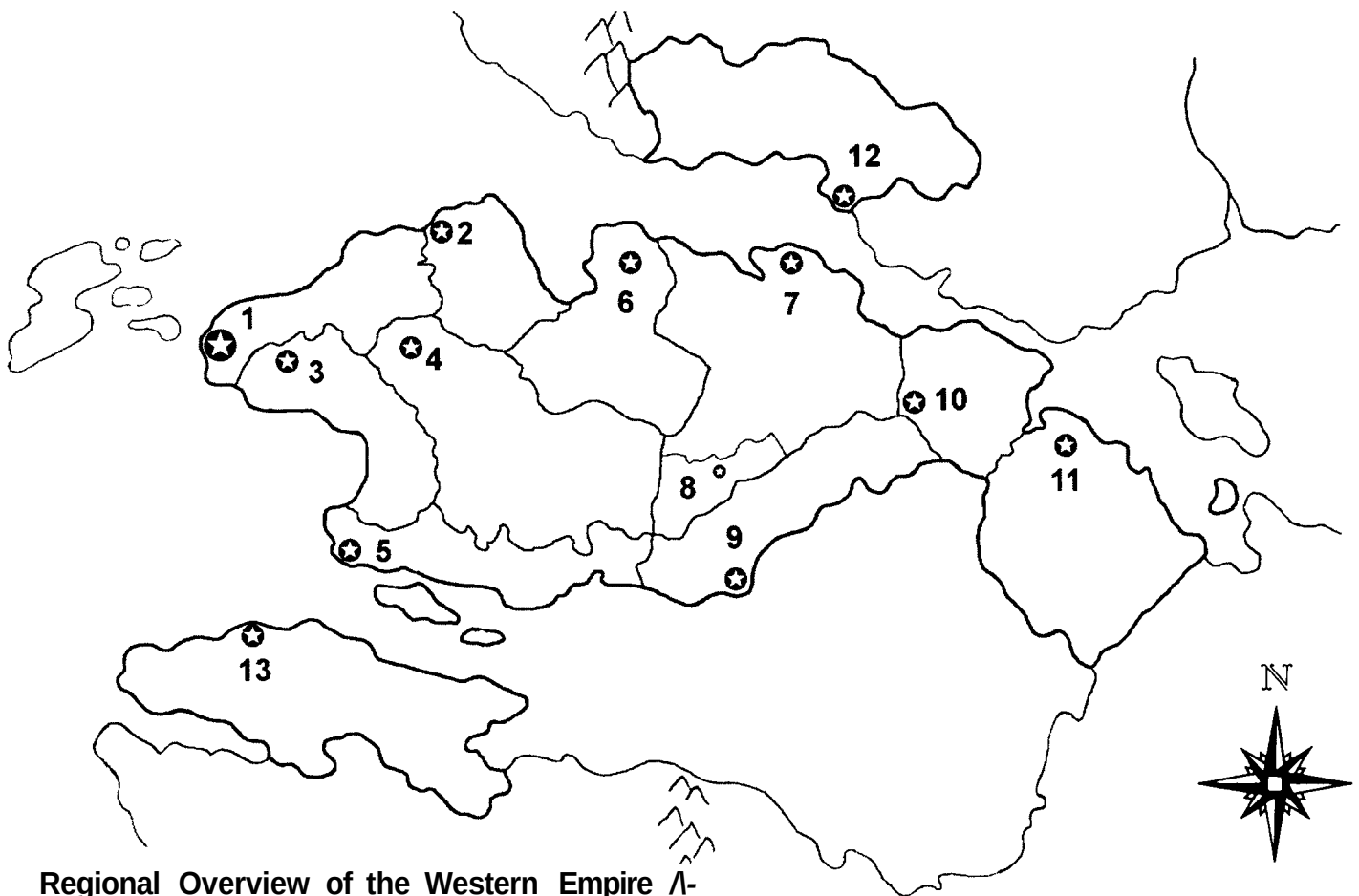
Milaszc ("mee-LAHCH") Province

This inland province's primary business is specialty wine and liquor production. The huge grape and fruit farms here all connect to central wineries and distilleries where thousands of gallons of various beverages are made, casked, and sent to laendria for shipping. Things have been fairly quiet here since the Reconstruction.

Provincial House: House Milaszc. During the Civil War's, the Milaszc nobles threatened to capture the Imperial Capitol and dissolve the Empire altogether. When Leopold I reconquered West Kighfalton, he purged this house of nearly all of its members, allowing those few who didn't break with the

Empire to rebuild the Noble House into something more pro-Emperor. Ever since, the rebuilt House Milaszc has been under close scrutiny. As a check against House Milaszc's power, the Emperor Itomas encouraged the Palladium Wizards' Guild (which is steadfastly loyal to him) to relocate their central chapterhouse to laendria. The Wizards' resulting influence on the town has kept House Milaszc weak. In addition, House Milaszc's military power is also kept very small — only a single battalion of soldiers — so that it will never again threaten regional or provincial stability.

Provincial Capitol: laendria (75,000 people). Like the other cities of the region, laendria has all the amenities and facilities of a major cosmopolitan center. An added perk is the national headquarters of the Palladium Wizards' Guild, one of the largest and most powerful unions of spell casters in the world. With the guild headquarters in town, the hundreds of affiliated high-level Wizards exert great influence on local government



Regional Overview of the Western Empire /-

- 1 : West Kighfalton. Regional Capitol: Caer Itom. Ruling Noble Family: House Itomas.
- 2: Upper Kighfalton. Regional Capitol: Caer Kurgas. Ruling Noble Family: House Ne'Klosh.
- 3: The Koerdian Mountains. Regional Capitol: Syrefald. Ruling Noble Family: House Oslof.
- 4: The Kighfalton Plains. Regional Capitol: Caer Netebbe. Ruling Noble Family: House Inindri.
- 5: Lower Barraduk. Regional Capitol: Iyancine. Ruling Noble Family: House Taerea.
- 6: The Vequerrel Woodlands. Regional Capitol: Pallisade. Ruling Noble Family: House Jaoradon.
- 7: The Middle Kingdoms. Regional Capitol: Epiphany. Ruling Noble Family: House Kaze.
- 8: The Southern Middle Kingdoms. Regional Capitol: Ghowell. Ruling Noble Family: House Krugazi.
- 9: The Scarlet Mountains. Regional Capitol: Colfax. Ruling Noble Family: House Valocek.
- 10: The Tarldet Plains. Regional Capitol: Arcadia. Ruling Noble Family: House Wenglid.
- 11: The Old Kingdom Frontier. Regional Capitol: Shinkasa. Ruling Noble Family: House Clynn.
- 12: The Ophid's Grasslands Colonies. Regional Capitol: Ophidia. Ruling Noble Family: House Belopo.
- 13: The Yin-Sloth Periphery. Regional Capitol: Caer Glaverius. Ruling Noble Family: House Glaverius.

and other issues. The downside of this is that House Milaszcz's power is deeply compromised by them. The upside is that with so many sorcerers in town, life here is extremely comfortable. Nearly every aspect of daily life is magically augmented. Homes are heated by eternal flames, and golems and elementals carry out routine maintenance of the city's infrastructure. Summoned creatures perform security. Flying, teleporting, and Fleet Feet are all preferred modes of transportation. Although *Caer Itom* still has more alchemists, magic items are relatively cheap here. For these reasons, laendria is also known as "The City of a Thousand Magicks." **Note:** The Wizards of laendria are very happy with their power base here, and will tolerate no competition. Thus, there are no strong churches or temples in town, and psychics are routinely harassed and encouraged to leave.

Regional Overview #2: Upper Kighfalton

Racial demographics for Upper Kighfalton:

58% Human
10% Elves
9% Dwarves
5% Kobold
4% Ore
4% Goblin
10% Other

Note: This does not include the massive slave population which is equal to 55% of the population! Mostly Ores (25%), Goblins (20%), Ratlings (20%), Ogres (5%) and others including humans. Nor does it include the transient population at the sea ports which are roughly 40% nonhuman or the swarms of Ratlings that in the sewers and subterranean tunnels under all the cities and port towns. The Ratling population is easily equal to 30% the overall population of the region, not including slaves.

Upper Kighfalton is a booming shoreline district on the peninsula's north shore. The region has always maintained close ties with West Kighfalton, and the regional house, *House Ne'klosh*, is quite friendly with House Itomas (the reigning Emperor). This region sustained heavy damage during the Civil Wars era, and many of its cities had to be rebuilt from scratch. On the positive side, Upper Kighfalton's Noble Houses were able to cash in on their loyalty to Emperor Leopold I, and as a result, received lots of help during the Reconstruction. Now, while other regions are still feeling the lingering effects from the civil wars, Upper Kighfalton thrives and prospers.

Most of the money to be made in Upper Kighfalton comes from its vineyards, orchards and spice grinding operations. Upper Kighfalton doesn't grow much of the raw materials for these within the region. Instead, they have exclusive agreements with the huge farms in the Kighfalton Plains region to buy their produce wholesale. Bulk shipments of grapes, spices and other

products are imported from the Kighfalton Plains, processed in Upper Kighfalton and sold for domestic resale or exportation to foreign ports of call. Upper Kighfalton is also a major producer and exporter of fine Western Champagne, wines, grain alcohol, blown glass, hand-crafted furniture, metalwork, and stone masonry.

Despite all the profit from manufacturing operations, Upper Kighfalton still has a fairly small commercial market thanks to the region's unfortunate location. Upper Kighfalton has a lot of nice seafront ports, but merchants from the south tend to buy and sell in *Caer Itom* or along the coast of the *Lower Barraduk* region. Merchants sailing in from the north are in short supply because very few dare sail through the Sea of Dread. Those who do, generally shoot through the northern straits for ports of call along the coast of the Middle Kingdoms or other stops within the Inland Sea. So, Upper Kighfalton must be content with being an export seacoast. But as long as people are making money, nobody's complaining.

Another thing that's helped to strengthen commerce and trade in the region is the renewed colonization efforts in Ophid's Grasslands and the Northern Wilderness. Emperor Itomas has been sending huge amounts of personnel and supplies to these new lands, and Upper Kighfalton is the perfect staging point for these brief overseas voyages, as well as a supply junction for the colonists and troops. The Vequerrel Woodlands don't have the port facilities needed to launch such expeditions, and the Middle Kingdom region is far too politically unstable to allow any colonization parties to enter. Their loss is Upper Kighfalton's gain, which charges tolls for each colony ship to enter and exit its ports.

Politically, Upper Kighfalton is rock solid. The Noble Houses were all allied together in some way during the civil wars and Emperor Leopold's reconquest of the realm, and they have managed to keep close relations ever since. It is a bond few other regions can boast about.

Unfortunately, all is not rosy. Despite the current stability among the nobles, many of the rebuilt cities in this region have serious crime problems, rampant cultism, and hordes of angry Ratlings, Goblins, and other subterranean non-humans who were driven from their homes during the cities' rebuilding period, and are the targets of organized military extermination. Indeed, hardly a night goes by without a few people either turning up missing or getting assaulted and robbed by subterranean denizens. Worse, at least a few times a week, bodies are found that have been partially devoured by man-eating subhumans (mostly Ratlings and Goblins), ritually mutilated by cult members, or branded or scarred with the mark of a Ratling gang, or thieves' or assassins' guild. Such dark (and apparently unstoppable) violence casts a long shadow on Upper Kighfalton's otherwise glowing state of growth and prosperity.



Regional House: House Ne'klosh

Another of the old, great houses, House Ne'klosh can trace its lineage all the way to the first human warlords who founded the Western Empire nearly 6,000 years ago. Since that time, it's been a turbulent ride for the House, which has changed names seven times and risen to the Imperial Seat twice (losing it both times in bloody civil wars). Still, no misfortune has ever been enough to shatter this proud noble family.

House Ne'klosh was one of the first major noble powers to be subdued by Leopold I, and quickly became a supporter of the Great Emperor and his Reconstruction. Today, House Ne'klosh is one of Itomas' strongest supporters. Like House Itomas, it is known to be one of impeccable (Western) character, meaning that it does what it says, and it says what it means. While Ne'klosh is constantly scheming as to how to get back to the Imperial Seat, its loyalty and honor have never been questioned. Rather than usurp the Imperial Seat from its rightful holder, House Ne'klosh would much rather position itself in such a way that it might inherit the house if a disaster were to befall the Imperial House. Many other regional houses scoff at Ne'klosh's unusual patience and timidity, citing its lack of ruthlessness as the reason why the house has been in 2nd place for so long. To House Ne'klosh, such barbs are irrelevant. After all, their house has lasted for 6,000 years when no other Noble House has survived as long. To the Ne'klosh nobles, it's far better to be alive and prosper for 6,000 years than to die at the top after only one hundred.

House Ne'klosh is the strongest regional house in the Empire, after House Itomas. As such, it holds an informal authority over the other regional houses (and hence, the jealous barbs and criticisms directed at House Ne'klosh). This is backed up predominantly by the house's vast wealth and military power. Every port in Upper Kighfalton charges money for export vessels and colony ships to use their facilities. A good chunk of this money goes to the port owners, usually the local Noble Houses, who in return, kick a lot of that to their provincial lord. They, in turn, kick a portion of what they receive to House Ne'klosh. When one considers how much exportation and other port usage that goes on there, House Ne'klosh gets a lot of money for doing almost nothing. Rather than squander this ongoing windfall on drugs, parties and extravagant social occasions, the Ne'klosh nobles have wisely invested it to finance one of the toughest regional militaries in the Empire. House Ne'klosh makes a habit of honing its troops abilities' by sending them out to destroy pirates operating off the north coast or even occasional forays into the Sea of Despair on sea serpent hunts. Unfortunately, such foolhardy ventures often result in missing ships and soldiers instead of trophies for the barracks. More than anything, though, House Ne'klosh maintains a large military to show off its wealth and influence (and to keep it).

This House is on friendly terms with other pro-Imperial regional Houses, especially the Houses *Oslof* and *Inindri*. Ne'klosh also maintains a friendly acquaintance with House *Jaoradon* of the neighboring *Vequerrel* Woodlands because both maintain a friendly border with one another. House *Belopo* of the Ophid's Grasslands Colony courts House Ne'klosh's favor in the hopes of borrowing money and getting better discounts on supplies, but Ne'klosh rarely entertains such overtures seriously.

On the down side, House Ne'klosh's leaders exhibit some of the excessive lifestyles and overspending that have made Western nobility infamous. While the House elders have not fallen into this lifestyle, many of the young **up-and-comers** of the House are pretty much spoiled brats who know little of leadership and show no inclination to handle their inherited power responsibly. This deeply concerns the House elders, who fear the House will fall on hard times once they are gone. This also deeply concerns House Itomas, who might lose a powerful ally if drug-addled and decadent idiots take over the region and run it into ruin.

House Ne'klosh's most notable members include:



Skluud Ne'klosh: House elder and presiding lord (I.Q. 16, M.E. 15, M.A. 17, 8th level noble, principled alignment). Skluud is nearly 60, but still of sharp mind and sound body. He is known for having an extremely even temper and prefers to wait as long as possible before taking any sort of action — just to be sure he isn't rushing into anything. He remains very active in Imperial, regional and provincial politics, but has been cutting back his role in deference to his son, *Spagla*, whom he is cultivating to inherit his seat as House Elder and Regional Lord. Skluud realizes that Spagla is a shiftless, addle-minded misanthrope who possesses not a shred of leadership qualities. Unfortunately, he feels bound by the ancient patriarchal traditions to hand the house over to the eldest boy. Secretly, he wishes he could find the nerve to defy tradition and turn the House over to his daughter, *Vost*, who would make an excellent regional ruler. He has even learned that Vost plans to quietly depose her brother once he ascends to the regional seat. Although this tech-

nically constitutes treason, Skluud ignores this information and takes no action, hoping in the end it will all work out for the best. To do otherwise, would mean imprisoning his most favorite child, which he would have to do (at the very least) if he were to personally intervene. No, he'll let fate and his ambitious daughter work things out when he's gone.

Ketke Ne'klosh: Skluud's wife and secret advisor (I.Q. 18, M.E. 12, M.A. 16, P.E. 6, P.B. 14, 5th level noble, unprincipled alignment). Ketke was a spy in her younger, wilder days as an Imperial courtesan. Since marrying Skluud Ne'klosh, she has settled down and prefers to observe the goings-on of the Regional Court, keeping abreast of everything. Nothing escapes this woman's notice. Nothing. That's why comparatively little chicanery goes on at the Ne'klosh court — because everybody knows that eventually Lady Ketke will find out. And if there is one thing Western nobles dislike, it's other people having sensitive information on them. Ketke's health is starting to fail, and she will most likely die within the next year or two. Ketke's death will shatter her husband, to whom she has been married for nearly 40 years. It is widely whispered that when Ketke dies, her husband will soon follow her, dying of a broken heart. Ketke and Skluud's love, fidelity and devotion to each other is indeed rare among other nobles these days. The pair is praised by the old-timers and cultural conservatives who mourn the passing of the old tradition and adherence to personal honor. However, the pair are also mocked and disregarded by younger nobles who think such monogamy is for simps.

Vost Ne'klosh: Eldest daughter of Skluud and Ketke, she has inherited her mother's wildness, sharp wit, wiles and ambition (I.Q. 21, M.E. 20, M.A. 22, P.S. 14, P.P. 12, P.E. 13, P.B. 10, Spd. 18, 6th level noble, anarchist alignment — she has secretly studied under *Master Shang*, is one of his most driven and hard-working students, and knows Hand to Hand: Expert, W.P. Paired Weapons and W.P. Targeting — skills not normally taught to aristocratic females). What Vost lacks in outstanding physical beauty she makes up for with intelligence, social grace and charisma. On the strength of her personality alone, she is one of the most eligible noblewomen in the Empire.

Ambitious and brazen (sometimes to the point of savage **ruthlessness**), she intends to depose her loutish brother from the Regional seat not long after he ascends to it. Her plan is to become the first woman to literally "seize" a seat of power held by males for six thousand years. Vost has already set into motion her quiet bid for power. If all goes right, it should be quick and non-violent, but she is prepared for the alternative. She already has the support of most of the Generals in the Ne'klosh House's military, and her network of spies and informants have enabled Vost to keep her enemies from forming secret plans against her. Up against this kind of preparation, many of Spagla **Ne'klosh's** supporters have quietly conceded their defeat to Vost already, assuring her that when the time comes, they will not protest her claim to the House seat. So far, everything is working perfectly, and this could be the cleanest coup d'etat in Western history. But anything can go wrong between now and then. Meanwhile, Vost resents that she must resort to such political and military maneuvering, and that because she's a woman, she's not even being considered for the position when she's genuinely best suited for it. This has hardened her heart toward her father, while her contempt for her worthless brother borders on hatred.

She hopes she can reconcile with her father one day, but she fears that will never happen.

Spagla Ne'klosh: Spagla (I.Q. 12, M.E. 7, M.A. 6, P.S. 9, P.P. 8, P.E. 10, P.B. 18, Spd. 7, 4th level noble) always figured he'd inherit the family throne when his father died. As a result, this shiftless snob has loafed his entire life, never working for anything because ... why bother? Someday he'll inherit it all anyway, won't he? He is not stupid, but has never tried to use his intelligence or develop his talents. Nowadays, Spagla is a loutish pretty boy who lives in a drug-fogged stupor, nurses various drug addictions and suffers from venereal diseases that are slowly ravaging both his mind and body. In his wing of the Regional Palace, he holds a sad parody of his father's court. Only his court is populated by all sorts of con-men and grubby leeches who are either fellow drug addicts or lowlifes trying to suck up to the apparent, future Regional Lord. It's little wonder that Vost intends to depose him when he comes to power. Everybody knows he is a miscreant who will fritter away his wealth, power and position, and drag the Imperial House of Ne'klosh and Upper Kighfalcon down with him. The only thing that stands in **Vost's** way is that years ago, before his descent into drug-induced mindlessness, Spagla hired a skilled assassin to be his bodyguard for life. If Vost ever attempts a palace coup, this assassin, *Ishtig Vrebuss* (9th level, aberrant), will do all he can (including murdering Vost) to preserve his patron's power. Ironically, if Lord Skluud Ne'klosh (the father) broke with tradition and placed Vost in the House seat, there would be little opposition and strong support.

Ishtig Vrebuss is a master spy and assassin, a "freelance patriot" whose services have greatly profited House Ne'klosh over the years (I.Q. 13, P.S. 19, P.P. 21, P.E. 17, 7th level assassin, aberrant alignment, and loyal to Spagla). It is a custom of the House to always keep a skilled assassin on a generous enough retainer to assure loyalty. Ishtig, an aberrant elf, has already served House Ne'klosh for 12 years and is likely to continue serving for many more. Whenever Skluud Ne'klosh has found it necessary to order a killing, have something stolen, or a spying mission carried out, the job has fallen to Ishtig. However, this assassin is also in the private employ of Spagla Ne'klosh and acts as his guardian angel. Ishtig's loyalty to Spagla and his noteworthy skill as a killer will make him a dangerous wildcard should Vost ever try to usurp the family throne. Why exactly, he is so devoted to Spagla is a mystery to all.

Ormod Kossig: Ormod (I.Q. 19, M.E. 18, M.A. 11, P.S. 13, P.P. 18, P.E. 15, P.B. 8, Spd. 8, 10th level wizard, 9th level **summoner**, 6th level diabolist, aberrant alignment; completely loyal to Skluud Ne'klosh) is the "High Wizard of Upper Kighfalcon" and mystical advisor to Skluud Ne'klosh. **Ormod's** duties include advising and protecting Lord Ne'klosh and providing "magical security" at the Regional Palace — he cracks down on any unauthorized use of magic within the palace walls. Ormod is given a two month sabbatical every year, usually to coincide with the seasonal lull of political activity at the Imperial Court. During this time, Ormod disappears for parts unknown. He always returns on time, however, but sometimes bears the marks of having experienced physical peril — new robes, wounds and injuries still healing, scars, a limp, etc. In his free time at court, Ormod works in his large and incredibly well-stocked laboratory, atop a High Mage's Tower on the east

wing of the Regional Palace. Only a select few people are allowed up there, including Lord and Lady Ne'klosh and Vost Ne'klosh. Ormod keeps all of his possessions there, including several minor rune weapons (he has established a connection with none of them, curiously enough), a very large spell book (each page acts as it were a single-spell scroll), and a number of demons Ormod has successfully trapped in stoppered clay jars covered with special containment wards. Ormod generally keeps to himself, but he respects Vost Ne'klosh and has a deep friendship with Skluud Ne'klosh. His contempt for Spagla Ne'klosh and his cronies runs so strong that he has often considered obliterating the whole lot of them, regardless of how Lord Ne'klosh would react.

Regional Capital: Caer Kurgas

Population: 150,000

Human: 64,500

Orc: 37,500

Dwarf: 16,500

Goblin & Hobgoblin: 13,500

Wolfen: 3,000

Other: 15,000 (Ratlings not included)

Named after the long-dead noble family that founded it nearly 5,000 years ago, Caer Kurgas is a grand and vibrant metropolis, with many of the luxuries and specialties available in Caer Itom. The city was mostly destroyed during the Civil Wars era but has since been rebuilt. Today, the city is a model of urban planning, laid out in an orderly grid pattern with wide streets, and brand-new sewer and aqueduct systems.

Caer Kurgas is an industrial center with many glassblowing, spice grinding, and manufacturing sites. The dockworks in town also buzz with activity, and so do the commercial districts. If the good times continue like this, the people of Caer Kurgas will hardly know what to do with all their money. Which brings us to Caer Kurgas' next big industry ...

Since the Reconstruction, Caer Kurgas has become a major banking center that caters to clients across the Empire. Best known for their security and discretion (no questions asked), the banks in Caer Kurgas are used by Western nobles, adventurers, criminals, alchemists, and others to store huge sums of money.

As mentioned before in the regional overview, Caer Kurgas has a number of serious problems. First of all, the Ratlings, goblins and other subterranean creatures are still angry about being displaced when Imperial engineers rebuilt the sewers. Seeking revenge, these sewer critters have begun attacking surface dwellers at night, taking special delight in snatching the rich and privileged off the streets, and sometimes from their beds.

Another problem is all of the freshly founded thieves' guilds that sprung up while the city was being rebuilt. Now that the construction is over and there are no more workers to supply an underworld economy, the thieves (33% goblin, 20% other nonhumans) are finding new targets, sparking a crime wave across town and along trade routes. So far, nobody's hit one of the banks in town, but that's just a matter of time. On the other hand, the banks are outspoken about the magical and military protection in places, and one would need an earth elemental or dragon to punch through the walls of one of the vaults.

And then there's the *vampire problem*, a blight that has existed from place to place and time to time throughout the West-

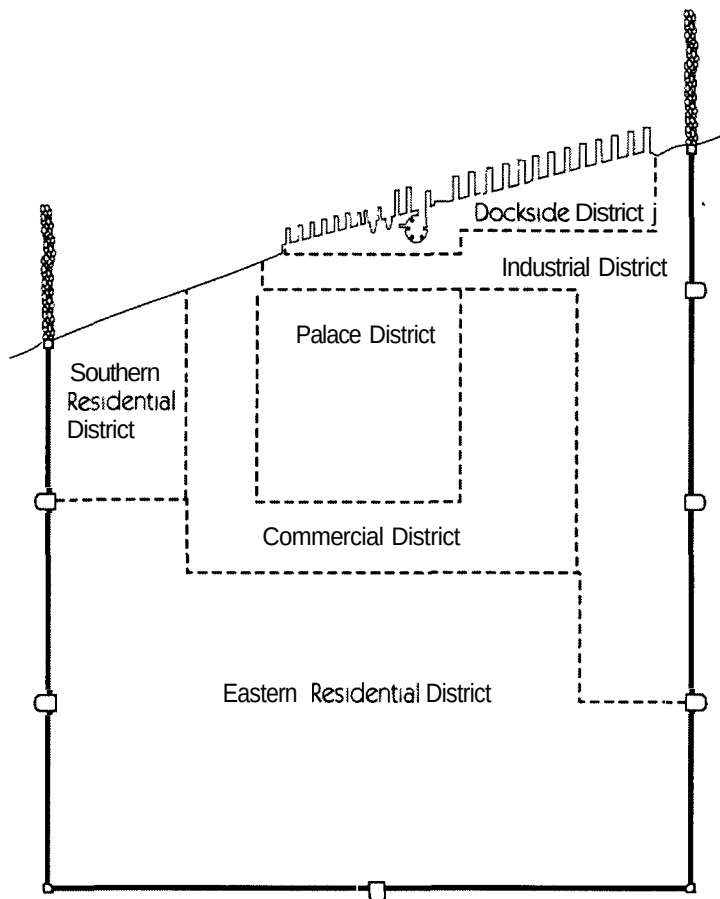
ern Empire for thousands of years. Since the beginning, Caer Kurgas has been plagued by the presence of a large and powerful "family" of vampires that live in secret catacombs far beneath the city. These predators mostly target the lost souls of the dock areas and other shady districts of town, and their presence is something often whispered about. The local nobles pretend the problem doesn't exist, but the townspeople know better. Every night, they clutch their holy symbols and dare not wander the streets if they can avoid it. Over the years, the city has become a major source of occult research, and the hunting ground for Undead Hunters, Holy Crusaders and Witch Hunters from the south (see *Yin Sloth Jungles, Book 7*), but this still hasn't offered a way to break the spell of terror these vampires have on the city.

Thinking themselves cursed, many townsfolk have secretly turned to worshipping gods of darkness, demons, and devils in a vain attempt to appeal to a greater power that could call off the night-feeders. What's worse, the local churches and temples have proven to be powerless against these creatures, making the situation seem even worse.



Caer Kurgas

Description & Code Key



Palace District

1. Regional Palace. Home of House Ne'klosh and its staff and advisors. Guests are welcome to stay in the adjacent palace within the compound. The Regional Guard, a Battalion (1,500 troops) of House Ne'Klosh's best soldiers, are housed in a third building on the grounds here. Lord Skluud Ne'Klosh holds court in the main chambers of the palace. The lesser chambers and offices house the administrative and managerial offices for the Caer Kurgas city government. Nearly 10 million gold went into rebuilding the palace, which is now the envy of many other Western nobles.

2. Regional Plaza. Modeled after the Imperial Plaza in Caer Itom, this open-air courtyard has a mammoth public fountain in the center topped by an eternal flame.

3. Regional Barracks. This is where the rest of the regional military is housed when not on patrol or on maneuvers. A parade ground and training yard are also on the premises.

4. Wizard's College. A formal university for the study and practice of wizardry. House Ne'Klosh sponsors this school in the hopes of cultivating a small army of spell casters who will be loyal to the noble family. The university also doubles as the primary Wizards' Guild for Caer Kurgas.

5. High Temple of the Northern Gods. This pantheon is one of the most influential in town (the other being the Pantheon

of Rurga). The priests of the Northern Gods have considerable influence within the regional court, since *Sklud Ne 'Klosh* and the Temple's high priests and priestesses all owe each other serious political favors. This temple doesn't like the rising power of the Pantheon of Rurga, and is considering asking House Ne'Klosh to help them halt the rival sect's growth ... whatever that may entail. This temple is very majestic and draws thousands of worshippers every week. The tithes collected here are kept in a massive vault until they are magically **teleported** to the Upper Kighfalon Regional Bank every month. Within this temple are separate shrines for Od, **Epim**, **Locknar**, **Hoknar**, Heim, Belimar, Wolvenar and **Hel**. Although services are held only once daily, worshippers are welcome here at all times.

6. High Temple of the Pantheon of Rurga. The next biggest religious temple in town, with specific shrines to Rurga, Cirga, Panath, **Kalba** and Lista. The Pantheon of Rurga can bend House Ne'Klosh's ear when it really needs to, but with the Pantheon of the Northern Gods already in place, what's the point in competing with them for the same favors? The Pantheon of Rurga grows more popular each day, with its emphasis on justice, truth, and uncompromising morality. Given the crime wave and rampant attacks by non-humans on townsfolk, Rurga is a welcome addition to the lives of these frightened city folks. The pantheon's priests figure that if they combat the crime, the Ratling population and the vampires in town, it will earn them enough popular support to directly compete with the pantheon of the Northern Gods on equal footing. Their ultimate goal, of course, is to surpass the Church of the Northern Gods and become "the" religious power in Caer Kurgas. To that end, the Pantheon of Rurga routinely hires adventurers and other **freebooters** on expeditions to destroy Ratlings, crack thieves' guilds, or help locate the vampires that have been plaguing the city.

7. Imperial Embassy and Barracks. This compound houses the official office of the Imperial government as well as the barracks for the Upper Kighfalon region's garrison of Imperial troops.

Commercial District

8. Otto Bost's Fine Stringed Instruments. Otto Bost is a talkative human who's an expert on the mandolin and lute. He sells the best stringed instruments in the city, and has connections with many of the local entertainment troupes. As a result, he's a good source of inside information on a variety of topics, including rumors concerning local nobility and affairs at court.

9. Master Shang's Dojo. For 2,000 gold, a student gets a three month crash-course in the "art" of hand to hand combat; upon graduation, the student's fighting skill is upgraded from basic to expert or from expert to martial arts (The Master will not teach the arts of the assassin). In the alternative, the course can give the character one of the following physical or W.P. skills: boxing, wrestling, gymnastics or W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Staff, or W.P. Targeting. Note: The character must devote 70 hours a week to his training for the entire 12 week program. If there is a lengthy break in the training (4+ days) or the student is not serious, or is too distracted by other things (adventuring, partying, love life, family, politics, etc.), the time spent training will not provide the additional skill or change in hand to hand combat. In fact, Master Shang is likely to counsel his student on priorities, focus, commitment and spiritual peace, then dismiss him before the training is complete (and without a refund), **tell-**

ing him to **return** when he is at peace with himself and able to focus. Subsequent training takes twice as long to improve or master a new combat skill (each taking the place of a future Secondary Skill or Other O.C.C. Related skill); three training sessions maximum.

Master **Shang** is a 14th level, human, warrior monk who appears to be over 100 years old. He is of unprincipled alignment and a hard taskmaster who brooks no chicanery or treachery. All profits made by the dojo are donated to local charities and temples. Shang has 13 Master-level disciples/students ranging from 7th to 10th level warrior monks. Each teaches the majority of his classes and protects the honor of the dojo as is necessary. Training at the Dojo is usually limited to about one hundred students at a time and is typically booked three years in advance. However, Master Shang and his Second, an aberrant elf by the name of Master **Zylln**, are the only ones who can make an exception and admit somebody ahead of the rest; a rarity. When such an exception is made, it is either due to special circumstances or because the Master sees something special in the individual. None of the monks have time for nonsense or open politics. All are dedicated to their martial disciplines and helping the less fortunate.

10. A Thimbleful of Sauce. A shop that offers Western whiskeys, bourbons, brandies, and a small variety of regional moonshine at fair prices and at quantity discounts (three cases or more, 20% discount, 20 or more, 35%).

11. The Bailiwick. An old, old, old tavern and grill house. Nobody knows where the name came from, but it's too much a part of tradition to mess with. A place to get a hardy meal, southern rum, and stout beer for high, but fair prices. A local favorite.

12. Mileena's Spellworks. Owned by Mileena, a beautiful Elven alchemist who specializes in scroll manufacturing, and teaching spell magic to Wizards and circle magic to Summoners and Diabolists. Mileena has become very successful over the years, and now lets her stable of young apprentices do most of her work. Average turnaround time for a specially made scroll is only one or two days. Otherwise, any single wizard spell can be purchased on a scroll, up to 6th level. Cost for a single-spell scroll is 3,000 gold per level of the spell.

Mileena (anarchist alignment, 225 years old, but looks 35) doesn't do much work anymore, devoting her time to research and hobnobbing with her rich and powerful clients. She still does commissioned scrolls for special clients, if the price is right. Rumor has it she knows several spells that nobody else knows, having converted them from an ancient scroll she is said to have found in an ancient **dwarven** ruin a century ago. She is also interested in truly rare magic items and ancient magic (some say, including forbidden magic).

13. The Financial Office of Archimedes Schaff. Archimedes is a financial consultant who helps folks invest extra cash into a variety of long-term ventures. He's got a great reputation for reliability and honesty.

14. Rings and Things. This shop has large inventories of magic rings and talismans for list price to 15% above. Numerous other types of jewelry with both unique, nonmagical features and value, as well as those with magical properties are available. The proprietor can create rings that can cast a single spell (regardless of P.P.E. cost) three times daily. The costs of

such "spell rings" is 5,000 gold pieces for each level of the spell (maximum enchantment is up to seventh level), plus 3,000 to 6,000 gold pieces for the fine quality jewelry and the service of his staff. Thus, a ring enchanted to cast Energy Bolt (a Level Three spell) would cost 15,000 gold plus 3,000-6,000 gold for the jewelry itself. Rings that can cast multiple spells can also be commissioned — the same pricing scheme applies, except there is an additional 10,000 gold for each additional spell added to the ring. So, a ring that is enchanted to cast Blinding Flash, Chameleon and Energy Bolt would cost 50,000 gold — 5,000 for the Blinding Flash, 10,000 for the Chameleon, 15,000 for the Energy Bolt, and 20,000 gold tacked on for the two extra spells. No matter how many spells are on one of the rings, they can only cast three spells total per day.

15. Alchemical Renderings. Keeps almost no premade inventory; specializes in custom-making items to order. A bit slow and pricey, but excellent work. The place to visit for those wanting to create a new type of magic item or to tweak a standard one (typically double normal costs).

16. Second Time Around. This antique shop has it all, from old clothes to adventuring gear. It's all old and second-hand, so the quality isn't the greatest, but the prices are hard to beat (50-60% less than a new equivalent). Run by an ultra-skinny human who's got a quavering voice. He's suspected of being a Summoner and it is rumored that he uses his shop as a cover.

17. Antiquary. A small shop overflowing with reasonably priced second-hand stuff.

18. Yellow Taxi. This small operation uses brightly painted yellow wagons to ferry people and cargo through town. The drivers are a bit reckless, however.

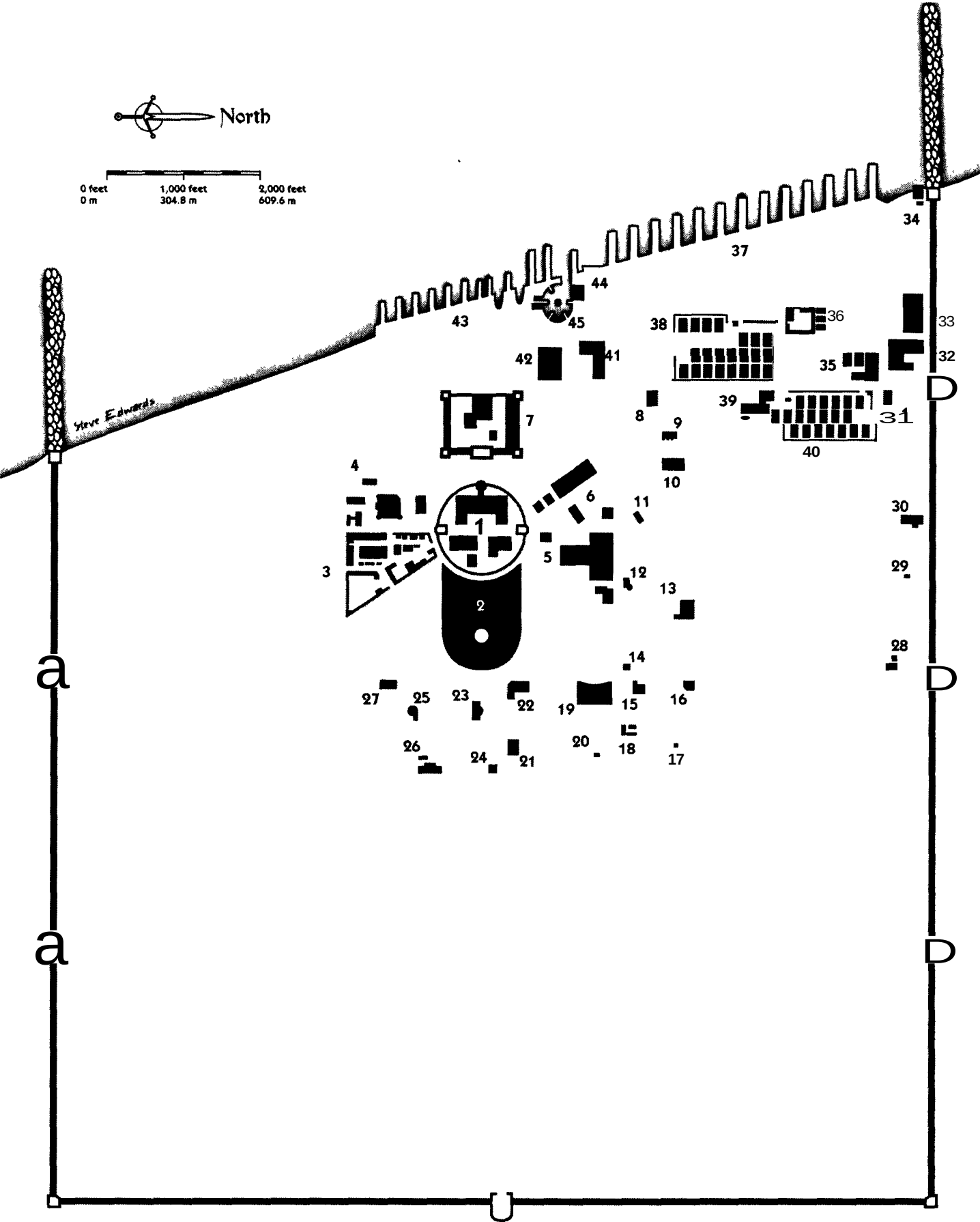
19. Northern Imperial Bank. A large and well-run operation. House Ne'klosh does a great amount of business with this bank. Apparently they stock their tax money here and let it accrue interest for a year before using it for anything. It is heavily protected by magic and combatants trained by Master Shang.

20. Up in Smoke. A top-notch tobacco shop run by an erudite-looking Kobold. This smoke shop is a big neighborhood hangout for many of the older folks living in the area. They're likely to know odd bits of news and rumors, but they're also likely to get the details wrong.

21. Exotic Armaments. This weapons shop sells all kinds of oddball weapons brought in from around the world, including giant-sized weapons and armor. Prices are fair and quality is good. **G.M. Note:** This is a good place for characters to find some of the weirder weapons found in *Palladium's Compendium of Weapons, Armour and Castles*, an excellent weapons reference.

22. Sage. An expert source on treasure hunting. Definitely the guy to consult with about odd maps, lore, and other such mysteries. Consulting fees are 1,000 gold per hour, but this guy knows all the legends of the Western Empire and Old Kingdom, can authenticate maps and spot forgeries with a glance (90% skill), can offer tips about the region and warn treasure hunters of little known dangers and/or past attempts and why they may have failed, or what is believed to have happened to the last treasure hunters. He can also authenticate and evaluate ancient currency, books, and artifacts (90%). Rumor has it he personally knows of at least a dozen major treasure troves out there waiting to be plundered, and is ever vigilant for the right group of trust-

Caer Kurgas



worthy adventurers to bring it back to him for a eminently fair cut (he gets 40% and first pick of premium items, the group gets 60%). "The Sage" appears to be an elf in his **hundreds**, which means he must be 500 years old or older. Nobody knows what other powers or secrets he may hold.

23. The Blue Light. A moderately priced but very clean bordello. Little does the public know that this place really is a front for a mysterious, all-woman assassins' guild. They are all very skilled and demand top prices for their services. Anybody who discovers this place's secret ends up dead.

24. Omar the Furniture Guy. A fat, jolly human who sells hardwood furniture from underneath a large tent. (Omar is claustrophobic and won't live or work inside any building that has walls.) Although folks blow Omar off as an idiot, he really is a shrewd businessman — but that doesn't stop him from playing the part of a fool in order to lure clients into being taken for suckers.

25. The Shadow Lands. A small **showhouse** that specializes in shadow plays. There are several different screens here, so multiple shows go on simultaneously, making the central seating area a bit chaotic. On the main screen, actors use life-sized shadow puppets that resemble warriors and monsters, putting on amazing shows depicting battles and high adventure. Lately, this has become a place where young actors get noticed and join more prestigious troupes.

26. Grinning Goblin. Yep, the ever-popular tavern franchise has branched out here, too. A nice, if predictable, tavern and inn.

27. Financiers' Collective. A group office of accountants, lawyers, brokers, investment consultants and other financial professionals.

Industrial District

This sprawling area of production facilities runs into the city's dockside district, creating a large industrial-wharf area. At night, this place can be pretty dangerous, what with all the Ratlings, Goblins, and cutthroats lurking about. This section of town is also a favorite hunting ground of the city's vampires.

28. Glassblower. One of many in this part of the realm. These folks produce lots of low-grade glass items, like drinking glasses and windowpanes.

29. Exotic Glassblower. The owner and operator of this little place is a talented glassblower who's gone slightly mad. As a result, his creations are really bizarre. However, local art collectors have recently discovered this guy's work, so now he's become a hot commodity, producing his warped works for top bidders.

30. Harlg's Mill. Harlg is a hard-driving human who makes uniforms for most of the noble militaries in this province. He cruelly mistreats his **orc** slaves, and he hoards nearly all of his profits in a hidden safe back at his country estate.

31. Spinner's Hall. This clothing factory is owned and managed by Rogas, a meek-looking human. Rogas is actually a Changeling Mind Mage (3rd level) whose true identity was discovered a few years back in another part of the Empire, so he's taken a new identity and has been on the run ever since. He has a good deal of his money and belongings packed up and ready to go in case he feels the need to flee. Rogas is skittish and paranoid.

32. Winery. Huge vats crank out thousands of gallons of potent wine every month. The operation sends all of it to the city's dockworks, where large merchant ships take the cargo to ports within the Inland Sea.

33. Spiceworks. A large spice grinding factory run by a hard-driving human who manages a work force of nearly 300 **orc** slaves. All spices processed here are exported, mostly to other parts of the empire.

34. Tannery. Produces all kinds of leather goods.

35. Liquor Production. A huge distillery that specializes in hard alcohol. This is another factory with a high fire hazard — with all the flammable vapors in the place, it would take a single open flame to set the whole building off like a gigantic bomb.

36. Slaughterhouse and Meat Packing. Most of the beef comes here from the Kighfalon plains. Nearly all of the product goes to feeding the people of Caer Kurgas.

37. Caer Kurgas Regional Docks. A vast series of slips and wharves run by the local government. Despite all of this place's competition, it's still the safest place to land a boat. Entry/exit fee: 50 gold each way.

38. Warehouse Section. Nearly two dozen large warehouses are here, most of them used by export firms. One or two lie empty, however, usually used by thieves as a temporary headquarters.

39. Furniture Factory. Imports wood from the **Vequerrel** Woodlands, processes it, and exports it.

40. Old Warehouse Section. Similar to #38, except the buildings are older and security isn't as tight.

41. Spice Grinding. Standard operation.

42. Glassworks. A large operation producing a wide variety of goods, from mundane glasswares to finely **crafted** trinkets.

43. City Marina and Docks. The official docking facility of the city and largely reserved for military traffic, colony ships, and other **VIP** vessels. Heavily guarded and patrolled.

44. Private Marinas. These **for-profit** dock facilities turn decent profits, even after paying the heavy taxes levied on them by House Ne'Klosh. A few of these operations have recently turned to smuggling and drug-running, which adds to the already serious underworld presence in this part of town.

45. Caer Kurgas Shipyard. The only place in town where major repairs, upgrades and modifications can be done to ocean-going vessels. This place has its own small dock where ships are stowed while being worked on. There are a few smaller vessels for sale here, typically those dropped off for repair but never picked up. They can be bought for 60% of their market value, but there's no guarantee that their rightful owners won't come looking for them. Currently available are two Western Merchantmen, an Eastern Mercantile, and a Byzantium Lighter. All ships are in good condition but have seen considerable use.

Southern Residential District

The nice part of town to live in. The Southern District was largely populated by nobles and prominent military figures for thousands of years. Since the Reconstruction, however, lots of newly rich industrialists have moved in — much to the distaste of the neighborhood's old families. Of all of the sections of Caer Kurgas, this one was damaged the least during periods of civil

unrest, so there remain a lot of old houses and estates. Many of these are said to be haunted; something that the families living in them gradually learn to accept. As news of hauntings spreads, it will only be a matter of time before freelance ghostbusters flock to this end of town.

Notable residents of the Southern Residential

District include:

- The owner and manager of the Glassworks (#42). This fellow struck a deal with a deevil lord to gain control of the operation, and his grace period is coming to an end. This guy is becoming frantic about finding a way to get out of his infernal contract.
- A scholar who has authored ten different translations of *Chantico Thought*, the incomprehensible book read and memorized by followers of the mad god Chantico.
- A rich widow interested in becoming immortal.
- An accountant of the Northern Imperial Bank (#19), who has embezzled over 350,000 gold from his employer. He's now looking for a way to liquidate all of his belongings and get the hell out of town before anybody finds out. He hopes to make it to Phi or Lopan and settle down to a quiet and unassuming life.
- Everyone mistakenly thinks this guy's a sweet old man who wouldn't hurt a fly. In reality, he's a freaky old codger who keeps several wretched individuals chained up in his basement, where he tortures them regularly. He is miscreant evil, and a secret follower of a Death Cult.

Eastern Residential District

The home of Caer Kurgas' work force, this area has grown exponentially in the last 20 years as the industrial sites in town have begun to turn amazing profits.

A problem this part of town will eventually have to face is racial strife: nearly 60% of the Eastern District is human, **elven** or **dwarven**, but the remaining 40% is made up of **free orcs**, kobolds and goblins. So far, all races here live in tight-knit, racially segregated neighborhoods. But once this section runs out of room to grow, these neighborhoods will eventually spill over into each other, and simmering racial tensions will flare up. It doesn't help that there is a growing streak of human supremacy within the human part of this district.

Notable residents of the Eastern Residential District include:

- A shrewd human who, along with his elf and dwarf **partners**, wishes to form a single workers' union for the city. This guy is keeping his plans secret for now, because he knows if the factory owners hear of them, they will certainly assassinate him.
- A spice grinder who anonymously publishes "**Pureblood**," a **hatemongering** newsletter that advocates human supremacy and encourages the harassment and eventual deportation of all "monster races" from Caer Kurgas. This vile publication is growing in **popularity**, especially among young factory workers.
- An insane goblin artist who paints portraits in dwarven blood on canvases made of tanned elven skin, using brushes made of human hair. Where does he get his materials?

- A free **orc** who is scheming to murder a prominent human supremacist in town.
- The great-grandson of a once-prominent local noble. This guy wants very much to get back in the politics game, and is amassing the wealth to do so.

Provincial Breakdown of Upper Kighfalon

Upper Kighfalon breaks into four provinces. The regional province, controlled by House Ne'Klosh, consists of Caer Kurgas and its surrounding lands. The other three provinces in Upper Kighfalon are Amberhall Province, Csusk Province, and Zietich Province.

Provincial Overview: Amberhall Province

This province has a long coastline and an equally long history of seafaring. Although this region suffered terribly during the civil wars, the Amberhall Navy fought fiercely against overwhelming odds and earned the respect of the entire realm. Ever since, Amberhall has been recognized as a province of hardy seafarers who will respond aggressively to any challenge. Since the Reconstruction, the province has become a noteworthy ship-building center and a launching point for voyages into the Sea of Despair or for colony ships heading to the Ophid's Grasslands or the Northern Wilderness.

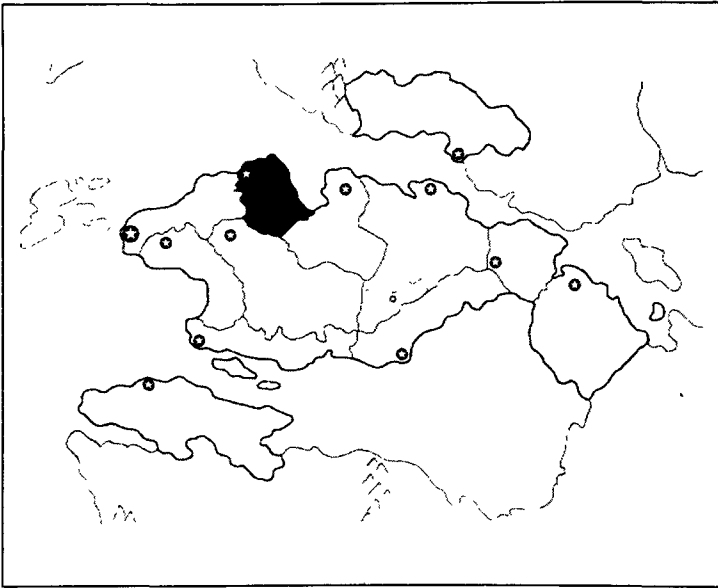
Provincial House: House Amberhall. A patron house of House Ne'klosh, which bailed House Amberhall out of trouble several times during the Civil Wars era. As a result, Amberhall is super-loyal to Ne'Klosh and will remain in the regional house's pocket for a long, long time. It has always stressed the importance of amphibious soldiers for engaging pirates and sea monsters. As a result, the Amberhall Marines have become one of the most efficient and respected military units among the provincial houses. A large percentage of these soldiers are eventually selected to become Imperial Janissaries.

Provincial Capital: Greensea (60,000 people). Greensea is a fairly small provincial capital. Situated along one of the few hospitable places of the Region's North Shore, Greensea must endure harsh storms, sea monster attacks, and relative isolation. While the people of Greensea are tough and honest, they are also xenophobic and very conservative. The population is nearly 85% human, with much of the rest being dwarves and a few **orcs**. Elves aren't welcome here, and any hint of Changelings or other shapechangers sends them into a frenzy.

Provincial Overview: Csusk Province

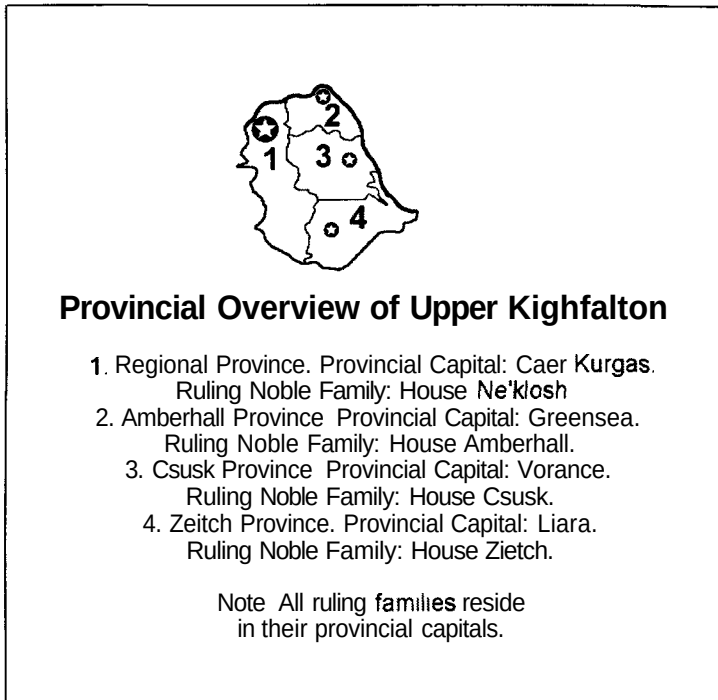
The shoreline within this province is too jagged and dangerous to make for a good shipping locale, but the beaches and cliffs here are rich with **salt**, which is mined, processed, and exported throughout the Empire. Overall, this is a profitable province with little trouble on the horizon. Sure, there are always labor difficulties in the salt mines, but what do you expect from condemned criminals and lousy **orc** slaves?

Provincial House: House Csusk. Another old house with lots of money and prestige. The beautiful formal gardens at this family's provincial palace are famous throughout the empire. Even Emperor Itomas himself enjoys visiting with this house occasionally to catch a glimpse of their greenhouses. Many



other Noble Houses scoff at the Csusk nobles for their lowly vocation, but House Csusk takes it in stride. Sure, others can laugh, but salt mining has made House Csusk more money than anybody can count.

Provincial Capital: Vorance (75,000 people). This beautiful city was also entirely rebuilt during the Reconstruction. Since then, House Csusk has poured lots of gold into keeping the place nice. The result is that the city looks just as nice now as the day it was fully reconstructed. The city is spacious and clean, has full sewer and aqueduct services, and even has a thriving cultural center. Crime, political unrest and racial strife are all managed well enough, so they aren't serious problems. The only real worry is that one day, the salt mines might bottom out. And if so, then what? Many speculate this little Utopia is only being held together with gold thread, as they say. As soon as money stops pouring into the city's various renewal programs, Vorance will probably fall apart quite quickly.



Provincial Overview: Zietich Province

Somewhat estranged from the seacoast provinces, this inland region grows lots of grapes for distilling, fruits for preserving, and other crops. This province feels more kinship with those in West Kighfalon than with the rest of Upper Kighfalon. Over the last 10 years or so, a quiet separatist movement has grown and is looking for a way to get this region to become part of West Kighfalon. These separatists would like to avoid unnecessary conflict but they know that if they truly want their province to switch regions, violence is inevitable.

Provincial House: House Zietich. Another fairly bland house, as far as nobles go. Average wealth, average influence in the Regional court, average military strength. It's no wonder why these nobles have never been considered for promotion to regional status. The house has only two distinguishing characteristics. The first is that the extended family includes more than 350 members. The second is that there are 34 pairs of identical twins, and 13 sets of identical triplets in this family. This house is somewhat asleep at the wheel concerning the growing separatist movement that's organizing right under their noses. If ever there is a major rebellion, it will take House Zietich by surprise. The other houses in the region write off the House as a bunch of inbred nimrods who don't know the first thing about politics or leadership.

Provincial Capital: Liara (90,000 people). A tightly packed city amid rolling crop fields. Human supremacy is much less intense here than elsewhere in the region, but it does exist. Perhaps this is because of the unifying presence of the brewing separatist movement. To the separatists, it doesn't matter if you're human, Goblin, Wolfen, or Troll, the important thing is that you want to join *West Kighfalon*. For now, the streets of Liara are quiet, but when this separatist movement gains critical mass, House Zietich will probably crack down on it with troops in the streets. At that point, widespread guerilla fighting will probably break out, turning this quiet community into a blood-soaked war zone.

Regional Overview #3: The Koerdian Mountains

Racial demographics for the Koerdian/Oslof Region:

40% Human
27% Dwarf
14% Orc
8% Goblin
2% Hobgoblin
9% other

Note: There are precious few elves here because of the strong **dwarven** presence and influence. The animosity between these two races remains great in some places, and this is one of them. Any elf with a brain in his head knows enough to stay away from this region. Far away.

The low Koerdian Mountains run along the middle section of the Empire's west coast. The farthest northern peaks point across the sea to the Isle of the Cyclops and the mountain chain forms something of a natural defensive barrier from hurricanes and ocean storms. The coastline is dotted with fishing villages, small ports and farms. Beyond the coast is a short expanse of lowland prairies, much of which is used for raising cattle and grazing animals. Nestled in the low mountain forests and meadows, and in the upper alpine pastures, are farmers and **sheepherders**, as well as the occasional lumber mill and mining operation. The upper forests, rocky scrubland and desolate peaks are uninhabited by humans and left to whatever creatures lay claim to them. Although half the size of the towering Old Kingdom mountains, the tallest peaks reach to about 9,000 feet (2743 m), are snow-capped during the winter months, and are battered by fierce winds and bitter cold. It is said that several small bands/tribes of **Algor** Frost Giants (probably refugees who escaped the gladiatorial arenas or slave pens) make their home someplace in the northern peaks. According to rumor, they kill any elf, dwarf or human who stumbles across their homes. The uninhabited mountain forests **and/or** upper elevations are also the home to dangerous creatures such as the **Peryton**, Chimera, Devil Digger, **Gruunor**, Rock Crawler, Nipper Worm of **Taut**, wolves, bears, and mountain lions, not to mention humanoid predators. Devil Diggers, **Gruunors**, Rock Crawlers, Tomb Worms and spiders are also a problem for miners, because these creatures often invade and make nests in their mine runnels and shafts, or come looking for human prey.

The majority of surface dwelling monster races and peoples native to these ancient mountains have been driven away by Imperial and Regional troops, settlers and miners. Human and dwarven settlers and their nonhuman slaves (about 30% of the overall population) are found in and around the Koerdian Moun-

tains. The few nonhumans that inhabit the mountains are relegated to small bands and clans of goblins, **orcs**, ogres and harpies, with the occasional giant, troll and other races thrown in for good measure. For example, sphinx, dragons, and Gromek, as well as runaway slaves, including Wolfen, **Bearmen**, and beings from distant lands, often find refuge in these mountains. They can be peaceful or hostile toward humans, dwarves and other races, and welcome or avoid contact. Most of these humanoids are one of the following: Refugees, squatters, independent (and often unauthorized) prospectors, bandits, pirates, criminals, runaway slaves, hermits and goat herders, all of which are not human, making them wary of strangers and giving most reason to consider men at arms, nobles, and soldiers and officials of the Western Empire their enemies. Kobolds never had much of a presence in these mountains, and while a few tribes are known to exist here and there inside the mountain, they usually avoid human contact. Their true numbers are unknown, but the Western Empire estimates them at around 4,000 (in reality, there are 10 times this number).

In the earliest days of the Western Empire, this range of mountains was heavily mined for rich veins of gold, silver, iron, coal, and other precious and useful ores and minerals. Before long, mining camps sprung up everywhere and large cities and towns weren't long to follow.

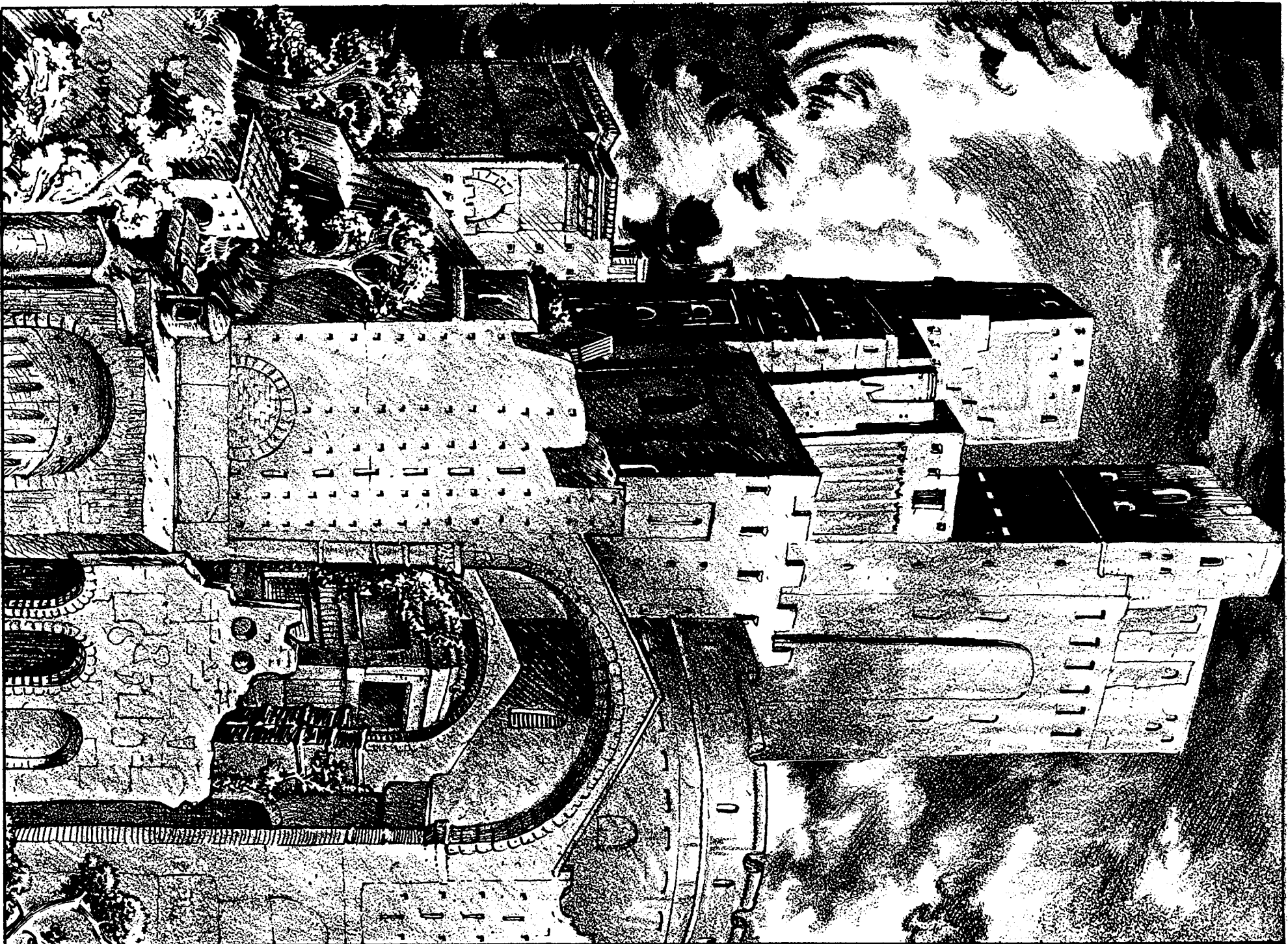
The influx of dwarven refugees that followed for centuries after the Elf-Dwarf War found the Koerdian mountains to be inviting, and the fledgling mining industry a good place to put their skills and natural abilities to use. It was these new citizens who found the richest gold, silver, iron and mineral deposits. When the Koerdians became a hotbed of mineral mining, the dwarves oversaw most of the Imperial mining operations. For centuries, the Koerdian mines yielded a river of wealth that made almost every citizen rich beyond their wildest dreams. Then the mines ran dry. They bottomed out over two centuries ago, and the region has never been the same since.

The fallen House of Oslof

Few people saved much of their money, so when the mines petered out, plenty of folks lost everything they owned. The region went from riches to rags very quickly.

Today, the old established cities are comparatively poor with large portions abandoned, left to slowly deteriorate, or the home of vice and crime. Many of the dwarves have remained to work the dozens of mines still in operation, but the precious ores continue to dwindle and the future looks bleak.

Independent dwarven and human prospectors and adventurers continue to work the mountain range in the search for new deposits (surely there must be another vein waiting to be discovered?). These "wildcats," as they are nicknamed, scour the mountain, but seem to be living a fool's dream, because the mountains appear to be truly tapped out. That doesn't mean there's nothing of worth among these peaks. There is some excellent farm and grazing land in the mountain valleys and meadows, and an abundance of lumber. Meanwhile, some desperate and unscrupulous men have suggested raiding underground Kobold networks to "purge the region of dangerous monsters" (not that the Kobolds cause much trouble) and to liberate the vast wealth they must have accumulated over the centuries (which is sizable, but not as much as one might expect). Word



also has it that a lot of dragons lived and died in these mountains, but few of their bodies or treasure hoards have been found. Thus, tales of lost dragon treasure abound, not that anybody has found much of anything. The rare report of a treasure **trove** ignites wild rumors that encourage scores of wildcats and adventurers to join the hunt, but they soon go home empty handed.

All merchant caravans travel with heavy mercenary escorts, and staying anywhere in the Koerdian region, even the nicest of the declining big cities, isn't safe. Unless one knows how to handle a sword, staying in the **Oslof** territory could cost you your pocketbook ... or worse. In a more prosperous region, this would be fertile ground for a rebellion, but in the washed-up Koerdians, it's just a recipe for eternal misery and squalor.

House Oslof, the noble family that has ruled the region since its inception, was just as short-sighted as everyone else. They spent money freely, lived lavishly, and never made plans to reduce their reliance on mining and related industries (metalworks, weaponsmiths, craftsmen, jewelers, etc.) by developing other areas of commerce. As a result, the Koerdian Mountain region has fallen on hard times despite numerous small, profitable mines, productive farming, sheepherding, and lumber and fishing operations. There are also a few small, rugged, boomtowns at the base of the mountains that cater to treasure hunters, wildcatters, and adventurers who come to spend weeks or months trying their luck at finding lost treasure and new ore veins before going home. Most (99%) never do, but that still doesn't stop folks from dreaming.

The Oslof House, in all practicality, has been cast aside and regarded as a has-been that few of the other Major Houses wish to have much to do with. Until a new major mine or other means of revenue is found, the Koerdian communities remain lost in the shadows of their past glory and struggle to hold their own. Most of the old towns and cities of the region have fallen on dire straits that have continually grown worse over the last several decades. The Oslof domain is one of the oldest and comparatively poorest in the Western Empire. The once great Noble House now looks away from the epidemic of drug addiction and rampant crime that plagues its communities. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that the Oslof House, left with no other recourse, has turned to crime and encourages decadence and base behavior as a solution to their shrinking economy. Banditry is particularly common throughout this region, and powerful thieves' guilds dominate many of the larger towns and cities — at least 50% are heavily influenced and corrupted by the criminal underworld. Sadly, this has made the Oslof region a haven for bandits and criminals of all kinds, which helps breed decadence, illegal trade and low-life attitudes. It is said a man can hire an army of cutthroats or the best thieves, spies, smugglers, forgers and assassins from the communities along the Koerdian Mountains.

The Pirates of Koerdian

It is also known that pirates from the Western Empire and other lands use the small ports along the Koerdian coast, as well as buy, sell, smuggle, and trade with many of the cities and towns in the Oslof region. In fact, it is rumored that some of the pirates are unofficially sanctioned (some say sponsored) by the Western Empire and allowed to use this region as their primary

base of operation. It is also rumored that the Western Empire has its own pirate fleet operating from this region. If the region is a key supporter and base for the Western Empire's secret pirate fleet, used to undermine, subvert, frighten and rob the ships from other kingdoms, it is unclear whether the Oslof House is a willing participant, simply turns a blind eye, is helpless to stop it, or has been *leveraged* by the Imperial House to support these covert activities. Oslof's support of the Empire's covert pirate operations would win the Noble House the favor of the Emperor and could lead to increased legitimate business, trade and other opportunities. The pirate trade (and secret Empire pirate fleet) has been something of a boon to the region, although it's not necessarily the kind of business the Regional House would like to attract. Currently, most of the coastal towns, ports and cities are doing the best economically, but are also the most dangerous and corrupt.

Note: For years, other kingdoms have suspected and accused the Western Empire of involvement with pirates. The most important charges include:

1. That the Empire sanctions piracy, even encourages it, provided the cutthroats don't touch Western ships.
2. The Empire deliberately provides sanctuary to these pirates, allowing them to use Western ports with impunity, while Western authorities prevent "foreign" powers from investigating or boarding suspected pirate ships while in Western Empire waters. Furthermore, Western warships attack any "foreign" combat ships that enter their waters, regardless of their motive, i.e. in hot pursuit of pirates. All perpetuated under the guise of "protecting the Western Empire's territories, citizens and rights from foreign invaders."
3. The Empire actively engages in trade with "suspected" pirates, buying foreign goods, slaves, wares and even captured ships at rates very favorable to the Empire. This "trade" gives the pirates an open, free port to sell their ill-gotten gains and to continue their profitable piracy.
4. That the Western Empire has its own secret fleet of ships, disguised as pirate vessels, to waylay, rob and sink foreign vessels without instigating an act of war.
5. Has secretly **reinstated** the Black Demon Ships used to harass and destroy foreign ships (if so, the Koerdian coast is a likely safe harbor for the demon ships).

Unfortunately, other than number three (a tenuous position at best), none of these suspicions and accusations can be proved. As enemies of the West and conspiracy theorists would expect, the Imperial House denies all charges. It publicly denounces piracy and insists it does not willingly trade with or support "known" pirates. As for ships crew "suspected" of piracy, unless that charge can be substantiated (and Western authorities make that impossible), the Western Empire must assume they are innocent and welcome their trade. To do otherwise would be "unfair."

Regional House: House Oslof

Long ago, House Oslof was the mightiest human power in this part of the world. As House Oslof's fortunes soured, they became increasingly poor, conservative, touchy and abrasive. As a result, members of the Oslof family are among the most unpleasant nobles to deal with in the Empire. The only thing

making these cranky jerks bearable is knowing that they really don't have the power to back up half of what they say.

Ever since the mines ran dry, House **Oslof** has lived off its savings with no way to replenish them. The last period of civil war was especially hard on House Oslof, which spent most of its savings to build up armies to defend its mountain strongholds and once noble cities. Now, like most people in the **Koerdians**, the Oslof House is all but broke. For a Regional House this means sucking up to whoever might support you or pay for services. In Oslofs case, that means offering all sorts of political favors, allowing criminal and other underhanded activity to transpire in his realm, and begging the Emperor for help.

House Itomas has agreed to give House Oslof some financial aid in return for a share of all further precious metals mined from the mountains (earth warlocks working for Emperor Itomas insist that enormous mineral wealth still exists within the mountains) and certain favors. Many Koerdians aren't very happy with this arrangement, but they aren't in any shape to complain about it. Without Imperial gold helping to keep them afloat, and, more importantly, public support to prevent others from challenging the power of the Oslof House, they could lose their position as Regional House, what little political clout they hang on to, their (questionably) good name, title, land ... everything. If ever the Koerdian Mountain Lords unearth new veins of gold and silver, House Oslof could recover much of its lost prestige and influence, although many favors and deals would keep them in an awkward position and under the thumb of the Imperial House.

Until that happens, House Oslof is an outspoken supporter of House Itomas. It votes in favor of every Imperial suggestion and is quick to offer fiery **pro-Itomas**, pro-Imperial rhetoric. This has made them an enemy of House Kaze and House **Krugazi** of the Middle Kingdom regions. Kaze has long been an anti-Imperial stronghold, and continuous charges of treason, cowardice and dishonor from representatives of House Oslof have led to more than one bloody street fight within Caer Itom's Embassy Row. No other Houses are as openly hostile toward House Oslof as these two, but many brush off these ornery mountain nobles as desperate men talking tough because **they're** too poor to do anything else and must rely on the Imperial House to survive. It is no secret that House Oslof is in the pocket of the Imperial family, and an annoyance to everybody. This has made the Oslof House something of a joke. If the Emperor said the blue sky was really red, the Oslof nobles would be quick to agree, and be willing to argue with or fight any man who said otherwise. Such is the sad state of the Oslof House.

Interesting items about the Oslof House: Representative of the House **Oslof's** aggressive and feisty spirit, and dependence on mining, the Oslof crest is a dagger crossed over a pickaxe. The Noble House has what it calls "House Daggers," a traditional weapon that resembles a machete, or a cross between a short sword and a meat cleaver (2D4+1 damage, and excellent for slashing and chopping attacks). Oslof nobles frequently fight with a matching pair of House Daggers or with broad-blade long swords (2D6 damage). Oslof nobles also are fond of wearing heavy armor, so it is rare to ever see one in anything lighter than a full suit of scale mail. Full plate mail or plate & chain are preferred types of armor, usually bearing ornamental metalworking and artistic engraving and detailing. Particularly distinguishing

are the knee and elbow guards, made to resemble grimacing **dwarvish** faces.

Notable members of House Oslof:

Overlord Rodd Oslof: This 75 year old bastard is as grumpy as the mountains are high. He is an extremely conservative noble who constantly grouses about the "moral decay" of the Empire and that the other Noble Houses aren't worthy of their titles. At least once a month Rodd causes some kind of uproar, either by offending members of the Regional Court or by offending visitors to the Imperial Court. He's fond of verbally insulting whoever he feels deserves it (just about everyone except the Emperor, it seems). What's more, Rodd still thinks he can scrap with the best of them, and often taunts his opponents to fight him physically. Rodd is still pretty tough for his age and he fights dirty, but chances are that he would get seriously hurt or killed in a **fistfight**. For that reason, Rodd's sons, Burok and **Groll**, have their father surrounded with a detachment of bodyguards whose primary job is to keep the elderly Lord from trying to mix it up with other dignitaries or getting himself killed in a duel. Rodd is still rather healthy, all things considered, and he'll probably rule for another 20 years. That is, if one of his enemies doesn't kill him first. Rodd has gotten so used to currying the Emperor's favor that he no longer entertains the notion of making his home region self-sufficient again. His region's current condition is a real sore spot with him, and many of his enemies mention it to get under his skin. **Quick Stats for Regional Overlord Rodd Oslof:** 11th level knight & nobleman. Alignment: Aberrant. Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 9, M.A. 7, P.S. 9, P.P. 9, P.E. 8, P.B. 8, Spd. 8.

Lord Burok Oslof: Burok is Rodd's eldest son and the de facto ruler of House Oslof. Unlike his father, he plans to restore the good name and prestige of his Noble House, starting with removing the family and region's association with pirates and crime rings. He has started a rock mining and exporting industry, quarrying stone for all the building going on elsewhere.

Burok keeps an ongoing correspondence with the Emperor, and fully intends to pay back House Itomas for all the monetary help it has given House Oslof. Burok is a barrel-chested man with a deep voice, bushy beard and booming laugh. It is said he resembles the very dwarves the rest of the House tries so hard to avoid. Whereas his fellow noblemen are gruff and dour, Burok is easy-going and friendly. His ability to shrug off sharp comments has also endeared him to his countrymen, who admire his ability to take a good ribbing and keep in stride. When Rodd Oslof finally kicks the bucket, Burok will make a fine replacement. He truly is a rarity among Western nobles. Unfortunately, his honest nature may become his downfall should he ever really try to root out the deeply entrenched pirates and criminal enclaves throughout his domain. **Quick Stats for Burok Oslof:** 8th level knight & nobleman of unprincipled alignment; age 29. Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 10, M.A. 12, P.S. 20, P.P. 11, P.E. 13, P.B. 10, Spd. 12. He loves his brother very much, and the two are extremely close. However, he worries that Groll has fallen in with a bad crowd and has an unhealthy outlook on life.

Lord Groll Oslof: Groll is just a year younger than Burok, and he is **Burok's** silent partner in running the region. However, Groll isn't nearly as honorable as his brother. He associates with gamblers, brigands, and showgirls, and has connections with

smugglers, pirates and the leaders of one of the more prominent thieves' guild. Currently, he respects Burok's wishes and tries not to deliberately undermine his dreams, however, he thinks his brother is an idealist who is going to get himself killed someday trying to do "the right thing." **Groll** sees himself as a shrewd, streetwise realist (which is more or less true). He watches out for himself, his crazy old father and his beloved brother. He holds most of the other nobles in contempt, and feels most people don't appreciate what Burok is trying to do for them. He has part ownership in several saloons and gambling halls in Syrefald, and associates with scoundrels (members high up in one of the thieves' guilds) of whom his brother does not approve, but tolerates.

Groll suffered a near-fatal bout of Goblin Fever as a child, which has made him forever gaunt and pale. It's also made him hate goblins with a passion! Groll has little interest in politics or the responsibilities that come with being a monarch. If something were to happen to both Burok and his father, he would most likely abdicate the Regional throne and set out to make a new life in the Eastern Territory, and may establish a quiet tavern or gambling hall (he has a big enough personal fortune hidden away to live comfortably for the rest of his life). Although not particularly spiteful or vindictive, if the opportunity arose, Groll might do things to hurt or undermine the nobility that have turned their back on his family. He enjoys gambling and has the rare gift of knowing when to stop. He never loses a fortune and has a knack for making more than he loses. **Quick Stats for Groll Oslof:** 7th level noble of anarchist alignment. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 9, M.A. 14, P.S. 15, P.P. 10, P.E. 13, P.B. 11, Spd. 14. Skills of Note: Streetwise, **cardsharp**, seduction, basic math and speaks and is literate in Western and Eastern, and speaks Gobblely and Elven.

Syrefald, the Terraced City Regional Capital

Population: Approx. 136,000

Human: 54,000

Dwarf: 35,000

Orc: 18,500

Goblin & Hobgoblin: 15,000

Other: 13,500; does not include the slave population of approximately 33,000.

The Regional Army represents 5% of the total population.

Syrefald isn't the largest or grandest city in the Koerdian Mountain region, but it sure is the oldest. It was built after the first major ore finds and is literally carved into the side of Mount **Kordrun**, one of the tallest peaks in the region. Syrefald resembles a weird cross between the Pueblo cliff dwellings in the U.S. Southwest, and the ancient terraced **Incan** cities of modern-day Peru. The southern face of Mount Kordrun was terraced, and the city developed on top of these shelf-like sections of mountainside. Steep, twisting roads lead to the city, but traffic is light because the journey is so difficult. Architecturally, this is a magnificent city that has an incredible view of the surrounding mountains. Earth warlocks love to visit here, if only to

appreciate the efforts of their brethren that went into terracing the mountain thousands of years ago.

There is little major industry in town other than a few mining ventures, a lumber mill, and some commerce and manufacturing, and none of it generates enough wealth to keep the city running. The taxes and levies from the surrounding region go into maintaining this relic of better times. It's kind of like economic life support for a terminally ill community. Sooner or later, somebody's going to have to pull the plug. Until then, life moves at a fairly slow pace in Syrefald. Even the Regional Place and plaza is a quiet, sleepy place. Since the Noble House has fallen from grace, and the region is known for its crime and lawlessness, the old capital receives few visitors or adventurers.

Unfortunately, even the capital city is beset by crime, although nothing near what the other towns and cities experience. As House Oslof's power has waned, the thieves' guilds in the region have grown in power. Even in elegant Syrefald there is a section of town nicknamed "Stiletto Alley," known for its lawlessness and criminal elements. Here, one can find gambling halls, all-night taverns, drug dens, prostitution and the buying and selling of illicit goods and services. Thieves and con artists can be seen operating in broad daylight. A mercenaries union has formed to provide shopkeepers with affordable protection, while the authorities try to avoid incidents in Stiletto Alley as much as possible.

The nicer parts of Syrefald exhibit ancient craftsmanship, artistry and expensive tastes that harken back to a bygone age of prosperity and opulence.

Syrefald Description & Code Key

Palace District

1. Regional Palace and Court. This is where the family members of House Oslof reside and hold court. This includes Overlord Oslof, his two sons and about a dozen other family members (uncles, cousins, etc.). Not much goes on here, since most of the family practically lives in Caer **Itom**, begging the Emperor for financial aid and providing favors.

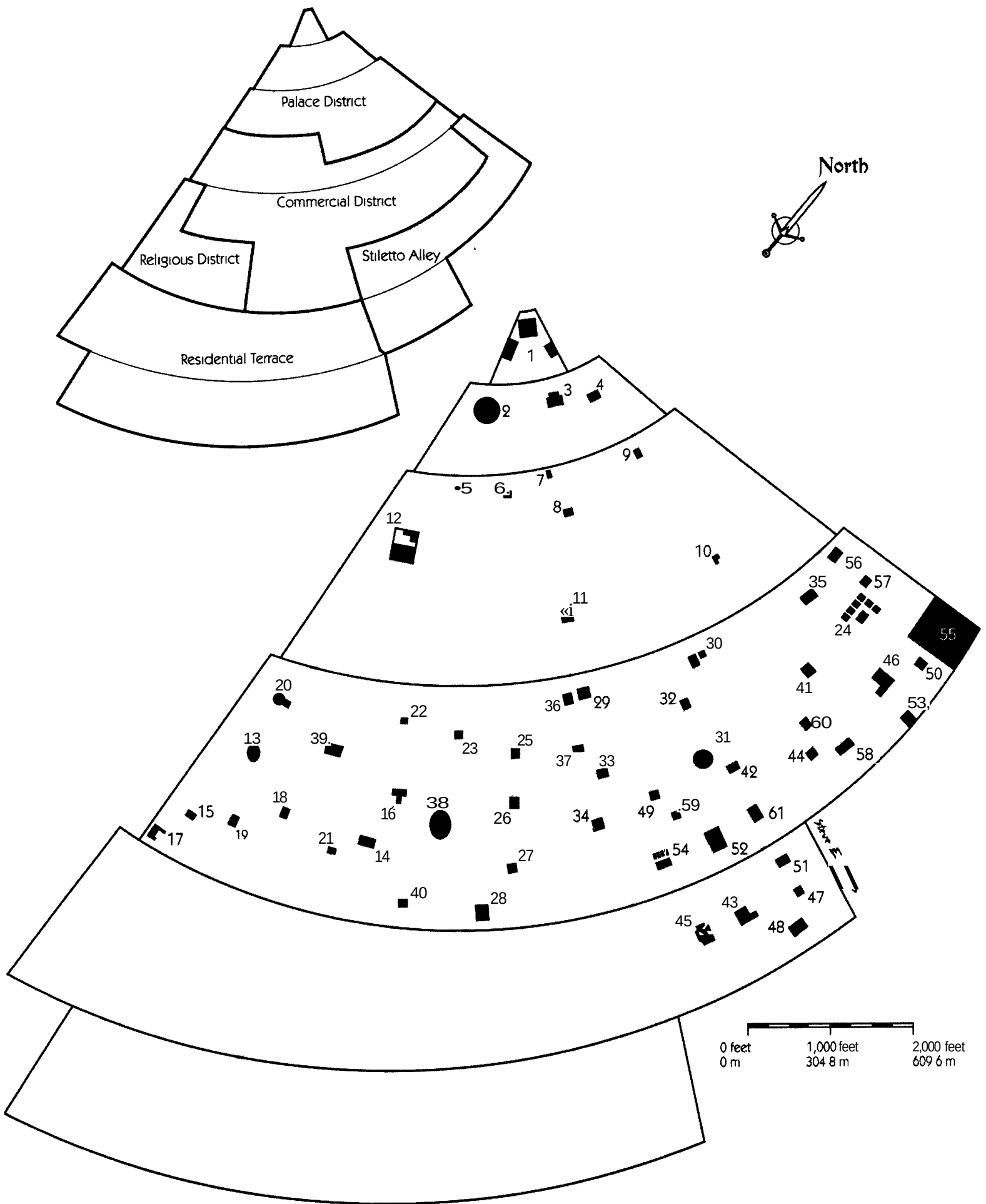
2. Earth Warlocks' Quarters. House Oslof keeps a number of Earth Warlocks on hand in case there is a problem with the city's engineering — like a terrace is about to fall off the mountain or something like that, as well as for defense. Most of the time, though, these mages have little work to do and hang out in the Earth Warlocks' Chapterhouse in the commercial district.

3. Halls of Justice. Any legal altercations are worked out here, where an adjudicator appointed by House Oslof holds court and renders judgements. One third of the 11 adjudicators are corrupt; whomever offers the biggest bribe wins their case, pure and simple.

4. Mining Administration of the Koerdian Mountains. Technically, all prospectors are required to obtain a "mineral exploration" permit through this office, and if anything is found, a percentage goes to House Oslof. Only about half the people obey this law anymore, because it is seldom enforced.

5-10. These buildings used to have purposes in the region's glory days, but they sit empty and unused now.

11. Regional Barracks. Small, underfunded and poorly disciplined, the Regional Army of House Oslof is a laughable fighting force. They number less than 8,000 troops, with no cav-



alry, and a smattering of knights and mages. Most of these guys haven't been paid in months, and desertion is high.

12. Imperial Garrison. Increasingly, people look to this small but impressive outpost of Imperial Soldiers as the real peacekeepers of Syrefald and the Koerdian Mountains. These Imperial troops don't want to get mixed up in local politics or troubles, and will resist any pleas for their involvement. However, they do try to make a point of protecting the city from invaders, raiders, bandits and particularly brazen criminals within the city.

Religious District

When one has little hope, religion begins to look really appealing. In the last few years, the presence of various churches and temples has exploded, making this section of the Commercial District a new section of town in its own right.

13. Temple of Aco & The Juggernaut. The most powerful sect in town. While they have no real pull with House Oslof, they do have a lot of money and a huge number of followers. The question is, what do they do with all these resources?

14. Temple to Rurga, the Warrior Goddess. Increasingly popular as the crime wave worsens.

15. Temple to Panath, the God of Treachery. This temple receives at least 10,000 gold in donations each month, which tells you how bad Syrefald's crime problem is becoming. The temple's probably a front for thieves or worse.

16. Temple to Kirgi, the Rat God. This temple saw its best days back during the mining boom, when everybody was swimming in money, but is still popular among thieves, Ratlings and Orcs.

17. Temple to the Church of Light and Dark. As this church grows, it gets closer and closer to splitting into a separate church for the Gods of Light and one for the Gods of Darkness. When that happens, both will become bitter enemies.

18. Temple to the Northern Gods. Really popular among dwarves.

19. Temple to the Gods of Dragonwright. A minor sect for years, but it has recently started coming into its own. Many in this district fear that as this temple grows stronger, the ongoing war between the priests of the good and evil Dragonwright will bring bloodshed to the streets of Syrefald, not that there is any sign of this occurring.

20. Temple to the Sect of Elementalism. Mainly services earth warlocks, but all warlocks are welcome.

21. Religious Supplies. A shop that specializes in church material and religious items, a sort of alchemist's shop for priests and religious worshippers. Sells mostly run-of-the-mill stuff, but every once in a while it conies across a genuine religious artifact or an interesting book, talisman, or magic item that sets off bidding wars among the various temples.

Commercial District

22. Syrefald Detective Agency. This crew of hired swords used to be a small thieves' guild that got run out of another city, came here, and decided it was less dangerous to act as private eyes than have to wrangle with another guild. These guys accept all kinds of work, some of it legal, some of it not. Standard fees for illegal activities are 25% lower than what a thieves' guild might charge.

23. The Sign Shoppe. Oddly enough, this place doesn't have a sign outside. Maybe that's why business is doing so poorly.

24. Snarbull's Self-Storage. A big container yard in the bad part of town. Thieves often hide their hot goods here. One container has had its rent paid through the next 25 years, and has remained locked (and heavily warded) since the day the rent was paid.

25. Higgins Housewares. Run by a sly, young human maiden who uses her good looks and charm (M.A. 20, P.B. 23) to talk clients into paying her high prices. Her inventory, which she hand-crafts with the help of a few local woodworkers and artisans is actually quite nice, though overpriced.

26. Fire-Fighting Station. Water and Air Warlocks provide this service out of an obligation to a higher power. They don't expect payment for their services, but they will accept donations and frequently enjoy discounts and favors from the local businesses and residents, including some of the crooks.

27. Magic Locks. There is a boom market for Diabolists in town (and throughout the region) to protect houses and valuables by warding them against thieves. This establishment can barely keep up with business.

28. Laundry Service. Another front operation for a thieves' guild. This gang calls themselves the Rusty Rapiers. They were the ones who pulled off the "Mountaintop Bank job" a year and a half ago, but they are sitting on their money until they feel confident they can split it up without attracting undue notice.

29. Earth Warlocks' Chapterhouse. Kind of a pseudo-guild for Earth Warlocks only. It's little more than a nice inn, tavern, temple and library all rolled into one. It costs 10gold to stay for the night, but the accommodations and service are excellent. A prime place for Earth Warlocks to make contacts in the region.

30. Taxi Service. More of a bus service, really. The only vehicles in this taxi fleet are mammoth wagons designed by a dwarven engineer to haul people and goods. Each wagon is made of wood and metal, and can fit over 50 people at a time and haul up to 80 tons. It is pulled (slowly) by a team of 16 horses and one wagon makes a constant circuit through town 24 hours a day. It costs two gold to get a ride on this vehicle; once on, you can ride it for as long as you like. Cargo hauling is five gold per hundred pounds (45 kg).

31. The Morpheus Theater. A nice, medium-sized theater with a well-established house troupe. Little does anyone know that this group of tumblers, acrobats, jugglers, bards, actors and prestidigitators is really a crime ring responsible for many high-profile cat burglaries in town over the last few years. The group uses most of their proceeds to line their pockets, but they put some back into their theater, and even donate a little bit to charity. They also offer their services through a middle man, to clients in the Noble Court as spies and investigators. The leader of the troupe is a miscreant, 6th level prestidigitator named Skellred the Magnificent. The others range from 3rd to 5th level and are anarchist to aberrant in alignment.

32. Constable's Office. A well meaning ex-soldier (7th level) and his six human, three dwarven, two orc and one elf wizard (4th level) deputies. Most are third level men at arms. They are constantly swamped with trouble and seldom at the office.

33. Tobacconist. The proprietor, a withered human with yellow **teeth**, coughs constantly and speaks with a gravelly, sick-sounding voice. Prices are 20% below normal and quality is good.

34. Jave's Alchemical Solutions. Specializes in making custom arms and armor, as well as offering a wide selection of magic potions. Has a fair selection of **pre-made** items in stock and is rumored to personally own several rune weapons. Prices tend to be 10% to 20% above normal.

35. Blacksmith. This honest and hard-working family of 11 *dwarves* craft excellent swords, armor, and metalwork (horse-shoes, tools, nails, chains, etc.). They are disgusted by the criminal element in town and try to have as little to do with them as possible. The family elder is an 8th level mercenary and a notorious swordsman (skills include W.P. sword, knife, shield, and paired weapons); he has no mercy for thieves and cutthroats.

36. General Store. Sells lots of wilderness supplies, shovels, picks, tools, rope and prospecting equipment.

37. Treasures of Kabarras. A brothel that caters to dwarves only.

38. Arena. This large stadium is struggling to stay in business. Once a week the *dwarven* family that owns it will try to present a day of **bloodsports** or other special events. Betting is fast and furious on these occasions, but most of it is controlled by the thieves' guilds. When this 30,000 seat arena does open, it is usually filled to half capacity all day long. Once it closes, the **hyped-up** folks of Syrefald seem to get into **fistfights** more easily than usual. It can also be rented by private parties at bargain prices.

39. Mountaintop Bank. Despite heavy security, this place got cleaned out by professional thieves a year and a half ago, and it's never really recovered. Half of its patrons have moved their money and it will probably close its doors within the next year.

40. The Wildcatter. A rowdy bar and grill where lots of humans and dwarves show up. Any other races are likely to get seriously harassed and bullied. A local favorite. Reasonable prices.

41. Coopers' Guildhouse. Just a front operation for the *Stonebreakers*, a major thieves' guild in Syrefald. The building's owner, a wiry, 9th level human thief named Jareus **Jol**, runs the guildhouse. They specialize in spying, blackmail, robbery and protection racketeering.

Stiletto Alley

The worst part of town. Three rival thieves' guilds are competing for control: the *Stonebreakers*, The Harlequin Gang, and the Brothers of Blood. A huge gang war seems inevitable.

42. Pawnshop. Buys and sells stolen merchandise. Asks no questions. Run by a really scummy human and his dwarf partner.

43. Darla's. A grimy bar and strip joint. Run by humans, but caters to everybody with coins in their pockets. The booze is cheap but watered down and so are the women.

44. Angus Fannimore, Tailor. Poor Angus. He hates all of these crooks and roughnecks, and dreams of a day when they are driven out of town. He's just a tailor, not a swordsman, so he swallows his bile and tries to endure. The moment a group of

heroes shows up to oppose the thieves, Angus will open his home and business to them, offering whatever information and help he can.

45. Burnt-Out Warehouse. The target of an arsonist last month. Doesn't look like the wreckage will be cleared any time soon.

46. The Skinny Finn. A brothel with a really dangerous clientele. Knife-fights and other acts of assault and murder are commonplace here. Most of the working girls would love to leave, but are terrified to do so. The madam running the place has threatened to kill any girl who tries to "retire."

47. Weapons Shop. Sells new and used weapons at 10-25% below normal; mostly ordinary fare, nothing magical or unique. Buys at 25% of list price.

48. Mercenaries Union Headquarters. This mercenaries' guild hires out to a lot of the shopkeepers in Stiletto Alley, and they've made quick enemies out of the major thieves' guilds operating in this end of town. Most are 3rd to 5th level.

49. Smoke Dreams. A drug den offering every kind of narcotic vice imaginable. Very sleazy. The owner is a retired pirate.

50. Bogan's Meat Market. This human butcher will dispose of unwanted bodies for just 100gold each. Word is he grinds up the bodies and feeds the remains to wild dogs living on the edge of town, but other rumors suggest he uses the meat in pies and stew served to **orc** and goblin slaves.

51. Herbalist. Makes and sells various herbal concoctions and poisons over the counter.

52. Stonemason. A front operation for the *Stonebreakers thieves' guild* which includes human, dwarven, kobold, and goblin members. The facility also doubles as a "safe house," with a dozen secret rooms hidden behind stone walls and secret passages leading underground, to safety. The *Stonebreakers* consist of thirty 1st through 3rd level thieves, twenty 4th to 6th level thieves and a half dozen master thieves (7th to 9th level). The leader is an 9th level human assassin (Miscreant alignment; I.Q. 15, P.S. 23, P.P. 22, P.E. 15) who is armed with a pair of magic scimitars (2D6 damage; one turns invisible 3x per day, +2 to strike and parry, the other is indestructible and eternally sharp, add +3 to damage). However, it is said he is able to use almost anything as a weapon (skills include boxing, use poison, W.P. targeting, throwing weapons and paired weapons).

53. Cobbler's Shop. An honest business pressed into laundering money for the *Stonebreakers*. It employs 3 genuine Goblin Cobblers, 2 other goblins, and 4 human shoemakers and leatherworkers.

54. Dog Kennels. The human proprietor takes wild dogs and strays, beats them into submission, then sells them as guard animals. Truly a vile and contemptible individual. Keeps company with all manner of underworld **low-lives** and knows a bit of what's going on in the various thieves' guilds.

55. Cemetery. Lots of grave robberies and desecrated sites.

56. Diabolist for Hire. A 9th level, **elven** Diabolist who refuses to give out his name, runs this shop. He claims he moved to the Koerdians because they remind him of the Old Kingdom Mountains back home. Offers really inexpensive warding services to keep objects from being stolen and refuses to kow-tow to the criminal element. The thieves of Stiletto Alley truly fear this individual. Rumors suggest he is either an Imperial

Spy/Lawman or an adventurer with an axe to grind with one of the thieves' guilds.

57. Furrier. More like a trading post for various animal pelts. Also buys and sells a variety of fur and leather goods. The shop makes a decent amount of cash, but pays 33% of it to the *Brothers of Blood* guild for "protection."

58. "Snowball's Chance in Hell" Gaming Hall & Saloon. This is one of the establishments partly owned and frequented by Lord Groll. Games of cards, dice, darts, pool, roulette and others are available here. The entire place is corrupt, and the house wins more often than it should, thanks to rigged games and cheating card dealers. Only good quality hard liquor is served (drunk gamblers make mistakes and don't know when to quit) at cheap prices; typically one gold per glass. Unknown to Lord Groll, the place is a front operation for the *Brothers of Blood* thieves' guild. This guild consists of nearly 120 1st to 3rd level thieves, an elite faction of about 30 master thieves (6th to 10th level), plus a handful of fences, smugglers, and a dozen spies and assassins (3rd to 7th level). Their leader is a drug addict named *Oxec* (a 36 year old, 9th level thief, anarchist alignment, I.Q. 14, P.S. 21, P.P. 21, P.E. 15; all others average). His favorite weapons include the dagger, mace and chain, and a lesser rune dagger named "**Bronc**"; he claims to have found it in an ancient tunnel in the Koerdian Mountains during his adventuring days (it does 5D6 damage and has all the basic properties of a minor rune weapon).

59. Fortune Teller. A group of scam artists. Nothing more.

60. Tattoo Parlor. The main tattoo artist here is a middleman for Stiletto Alley thieves and a professional smuggler. He helps them fence stolen goods, as well as set up heists and robberies by providing information, hirelings and supplies.

61. Bath House. A dirty place that practically screams "prostitution." It is the front operation for the newest and most rag-tag of the thieves' guilds to set up shop, the Harlequin gang. The Harlequins have only 13 thieves, each 4th level. All of them are devoted followers of Chantico, and have undergone a bizarre blood-bonding ritual that puts all 13 in constant telepathic contact with each other. Their leader is a 6th level Witch, with the power to animate and control 2D6 dead, and has the *Gift of Power* (see **Palladium Fantasy RPG**, page 113), and a demon familiar in the guise of a raven. The group is very secretive and violent, specializing in assassination, kidnapping, torture, interrogation and murder. However, for reasons unknown, they refuse to carry out contracts on House Oslof.

Residential Terrace

These buildings are tightly-packed apartments, most of them no less than five stories tall. Thankfully, all of the buildings here are built out of stone, or else there would have been a catastrophic fire long ago.

Notable residents include:

- A scholar who's convinced he's found a legitimate map leading to the location of a dragon's den about a week's travel into the mountains. The scholar would love to go, but he's too cowardly. He'll sell the map to any interested party for 5,000 gold and 20% of whatever the party finds.
- A **dwarven** blacksmith who murders **orcs** for fun.

- A priestess of Light commanded by **Isis** to root out the sources of evil in this town and destroy them. She has the rest of her life to do this, but she cannot leave town until she does. The priestess is only 2nd level and trying to gather the strength and support she needs to tackle the thieves' guilds.
- A heroic ranger who has been traumatized by something mind-boggling he encountered in the mountains. He can't bring himself to talk about it and is clearly haunted by it. So far, Words of Truth spells and psychic probes have failed to get this guy to reveal whatever it was he saw. Rumors abound about this shattered hero.
- A team of con men planning a hoax in which they claim to have found a gold vein nearby and will sell shares of it to the first 100 takers for 1,000 gold each. They have "salted" ore samples to show interested parties. If anybody compels them to tell the truth, the con will crumble.



Provincial Overview of the Koerdian Mountains

1. Regional Province. Provincial Capital **Syrefald**.
Ruling Noble Family **House Oslof**
2. Pascale Province. Provincial Capital **Weathertop**.
Ruling Noble Family **House Pascale**
3. **Nugent** Province. Provincial Capital **Muhargeis**.
Ruling Noble Family **House Nugent**

Note All ruling noble families reside in their provincial capitals

Provincial Breakdown of the Koerdian Mountains Region

The Oslof Region consists mostly of the regional capital, Syrefald, and the roadways leading to it. The regional province is pitted with old, **cleared-out** mines that once held great veins of precious ore. Now they are empty, inhabited only by random monsters and the occasional societal misfit who has no other place to live. These old mines have also become favored hideouts for bandits, spies, fugitives from justice and other evildoers.

These days the fishing villages and seaports along the western coastline (frequented by pirates) are the most prosperous. Small farm communities, sheepherders, cattlemen, and grazing lands make up much of the land between the coast and mountain lowlands.

There are two other provinces: Pascale and Nugent.

Provincial Overview: Pascale Province

The Pascale Province is located in the Koerdian Mountains Region, and is one of the most inhospitable places in the region. Its mountains are steep and jagged, with deep and inhospitable

valleys and fierce winds. The harsh environment here makes Pascale Province the home of many earth and air **Warlocks**, each of whom feel right at home. These powerful spell casters have formed joint guilds and share many secrets. Thankfully for the people of the region, the Warlocks are concerned only with improving their abilities and learning more about the mysteries of life, earth and wind, not dominating the populace. The region still has a few mines left, but they only yield a trickle of low-grade silver and copper. The surrounding communities are nothing more than scattered farms, trappers, and **sheepherders**.

Provincial House: House Pascale. This Noble House is known for its love of science, and has produced some of the Empire's greatest mathematicians and astronomers, such as Lodske the White. Lodske's workshop is preserved at the Regional Palace and contains prototypes of all of his inventions, which include an "automatic siege gun" that fires large numbers of arrows at high speeds, the magnifying glass, a nine foot (2.7 m) tall "solar lens" that focuses sunlight into a beam that can light fires up to 300 feet away, and plans for a flying corsair supported by huge balloons and grand wings (never built, much less tested). The Pascale nobles are very learned, intelligent leaders whose sense of honor puts them at a disadvantage when dealing with less scrupulous Houses.

Provincial Capital: Weathertop (38,000 people). **Weathertop** sits atop one of the lower peaks of the largest mountain in the region, Mount **Ironskye**. With no room to grow, however, Weathertop has become very overcrowded. House Pascale is considering how to reduce the population to a more sustainable level.

Provincial Overview: Nugent Province

This province borders the Lower Barraduk region, and has seen a great deal of fighting in its time. In the early days, the region's greatest **orc** and ogre strongholds were in this province, and it took years of nonstop warfare to drive them out. Then, during the civil wars and the lesser conflicts among the Lower Barraduk Provinces, the Nugent Province had to fight to maintain its ancient lowland borders. Invasions of this Province have always failed, something the locals are intensely proud of. Many of the young men of the region volunteer to serve in the Regional Army and Provincial forces, but without any wars to fight, the young soldiers become restless.

Provincial House: House Nugent. House Nugent is the last great Warrior House of this region. Lord Nugent himself is a mammoth man of famed strength and endurance. This House's collection of weapons and their prized hunting dogs are among the finest in the Empire. Noble Houses and rich merchants throughout the realm special-order their hunting dogs from House Nugent. These fine, well trained animals sell for no less than 1,500-3,000 gold each. Lord Nugent has recently learned of a new stronghold of **orcs**, ogres, hobgoblins, goblins and trolls gathering along the Province's southwestern border. If these rumors are true, he will assemble a massive war party to smash the creatures and garner a little more glory for his Noble House and Province. This area of the **OslofRegion** is mostly crime free and still held in good regard by the other nobles.

Provincial Capital: Muhargeis (42,000 people). Another old fortress turned settlement, turned city. As the city grew, so



did the battlements. From the air, the whole place looks like a cut-away tree, with the various growth rings being the concentric defensive walls surrounding the city. Muhargeis is the lowest lying of the Koerdian provincial capitals, enabling it to trade with Lower Barraduk. As more merchants come into the area, so do more thieves, but that's okay, though, because it gives the fighting men of the Nugent force the opportunity for some action and to vent their frustration. The city lords figure if crime gets really out of hand, it will just provide everybody with a good excuse for a minor military action as troops go door to door in search of criminals.

Other Places of Note: Greenclaw. Far away from any human settlements, along the southwestern edge of the Nugent province, is a small niche in the mountains where a tiny, lush valley has existed for eons. Recently, a band of **orcs** and ogres found the spot and settled it. These folk mean no harm and have since put out the word to all "monster races" in the area that there is a safe haven for them. The population of the little settlement, called Greenclaw, has swelled to about 1,600 and is growing. Humans in the region are beginning to take notice. The place is not a war camp, although it is fiercely defended, and most humans, elves or dwarves visiting there are likely to think it is indeed the base camp for a military operation, thereby setting off a chain of events that will probably result in Greenclaw getting wiped off the map.



Regional Overview #4: The Kighfalcon Plains

Racial demographics for the Kighfalcon Plains/Inindri Region:

55% Human

9% Orc

8% Elf

8% Dwarf

7% Goblin

3% Kobold

10% Others; not including slaves, equal to approximately 45% of the free population (and rising), comprised mostly of **Orcs** (60%), with 20% being Ogres, 10% Goblins, and **10%** other races, including humans and, according to rumor, even a few undead, such as zombies.

This large region of rolling hills and fields is the breadbasket of the Empire, covered by farms of every size and type. Many of these were single-family establishments that manages small plots of vegetables and fruit, or herds of livestock. During the Reconstruction however, land barons grabbed as much land as they could, taking advantage of the severe dislocation caused by the Civil Wars. With so many of the landowners dead and missing, and with so much of the land's ownership in dispute, it was easy for powerful merchants and nobles to acquire large tracts of farmland by bribing local adjudicators into recognizing their bogus claims. The end result is that the majority of the Empire's farmers ended up as indentured servants on their own land.

Most of the farm hands in this region are human, but in the last few years, some of the owners of the large farms have been importing **orcs**, ogres and other non-human slaves as cheap labor. This doesn't bode well for human farm workers, whose livelihood is already threatened by the whim of their greedy masters.

It is rumored that a number of the more successful orchards and grain fields in the area are worked by zombies, animated skeletons and other undead minions, who require no rest and who toil without payment. Most of these stories have proved false, but it has happened, and no doubt, there are farms worked by undead here and there. This is something the farm owners like to keep quiet (would you eat an apple harvested by a walking **corpse?**), and some have even killed to keep the nature of their operations a secret.

Barring the bad influence of the city folk who have moved into the region **recently**, the Kighfalcon Plains is a relatively peaceful place. However, even with the aid of magic, growing crops and raising livestock is hard work, requiring a strong back and an even stronger will. The people of the Kighfalcon plains have both of these in spades. Since everybody here has to work hard to survive, that lends a common outlook among the people in this region. As a result, race relations are pretty good, except

among those farmers who are seeing their jobs taken away by the increasing use of **orc** slaves.

This region's biggest problem is its rebellious neighbor, the Middle Kingdoms region. Eventually, the Middle Kingdoms will try to secede from the Empire and cause a civil war to break out. Because of the local geography, this region is the only one through which a large Imperial army could pass to attack the rebels. Even if no serious fighting takes place within the Kighfalcon Plains, just having to house a large imperial army will strain the area's grain **reserves...and** the locals' collective patience.

Regional House: House Inindri

The Inindri House is one of the more recent additions to the Major Houses. House Inindri descends directly from the plains horsemen who ruled this area back before Lord Kighfalcon forged the Empire. It was a City-State House until 1,200 years ago, when a savage civil war left many of the region's noble houses decimated. House Inindri was one of the few that survived more or less unharmed and earned its Provincial status by default — there was nobody else in the area qualified to take the position.

The same thing happened 350 years ago, as the Civil Wars period began. That time, House Inindri was part of a winning coalition of noble houses left to rebuild the war-scarred region. Again, Inindri was promoted to fill a power vacuum left by the fighting and became a Regional power. It has remained at this station ever since, but the character of the house remains that of a local power — **Inindri** nobles dislike the problems and power struggles of regional politics. They would rather handle more down-to-earth things like crop failures, local disputes, and suppressing bandits. This attitude has kept the house out of lots of scandals and intrigue, but it has also kept them from fully exploiting the power to grow stronger. As a result, Inindri has a small military, modest cities, and its nobles live modest lives with little fanfare or luxury. This has earned Inindri a reputation for being a bunch of undeserving hayseeds.

House Inindri could be a major player in Imperial politics, however. Sharing a border with the middle Kingdoms places the Kighfalcon Plains in the thick of that brewing situation. The House wants to ensure that if a civil war breaks out, their region won't be decimated by it. As a result, these nobles have frequent (but unproductive) audiences with the Emperor and representatives from House Kaze.

For now, House Inindri nervously awaits the final resolution of this looming crisis. It's stressful times like these that make this House wonder if it ever should have become a Regional power. Some members of the House openly question if it wouldn't be better for Inindri to get knocked back down to a Provincial or even a local station. After all, that's where House **Inindri's** heart really lies, and it never hurts to get back to one's roots. The counter-argument offered by the House elders is that getting back to one's roots is indeed most hurtful if you get there by being buried in the ground.

Notable members of House Inindri include:

Gaurus Inindri: The presiding lord of the House is lanky and tall, with graying hair and a handlebar moustache. He is 50, and still fairly fit and good-looking. Whenever he visits the **Im-**

perial court, he is besieged by the attentions of older ladies-in-waiting, something which embarrasses this otherwise shy and modest fellow (**Gaurus** lost his wife several years ago when the "Seven Year Plague" swept the region). While not exactly honorable, he is a pretty decent guy (Unprincipled), a rarity among Western nobles. More than anything, he has his House's best interests and those of the Kighfalcon Plains Region at heart. He is especially interested in keeping tabs on House Kaze, House Itomas, and the whole Middle Kingdoms situation. As he realizes that the Imperial military will eventually occupy this region, he is working on ways to minimize the damage and disruption such an event would incur. He has pared down the Regional military considerably, using the extra resources to build a larger food surplus, and cache extra money, supplies and building materials throughout the region. When the war comes, **Gaurus** vows, the Kighfalcon Plains will be ready. **Quick Stats for Regional Overlord Gaurus Inindri:** 9th level Knight & Noble; Alignment: Unprincipled. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 9, P.S. 14, P.P. 13, P.E. 14, P.B. 15, Spd. 11.

Telk Inindri: **Telk** is ten years younger than **Gaurus**, but that hasn't kept the brothers from being close. When **Gaurus'** wife died it was very hard on him, and **Telk** was there for his older brother. In the years since, the two have grown in experience and make a good team of leaders. The only point on which they split is over the Kighfalcon Plains' role concerning the Middle Kingdoms. Being a bit of a patriot, **Telk** doesn't like House Kaze, and he is eager for House Inindri to spearhead any Imperial efforts to put the Middle Kingdoms back in their place (if things ever come to that). **Gaurus** disagrees, however, and **Telk** is too loyal to the House to disregard his brother's wishes. But if **Gaurus** and his son died tomorrow and **Telk** inherited the family seat, you can bet that House Inindri would take a decidedly more pro-Imperial stance toward the Middle Kingdoms. All the efforts that have gone into weathering the coming war would be redirected at helping House Itomas preserve the Empire. **Quick Stats for Telk Inindri:** 6th level Knight & Noble of scrupulous alignment; age 40. Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 12, M.A. 12, P.S. 15, P.P. 14, P.E. 13, P.B. 14, Spd. 13.

Chayk Inindri: As **Gaurus'** only son, **Chayk** has grown up without much parenting — his mother died when he was still young, and his father has never had much time for family. So, young **Chayk** has spent many of his days amid the many courtiers of the regional palace. This has made the noble son pretty wise to the shady side of politics. This has also corrupted him a bit, and his shifting loyalties have made him prone to stabbing his friends and associates in the back. Older members of the court fear that when **Chayk** ascends to the regional throne, the Kighfalcon Plains will cease to be the relatively stable, agricultural place it is and begin to resemble the dark, decadent lands of West and Upper Kighfalcon. Time will tell. **Quick Stats for Chayk Inindri:** 5th level Noble of anarchist alignment; age 26. Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 11, M.A. 15, P.S. 12, P.P. 13, P.E. 11, P.B. 15, Spd. 10.

Telk Inindri II: **Telk's** only living son. **Telk II's** four older brothers all died in the **Seven-Year Plague**, leaving young **Telk II** to someday inherit a great deal of power. **Telk II** has become a bit decadent, snobbish and drunk on his position in life. He uses a variety of drugs recreationally, and it seems that he will one day become one of the addict-nobles that are popping up ev-

erywhere in the realm. **Quick Stats for Telk Inindri II:** 2nd level Noble of anarchist alignment; age 23. Attributes: I.Q. 8, M.E. 8, M.A. 13, P.S. 11, P.P. 12, P.E. 11, P.B. 14, Spd. 9. **Note:** At heart, **Telk II** is a fine young man whose youthful ignorance is leading him to make some really stupid decisions. It's still not too late for him to grow up and become a responsible adult, but if certain folks have their way, he'll become a drug-soaked drone, easily manipulated by nefarious individuals like...

...**Bequen Johalla**, a 19-year-old courtier from the west and a recent addition to the Regional court. **Bequen** is a pompous, overdressed jerk who is the son of a very wealthy family from Upper Kighfalcon. Since his arrival, **Bequen** has managed to endear himself to **Telk II**, and has introduced the boy to a number of addictive drugs and other decadent behaviors. Why, you ask? Because **Bequen** is really a spy from the Middle Kingdoms, sent to corrupt **Telk II** into becoming a dull-witted pawn that House Kaze can plumb for sensitive information. The plan had initially been to do this to **Chayk** as well, but **Chayk** has successfully resisted **Bequen's** bad influence. **Bequen** is a complete miscreant, and will gladly lie, cheat, steal and betray *anyone* to get out of danger. If he gets caught as a spy, he will gladly sing about his involvement with House Kaze and the Middle Kingdoms if he thinks it will spare him any jail time or physical punishment. **Quick Stats for Bequen Johalla:** 3rd level Spy of miscreant alignment. Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 10, M.A. 16, P.S. 11, P.P. 14, P.E. 12, P.B. 15, Spd. 14.

Caer Netebbe

Regional Capital

Population: Approx. 120,000

Human: 60,000

Orc: 24,000

Dwarf: 12,000

Elf: 12,000

Other: 12,000; does not include the slave population of approximately 28,000.

This is a large, open, unwallled city that has been destroyed and rebuilt at least ten times since it was first established. There are two reasons for all this destruction. The first is that **Caer Netebbe** lies at the crossroads of the Empire's two largest roads, and every time there's been a major civil war (especially concerning the Middle Kingdoms), this city finds itself in the middle of the combat zone. The second reason is that **Caer Netebbe** has never tried to erect city defenses. This is a cattle town, mostly, and it has to be accessible to herders driving large groups of animals. Large city walls would hamper that, and as such, the city lords have never tried to seriously fortify the city. Most of the city gets rebuilt within five years after it gets destroyed anyway, and by now the people who live here simply accept the fact that at least once in their lives their homes and businesses will likely be burnt to the ground.

Although the Kighfalcon Plains is mostly a farming region, the Capitol Province is cattle and sheep territory. All of these operations sell their herds in **Caer Netebbe**, where the animals are slaughtered and butchered or sold live for distribution elsewhere. The smokehouses of this city are particularly famous because they use a special kind of wood and spicegrass found only

in this region. That, along with secret meat-smoking practices, gives the meat products made here a certain flavor that Western nobles everywhere crave.

Besides meat production, Caer Netebbe is also known for the **fine** leather goods it produces. The tanners here make lots of money selling leather clothing, armor, bags, and other goods. Leather goods haven't become a big export yet, but there are lots of customers within the Empire who will pay through the nose for a really good pair of Netebbe boots or studded leather armor. In some of the more trendy noble courts, Netebbe **leatherwear** has become a fashion rage.

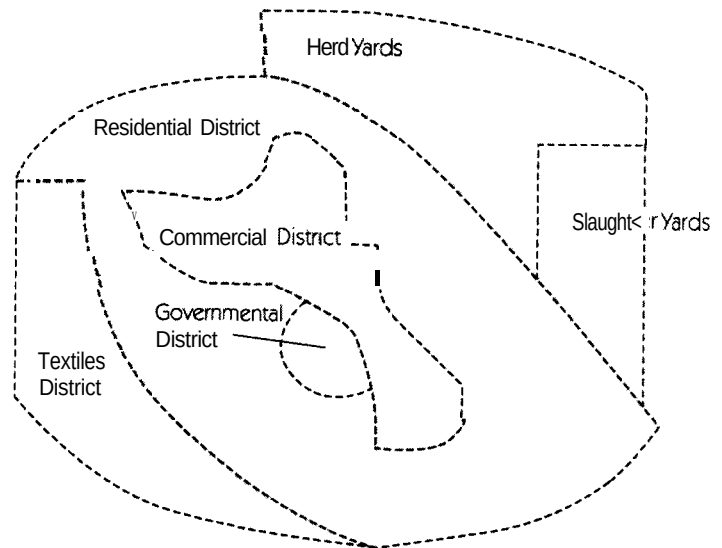
Livestock rustling is a beheading offense, so there isn't much animal theft here. Occasional crackdowns by the city guard have kept other crime low, but there has been an ongoing feud between cattle herders and sheep herders stemming from disputes over the ownership of grazing lands outside of town. Most of these disputes are settled peacefully, but sometimes bloody vendettas and murders result. When this kind of fighting erupts in Caer Netebbe (at least once a year during slaughter season, when all the herders bring their animals into town for sale), the streets can get very unsafe. **Swordfights** and hundred-man melees can break out in the central plazas and stockyards, turning parts of the town into a chaotic riot. When this happens, the city guard is authorized to do whatever it takes to restore order. After a few herders are put to the sword, the fighting tends to settle down.

The major roads intersecting here bring travelers from every quarter of the Empire, making Caer Netebbe a great place to exchange news of what's happening elsewhere. The Imperial garrison stationed in town maintains a large crew of informants and spies who constantly work the **town's** rumor mill and report any serious news back to the Emperor. House Jaoradon also maintains a network of spies to keep tabs on things. Sometimes they work with the Imperial spies, sometimes they don't. Of special interest is any news of the Middle Kingdoms. Half the spies in Caer Netebbe are keeping tabs on this rebellious region, and nearly every clandestine mission into that region is sent from this city, making it a gold mine for freelance spies, thieves, assassins, and others who specialize in cloak-and-dagger work.

Caer Netebbe Description & Code Key

Governmental District

1. House Inindri Regional Palace.
2. House Inindri Regional Garrison.
 - 2a. Armory.
 - 2b. Stables.
 - 2c. Training Yard.
 - 2d. Barracks.
3. Imperial Garrison.
 - 3a. Armory.
 - 3b. Stables.
 - 3c. Training Yard.
 - 3d. Barracks.
4. Regional Court of Justice.
5. Caer Netebbe Municipal Offices.



Textiles District

6. Clothmakers, Inc. This family business became successful, grew too quickly, and now can't support itself. It will probably be out of operation within a year. In a desperate bid to keep the company afloat, the owner, a human named Fairly, has taken out several high-interest loans from local criminals. Fairly has no means of repaying these loans and is at his wit's end over what to do next.

7. Textiles, Textiles, Textiles. While this place boasts "three times the selection of any other mill in the Empire!" it is just another typical mill. Very dusty inside.

8. Textile Mill. Ever since the human workers went on strike, the mill has been run by **orc** "scabs." The owner is awaiting the arrival of a team of strikebreakers **he's** called in to break up his protesting workers. This could get ugly.

9. Byregi's Spinning Yard. This place occupies a small compound that resembles a fortress. There are only a few known employees here, but the output from this place is phenomenal. Locals all think the place is manned by a legion of zombies, but are too afraid to inquire. Over the years, every adjacent building had been abandoned because the owners felt too creeped-out to be so close to a "den of **undead**." The rumors are indeed true — the owner of the Mill, **Byregi**, is an aberrant, 10th level Summoner and 6th level Wizard who decided to try his hand at a relatively quiet way to earn a living. So far, the mill has earned Byregi a small fortune, but he fears that eventually some damn fool will investigate the place, and he'll have to kill him.

10. The Spider's Web Textile Spinnery. Asharey, a sharp-witted female dwarf, created this business 50 years ago and **hasn't** looked back since. She manages a staff of over 100 spinners - some slaves, some wage-earners, but she treats them all with kindness and respect. As a result, she is one of the most sought after employers in town to work for. In fact, the waiting list to become a spinner for the Spider's Web has nearly 250 people on it.

11. Spinning Yarns. A small mill that produces every kind of textile product except for **yarn**, oddly enough.

12. Textile Mill. A basic manufacturing operation. Nothing special.



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Steve Edwards

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The Herdyards

13. ABC Cattle Yards. Local cattle drivers herd their animals here for auction and sale.

14. Brand Y Cattle Depot. Chief rival of ABC Cattle Yards.

15. Rain's Head Sheeppyards. Can accommodate huge herds for auction and distribution.

16. Woolley's Yard. Another sheeppyard, run by radical anti-cattle herders. These guys have murdered cattlemen before and will do so again.

17. Caer Netebbe Auction Yard. Handles all animal sales in the Herdyards district. For arranging auctions and delivery of the animals to their new owners, the operators of the auction yard take 20% of the proceeds from all sales. They make a killing doing this and sometimes keep a few stray heads for themselves.

Slaughteryards

18. Porchoi's Ham House. This place did lots of business back when the swine market was still big. Nowadays they butcher cattle, but their name has stuck.

19. Tannery. Makes excellent goods from the discarded skins of butchered cattle.

20. Muttonworks. A slaughterhouse and butchers' shop for sheep. The head "**hammerjack**," who kills the sheep, is an extremely emotionally disturbed man. If he didn't have defenseless animals to kill all day, he would become the region's worst spree killer.

21. A Touch of Hickory. A very profitable smokehouse. Although it specializes in hickory smoking, it produces meat with six different spices and flavorings.

22. There's the Beef. Another cattle slaughtering operation. One of the workers is a washed-up gladiator who punches the hanging carcasses in dreams of getting back into fighting condition.

Commercial District

23. The House of Ill Repute. For some reason, people don't mind this brothel, perhaps because of the honesty of its name. A favorite hang-out for city guardsmen and criminals alike. As a result, corruption of many kinds goes on under this roof.

24. Ye Olde Magicke Shoppe. The owner of this place is a kooky old elf who puts an extra "**ee**" sound on almost every word he speaks. Only a 33% chance of finding typical items here, but they are 10% below book price. Other alchemists in Caer Netebbe don't like these lowball tactics and will probably try to run him out of town.

25. House of the Midnight Players. This showhouse features the Midnight Players, a fiery, irreverent bunch of entertainers who are taking the city by storm. Several of their acts have offended rich and important people in town, and one in particular — a despicable merchant named **Obble Botch** — has vowed to hire a team of thieves to burn this place down. The Midnight Players, having heard this rumor, have openly dared Botch to "summon the intestinal fortitude to burn us out." Since then, crowds are a little nervous that at any show, a large fire might break out, but that still hasn't quashed the growing popularity of the place.

26. Farmers' Market. An open-air plaza that always has farmers from out of town selling their produce.

27. The Kighfalton Ironworks. A greedy but shrewd kobold runs this weapons and armor shop. He does a great business whenever feuds between the cattle ranchers and sheep ranchers break out. During quiet times, he passes out business cards so people will think to stock up from his shop when the next big fight breaks out.

28. Temple to Kirgi the Rat God. This is the most prominent of Caer Netebbe's many temples. Many priests of other churches don't like this and are forming an alliance against this steadily growing order. A surprisingly high number of young men and women come here to become priests and priestesses, and it is said that Kirgi itself has visited the inner sanctum of this temple more than once.

29. Jabberwocky's Place. Jabberwocky is an old, battle-scarred human alchemist who sports an eye patch and is missing his right hand. He runs his business by appointment only, out of his modest house on Steel Street. Jabberwocky has a few items for sale, but mostly is in the information business. His specialty topics include cults, dragons, and the Old Ones. He charges 500 gold for a half-hour of consultation.

Residential District

This area is a mix of nice manors, middle-class homes and run-down tenements.

Notable residents include:

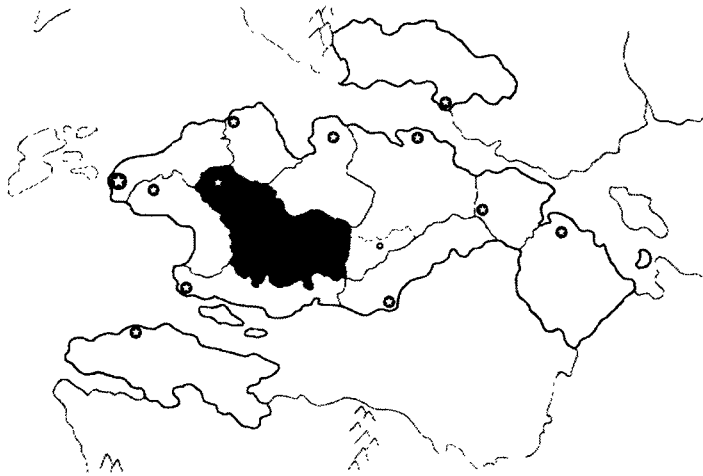
- **The Estellen Manor.** Old man Estellen made his fortune in cattle years ago. He ruthlessly murdered and intimidated his competition but then had a change of heart and renounced his ways. Since then, he has become a recluse.
- **Lod Humongous** is a weird, masked individual who is the self-proclaimed ruler of the tenement blocks of this district. His minions carry out his dirty work for him.
- An eccentric young man who actually is a long-lost relative of House Inindri.
- **Nuys Van Oster** is a freelance Air Warlock who, for the right price, will cast storm spells on your competitor's crop fields. He's an unscrupulous mercenary with plenty of unsavory friends, including a Long Bowman, a Warrior Monk and (rumor has it) a **Bearman** Mercenary.
- A retired adventurer who claims to have a bag of magical acorns from the "Tree of the Ten Moons." He's looking for some spare farmland to use.

Provincial Breakdown of the Kighfalton Plains Region

This region has more provincial houses than any other region in the Empire. Besides Inindri Province, the Kighfalton Plains Provinces are Ker, Selkoi, Quozadda, Nereus and Ironwolf.

Provincial Overview: Ker Province

The smallest of the provinces, but the most wealthy. Grows lots of common crops but also raises some raw spice plants and, rumor has it, a variety of drug-bearing flowers.



Provincial House: House Ker. House Ker spends most of its energy overseeing the large-scale production of wheat, barley, and corn. Like House Inindri, House Ker has little interest in politics, but watches the Middle Kingdoms situation very closely.

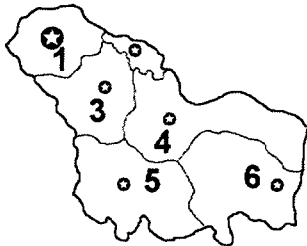
Provincial Capital: Zalig (60,000 people). A bustling and growing place with a constant influx of merchants, farmers and wholesalers buying and selling agricultural products.

Provincial Overview: Selkoi Province

This unremarkable house oversees some crop production and also raises some cattle and sheep.

Provincial House: House Selkoi. Very similar to House Ker in most respects, except that House Selkoi is considering hiring Warlocks to help its farming efforts.

Provincial Capital: Caer Selkoi (45,000 people). The youths of this city are bored out of their minds. Many have turned to crime, drugs, politics, or other kinds of reckless diversions to fill their otherwise dull lives. Many older folks here, who have worked entire lives, resent the younger kids' lackadaisical nature.



Provincial Overview of the Kighfalcon Plains

1. Regional Province. Provincial Capital: Caer Netebbe.
Ruling Noble Family: House Inindri.
2. Ker Province. Provincial Capital: Zalig.
Ruling Noble Family: House Ker.
3. Selkoi Province. Provincial Capital: Caer Selkoi.
Ruling Noble Family: House Selkoi.
4. Quozadda Province. Provincial Capital: Talatan.
Ruling Noble Family: House Quozadda.
5. Nereus Province. Provincial Capital: Everspring.
Ruling Noble Family: House Nereus.
6. Ironwolf Province. Provincial Capital: Modrian.
Ruling Noble Family: House Ironwolf.

Note: All ruling families reside in their provincial capitals.

Provincial Overview: Quozadda Province

Another big cattle-raising province. Lots of violence here, thanks to the feud with sheepherders from other provinces. Most of this fighting consists of single-house ambushes in the middle of the night.

Provincial House: House Quozadda. House Quozadda's biggest distinction is its private orchards that bear vast quantities of fruit each year, supplementing the provincial grain harvest. House Quozadda also makes a variety of sweet syrups that are processed and then sent to the Lower Barraduk Region for exportation. A recent boom in popularity for these syrups in the Timiro Kingdom and Lopan has increased demand by 600%, so House Quozadda currently has more money than it knows what to do with.

Provincial Capital: Talatan (53,000 people). Prospering like never before, this once-small city is growing by leaps and bounds. Since the last few years were great for the harvest, nearly everybody in the province made serious money, and now the place is experiencing a city-wide spending spree. It's also the best place in the region to buy, sell or trade magic items.

Provincial Overview: Nereus Province

This province doesn't border the Middle Kingdoms, but it certainly has absorbed the religious culture of that region. Nereus province is a major producer of wheat and rye but keeps almost none of its collective harvest, choosing to export it. In fact, millers and bakers are looked down upon in this province.

Provincial House: House Nereus. A devoutly religious House, the Nereus nobles pray to ancient harvest gods to help with their province's agriculture. The gods must be listening, because since House Nereus took power in the province, its agricultural output has increased remarkably every year. The Nereus Provincial palace sits on top of an enormous cavern where the House stores preserved crop surpluses in case times grow lean.

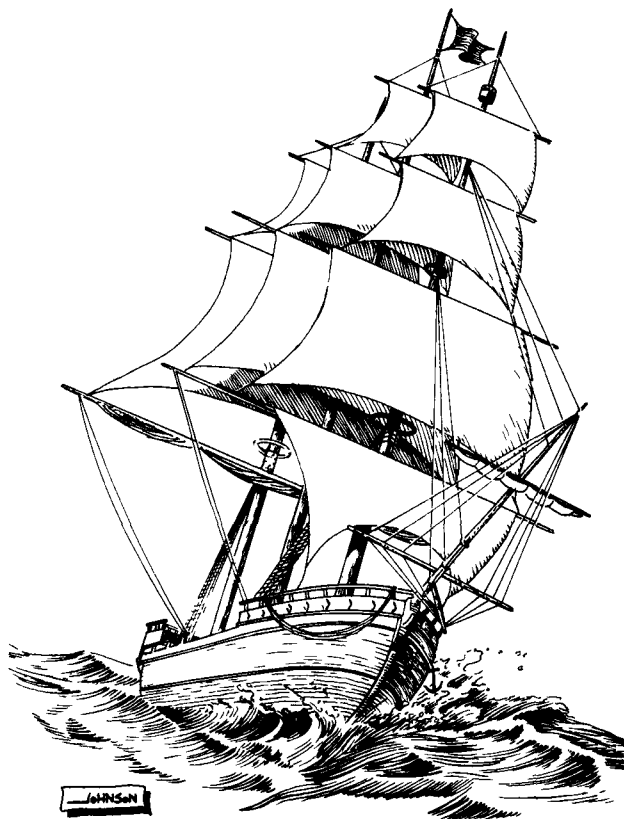
Provincial Capital: Everspring (30,000 people). A very sedate and heavily policed town, no ruckus of any kind is tolerated here. Huge storehouses form the bulk of the settlement, and they are filled with grain most of the time. As a result, Everspring has a serious vermin problem.

Provincial Overview: Ironwolf Province

A major sheep raising area. It also grows lots of alfalfa, bean sprouts, and leafy vegetables. Jokingly referred to as the "garden province." Lately, it has seen a rise in feuding among its sheep herders against cattle herders from other provinces. Pretty soon, the Noble Houses of the various provinces are going to have to get involved to put this feuding to an end.

Provincial House: House Ironwolf. This House is very concerned over the Middle Kingdoms situation, since their province borders them. Already, House Ironwolf has ordered a large amount of harvested food to be preserved and stored. The house has also begun procuring weapons and hoarding gold in anticipation of the impending conflict.

Provincial Capital: Modrian (40,000 people). This city was not fortified until three years ago, when House Ironwolf decided that it was time to protect itself in the event of civil war. Nowadays, Modrian has a strong and well-trained military. Coupled with the city's walls, siege weapons, and stores of extra food and water, the city could withstand a siege of up to a year.



Regional Overview #5: Lower Barraduk

Racial demographics for the Lower Barraduk/Taerea Region:

36% Human
13% Elf
9% Dwarf
2% Gnome
12% Orc
4% Goblin
1% Hobgoblin
3% Ogre
20% Other (mostly transients)

Note: Since there are so many different races and transients in this region, the racial demographic is dramatically different from elsewhere in the Western Empire. A full 15% to 25% of the population noted above is transient and half of them are **nonhumans**. The transient population represents sailors, pirates, merchants, traders, mercenaries, adventurers and travelers who constantly come and go from Lower **Barraduk**, but only stay for a limited period of time, whether it be a few days, months or years. Lower Barraduk has one of the largest populations of Gnomes in the world.

The statistics above do not include the slave population which is roughly equal to half the number of free citizens in the

region (23% **Orc**, 12% Ogre, 20% Ratling, 14% Goblin, 3% Hobgoblin, 5% Kobold, 3% human, 20% other).

Lower Barraduk is the Western Empire's wealthiest region, because it is the seat for the majority of the realm's overseas **import/export** traffic. An estimated 67% of all imported goods and 60% of exported goods and sea traffic stop to do business at the ports in Lower Barraduk. Merchants sail along the southern shore of the peninsula, buying, selling and trading their wares along a well-established trade route that starts just below where the *Koerdian Mountains* meet the sea, and stretches along the coast to the foothills of the *Scarlet Mountains*. All along the coastline, powerful trading centers compete fiercely with each other to attract merchant traffic and to buy, trade and sell all sorts of goods, from silk and brandy to magic items and slaves. As the saying goes, "The Empire's gold may come from the mountains, but it all flows to the sea."

The sea route is complemented by a web of overland roadways to distribute goods to the rest of the Empire. Overland caravans ship off-loaded merchandise to the southern half of the realm, while ships headed for the north stop to resupply, make any necessary repairs or stop for a little rest and relaxation at one of the bustling sea ports or cities. Most shipments destined for the northern regions travel by ship, but there are roads that lead all the way to Upper Kighfalton.

Foreign ships coming from the south are more likely to unload their goods in Lower Barraduk rather than risk straying too close to the *Isle of the Cyclops* on route to the northern trade center of **Caer Itom**, or lingering in the pirate infested waters around the Western Empire any longer than they need to. Lower Barraduk is also an established dry dock, port for resupply, R&R and the departure port for most Western Empire ships and many foreign merchant vessels restocked with Western goods bound for the coast of the *Yin-Sloth Jungles*, *Baalgor Wastelands*, *western Old Kingdom*, *Land of the South Winds* and other points south. Consequently, Lower Barraduk makes a ton of money on entry/exit fees and ship taxes alone.

The Barraduk Melting Pot

Racial tensions are somewhat less in this region than elsewhere in the Western Empire due to the constant influx of foreign and **nonhuman** people. Humans, elves, and dwarves are generally the most common, dominant and most politically powerful races. Gnomes and Titans are also highly regarded but uncommon. Meanwhile, "free" *goblins*, *orcs*, *ogres*, and *kobolds* are common as cheap labor and ship crewmen, but they are viewed with suspicious concern and varying levels of disdain and hatred. These races are more plentiful as "slaves."

Other races, typically members of a ship's crew or laborers, including free *giants*, *cyclops*, *trolls*, and even "savages" from the *Yin-Sloth Jungles* (**D'ogres**, Lizard Men, Tezcat, etc.), as well as some exotic beings like the *Eandroth*, *Sphinx*, *Troll*, *Gromek*, *Lizard Mage*, and the occasional *Wolfen* are tolerated, provided they obey the law and stay out of trouble. However, these monster-races are usually treated poorly and rudely, overcharged and frequently segregated and given inferior accommodations — for example, Trolls, Wolfen, **Bearmen**, Lizard Men, and Gromek must typically sleep in the barn, stable, or animal or slave pens (sometimes outdoors in the back) with the other animals, and where they won't frighten the "respectable" pa-



trons. Furthermore, some businesses reserve the right to not serve certain races, and most have bouncers, hired enforcers and patrons quick to enforce that right. It's important to note that, with rare exception, the monster races have little to no rights in **Barraduk** (or anywhere in the Empire). This means beating, robbing, abusing or killing them has insignificant to no consequences. The word of local business people, citizens and humans, elves, dwarves, titans and gnomes is believed over any "monster's."

Wolfen ships and vessels crewed by large numbers of Wolfen are never allowed to dock for any reason and will be forcibly turned away **and/or** sunk if they don't immediately comply. Changelings, free Wolfen and Adrams are three races *never* welcomed and usually besieged by mobs and slain if they are discovered causing the slightest trouble. Ratlings, plentiful in lower Barraduk, are regarded as thieving vermin to be used as slaves or exterminated. There is no such thing as a "free" Ratling, they are either slaves or monsters to be destroyed, end of story.

In most trade ports and many outlying cities in this region, a cosmopolitan scene with streets filled with a dozen different humanoid races and humans from foreign lands interacting without batting an eyelash at each other's unique and unusual physical **and/or** cultural characteristics. Western nobles with strong human supremacist views try to avoid dealing with or visiting Lower Barraduk, and question the logic and safety of dealing with such "barbaric monsters — eternal enemies of the human race" (elves and dwarves are excluded, and generally regarded as wholesome allies of, if not unofficial members of the human race).

The close proximity of so many trading centers creates incredibly intense economic competition within the region, especially among the trade ports and coastal communities. In the old days, the big merchant cities would blockade each other to prevent ships from landing at a competitor, and force merchant ships to do business with them. They'd also sabotage competitors and even sink ships! Thankfully, such strong-arm tactics were outlawed nearly 200 years ago, but cutthroat competition continues.

Present day tactics include price wars, battles to get products to market before the other guy (and thus the ability to charge higher prices), convincing a trader to sell product already earmarked for a competitor to him instead (for a higher price, product discount or special favor, of course, the man needs to make a profit), price gouging (when possible) of exclusive or rare products and services, lies about competitors' products or product quality, or affiliations (political, racial and criminal), lies and innuendo about competitors' unsavory practices (so and so "hates and cheats dwarves," or whomever; "he's really a **pirate**;" "they water their booze and let pickpockets and con artists have their way with **customers**;" or "he worships a death cult god"), and on, and on, and on. Some even encourage trouble ("Yes, you should go right over to that bigot and give him a piece of your mind"), protests, boycotts, and the spreading of vicious rumors and outright lies against their competition. The most desperate or ruthless may even engage in acts of vandalism, sabotage, robbery, and raids on competitors' businesses, merchant caravans bringing new goods, and sometimes will even resort to murder. Frequently, such foul deeds are perpetrated by hired thieves,

thugs, mercenaries and adventurers (the player **group**?), typically hired through a go-between, special agent, or member of the thieves' guild to keep the real culprit's identity a secret and to avoid political, economic and legal repercussions.

Lower **Barraduk**'s biggest problem, besides cutthroat competition among merchants, is an ongoing feud between its Provincial Nobles. These greedy, arrogant and aggressive tyrants have a long history of fighting each other to control the **region's** trade routes. There was a lull during the Reconstruction era, but 20 years ago the infighting and political maneuvering renewed with a vengeance. Every Provincial House and many of the Local Houses have been drawn into the conflict one way or another. The majority of the fighting takes place in the nobles' court and other political arenas, although it does spillover into small, localized, physical conflicts over trade agreements, trade routes, roads and rights, as well as **fistfights** and duels among the nobility. While some fear civil war may erupt, all of the nobles realize that if a full-blown war breaks out, it would devastate the region's economy, disrupt trade, bring the Imperial Army down upon them and probably lead to Imperial regulation (which means more money going directly to the Imperial House). None of the nobles want this, so they are very careful to avoid it. The majority of the infighting consists of political maneuvering, mudslinging, slander, acts of sabotage, price wars, exclusive deals, alliances, and all sorts of underhanded intrigue instigated and manipulated by the competing Noble Houses and their families, but often involving City-States, merchants and businesses. The worst involves the occasional and reprehensible destruction of a political career through lies, innuendo, **and/or** frame job, blackmail, the occasional assassination or attempt, and the rare meeting of private armies to engaged in battle to settle a dispute on a pre-arranged battlefield. **Note:** The cities and trade ports are largely free of fighting in the streets or obviously brutal competition. To most visitors, Lower Barraduk is a wonderful place with a mind-boggling number of merchants, an incredible selection of goods and services, rare items, and fabulous opportunity.

Although Emperor Itomas sees Lower Barraduk as a chaotic embarrassment to the rest of the Empire, he doesn't anticipate open civil war and tries to ignore the political nonsense this region constantly generates at court (name calling, condemnation, requests for legal and political judgements and penalties against rivals, etc.). To be safe, however, he has dispatched three battalions of Imperial Troops — one battalion of Imperial Janissaries and two battalions of regular Imperial Soldiers — to reinforce the garrison at the Regional Capital, and to send the message that he grows tired of their shenanigans.

Regional House: House Taerea

House Taerea is the noble power in Lower Barraduk, but the family has suffered economic losses due to the political infighting and unpredictable fluctuations of their commercial holdings. Furthermore, the escalating conflict among virtually all the Provincial Houses under the Regional House is both an embarrassment and raises the question as to whether the House is fit to rule. Fortunately for House Taerea, the Emperor realizes what a powder keg the House is riding and is actually impressed that House Taerea has managed to prevent the intense rivalry from having a negative impact on commerce throughout the region.

Since commerce is up for the 9th year in a row, bloodshed is minimal and the real battles occur in the court where the common man, merchants and visitors can't see it, the Imperial House is happy to let House Taerea struggle with "Regional problems."

House Taerea's most successful money-making scheme — aside from the huge amount of money solicited from taxes on vast amounts of sale goods, port fees, levies, and **import/export** tariffs — has been sponsoring enormous, high-risk mercantile ventures. They've played the odds wonderfully and seem to have a keen sense of the market and trends. On the political spectrum, the Regional House is quietly supporting a number of Provincial Houses that it believes will ultimately be on the winning side in a battle between the noble Provincial and City-State Houses. An amazing number of nobles owe the Regional House favors, which means in the long run, it should come out on top regardless of how the power base among the Lesser Houses may shift. This has meant a great deal of political maneuvering and playing several sides against each other without getting caught, but then the Taerea family has always had a gift for politics and diplomacy.

Meanwhile, House Taerea is spending a fortune expanding its Regional Army and Navy, which are necessary to protect their cities, ports and sea lanes. However, the expansion is a precautionary measure, just in case the nobles' infighting does turn violent and troops are needed to quell civil unrest. The Overlord is desperately looking for some way to stop the fighting among his nobles, but is at a loss. Every time he negotiates peace or a settlement with one group, trouble increases elsewhere or past arrangements crumble. If the squabbling doesn't stop, either some power-hungry Provincial House will try to usurp the Regional seat, or Regional House Taerea will have to step in with Provincial troops (perhaps supported by Imperial troops). The House is successfully negotiating with the Imperial House on a possible plan in which the Regional House would, at least temporarily, seize control of 30-40% of the warring Provincial Houses to force the others to cease and reach peace or face Imperial intervention. Of course, once House Taerea gets control of these lands, it will hold onto a good portion for itself and the opposing noble houses will be disenfranchised and permanently powerless unless they obey the Regional House's every word. Those who refuse will be replaced with noble families that "owe" House Taerea and are willing to follow their lead. Either way, the Regional House comes out a winner.

When its ready to go to war ("to save the region," of course), to insure the defeat the splintered Provincial Houses, noble families, and their private armies, House Taerea has recruited a legion of Summoners to draw upon the forces of nature and large numbers of demons to use in battle. So far, the Taereans have kept this part of the plan a secret, and will only call upon such extreme measures as a desperate backup plan. The building of a "dark army" for any reason is a bold, dangerous move that could backfire on the Regional House if the Emperor considers it a threat. Then again, House Taerea has, with the sanction of Emperor Itomas, secretly rebuilt and launched the Black Demon Ships to undermine and intimidate enemies of the Western Empire on the high seas!

House Taerea's involvement with Summoners and demonic forces is just its latest step into a long descent of madness and

depravity. The side courts of these Taerean nobles are a sickening, nonstop display of the most **overindulgent**, Caligula-like hedonism imaginable. Even some of the more notably depraved nobles in the upper circles of Western society remark that of all the houses, Taerea symbolizes the worst behavior. Overlord Taerea has been known to keep a large stock of slaves on hand for all manner of twisted, perverted purposes that only his closest aides and family members are privy to. The presiding elder of the house is a known drug addict, as are most of the other house members. What's more, Taerean nobles constantly gorge themselves on exotic food and drink: Dragon hatchling steaks, **Peryton** eggs, Faerie Foods, magical elixirs, etc. And some say, ritual human sacrifices to dark gods.

Whether any of House Taerea's crazy schemes work or not is left to the future. If the House goes too far, the Emperor will intervene and put an end to the madness. However, right now, the Regional House has the ear and favor the Imperial House and, if all goes well, could instigate one of the greatest and least bloody coups in centuries. And if resistance among the Provincial Lords is strong, let the blood run.

Notable figures of House Taerea:

Regional Overlord Jarvin Taerea: House elder and master manipulator. He is the mastermind behind House Taerea and its plots to seize more land and greater control over the region. To this end, he is trying to get Emperor Itomas to sanction and perhaps even support House Taerea's plan to forcibly put an end to the infighting between the Provincial Houses. This is ambitious even for a Taerea, but the old man has an insatiable lust for power. He is as slick and evil as they come and can smile and sweetly sing praise to the gods while he sinks a dagger into an ally's back, or plots the destruction of thousands. He uses a variety of drugs regularly, and suffers from delusions of grandeur, an obsession for power, a handful of phobias, and sadism. He enjoys torturing prisoners, encourages **bloodsports**, and is said to engage in blood rituals and even drink human blood. **Quick Stats for Jarvin Taerea:** 11th level Noble of diabolic alignment, age 69 and is as sharp, spry, and dangerous as ever, maybe more so. Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 15, M.A. 18, P.S. 15, P.P. 10, P.E. 12, P.B. 14, Spd. 10

Lady Melina Taerea: Jarvin's sister (and his lover, or so it is rumored). She has become a familiar face at the most upscale drug dens and sin parlors in both *Caer Itom* and *Iyancine*. It is said that she uses drugs to momentarily escape the clutches of the Overlords and to forget horrible transgressions made against her. Don't feel too sorry for the lady, as she is known to be cruel and abusive, and engages in all manner of decadence. In her current drugged state, she is a shadow of her former self given to fits of anger, amorous advances (but hates those who **reject** her and may plot to make them suffer for their slight against her), and can be easily manipulated by just about anyone who strikes her fancy. Melina used to possess elf-like beauty, but her wild lifestyle has made her look tired and worn out. She supports Jarvin and Erivin primarily to maintain her rich lifestyle and because she fears them both. Otherwise she has no political views or aspirations and seeks only to lose herself in drugs, sex and parties. **Quick Stats for Melina Taerea:** 8th level Noble of miscreant alignment; age 56. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 8, M.A. 14, P.S. 10, P.P. 9, P.E. 9, P.B. 14 (was 24), Spd. 8

Lord Demar Taerea: Jarvin's younger brother has been given the task of holding the fort in Lower **Barraduk** and plotting military strategies. It was Demar who encouraged **Erivinto** pursue the mystic art of Summoning, and his idea to recruit the legion of **Summoners** necessary to raise an army of demons in case of war. He has delusions of commanding an army of demons that will take over the region, and perhaps, the Empire. Demar is completely insane, but a brilliant military tactician and strategist. Like his brother, he is a **skillful** negotiator, interrogator and diplomat, although he tends to grow weary of games that take too long. Demar is truly maniacal. He is a sadistic bully who loves violence, abuses and belittles those around him, psychologically and physically torments a pair of captive demons (an **Alu** and a **Baal-Rog**), and enjoys torturing faeries, drinking blood, participating in blood rituals and cannibalism — he likes the taste of human flesh and relishes eating his enemies. **Quick Stats for Demar Taerea:** 7th level Noble and Mind Mage of miscreant alignment; age 58. Attributes: I.Q. 21, M.E. 14, M.A. 12, P.S. 13, P.P. 15, P.E. 12, P.B. 14, Spd. 18; I.S.P. 91



Lord Erivin Taerea: Jarvin's oldest son — mother unknown (rumored to be Melina Taerea, but unconfirmed). Astonishingly handsome and intelligent, but equally vindictive and cruel. Erivin knows he will inherit the position of Overlord, and can hardly wait. He respects and fears his father which, in turn, earns his loyalty. Erivin is not quite the politician and manipulator that **Jarvin** is, but he is a capable, iron-fisted leader and a cunning schemer in his own right. Like his father, he is obsessed with power and ascribes to the school of the ends justifies the means. He has always been fascinated with magic and dabbles in the art of Summoning. He also owns a demon slaying, flaming broad sword (does 5D6 damage) and an arsenal of magic scrolls and potions. He looks forward to a higher position in the

House once Itomas reasserts control over Lower Barraduk. Erivin is rumored to be a witch or demon worshipper, but in reality, he is a Summoner. **Quick Stats for Erivin Taerea:** 7th level Noble and 4th level Summoner of miscreant alignment; age 37. Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 15, M.A. 18, P.S. 20, P.P. 17, P.E. 14, P.B. 21, Spd. 19; he is cruel, vindictive, merciless and so blinded by ambition and self-confidence that he is nearly fearless. This also tends to make him overconfident and reckless, which explains his lack of concern about calling upon demon hordes to supplement their army (if necessary). He holds Y'skloth in higher esteem than the mage deserves and the two confide in each other regularly.

Y'skloth Blackblood: House Taerea's chief Summoner. He thinks the plan to summon a legion of demon-soldiers to insure victory (if it should come to war) is a brilliant one. In fact, he is currently gathering components to draw an experimental circle to summon forth a little known demon lord from one of the more remote comers of Hades. If the summons works, this demon — a lord named Goracz — could be worth more than a hundred **Baal-Rogs**. Of course, there's also no telling how difficult it will be to control this monster. Overall, Y'skloth thinks he is far more intelligent and powerful than he really is, and has a bad habit of underestimating his opponents. Personally, he doesn't know why House Taerea is wasting time with political maneuvering and thinks they should launch a demon invasion to soften up the Provincial Houses and follow with their human armies to seize control of the entire region (Y'skloth isn't much of a politician or business person). He has also played a role in the Empire's secret relaunching of a small number of the Black Demon Ships.

Quick Stats for Y'skloth: 9th level, **elven** Summoner of aberrant alignment; age 35. Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 17 (used to be 20), M.A. 12, P.S. 17, P.P. 18, P.E. 14 (used to be 18), P.B. 19 (used to be 22), Spd. 12; loyal to the Taerea family, particularly the father and son.

Iyancine — Regional Capital

Population: Approximately 75,000

33,500 Humans

11,500 Elves

6,500 Dwarves

9,750 Orcs

3,250 Goblins

10,500 Other

Plus 34,700 slaves; mostly **orcs**, goblins, ogres & ratlings, and 10,000 to 18,000 transients at any given time.

This city is a major commercial junction on the shore of the Sea of Scarlet Waters. Depending on which way a ship is coming, this is the first major city and trading center encountered upon either entering or leaving the Strait of the Sea of Scarlet Waters. Moreover, two major roadways intersect here, further adding to the heavy merchant traffic. Ships and merchant vessels often stop at this famous port to buy, sell and trade their wares, resupply, catch up on the latest gossip, try to catch accurate information about the needs of various cities and ports,

and/or to get a little rest and relaxation before heading north, south or east to the Baalgor Wastelands, Old Kingdom or the eastern portion of the Western Empire via the Sea of Scarlet Waters (Lower **Barraduk** and the Regional House Taerea effectively control all traffic along the strait and into the Sea). There are also several well equipped dry docks. Additionally, the entire town of *Tyral*, 20 miles (32 km) east of the city, is dedicated to building and repairing ships. It has six dry docks and excellent facilities. **Iyancine** often sends work to this booming town of 19,000+ people. However, from a trade or recreation point of view, this town has nothing to offer, and crews with ships stuck in dry dock usually stay at Iyancine. A string of other coastal trading cities, towns and fishing villages are found along the horseshoe coastline of the Sea of the Scarlet Waters.

The city has a long-standing policy of erecting new defensive walls to enclose the city every 200-300 years. These inner walls give the city something of a maze-like configuration and feel, and adds to the congestion of the streets and densely packed buildings. They also serve as demarcation lines for the various neighborhoods and sections of town.

Iyancine is a wealthy, cosmopolitan city even by the high standards of the Western Empire. After *Caer Itom*, Iyancine has more merchants, alchemists and freelance practitioners of magic than any other city in the realm. There are also exotic goods of every kind, not to mention exotic services and forbidden pleasures. Iyancine is notorious among sailors as a place of sin, vice and greed. Very depraved goings-on can be found in a variety of places. Sprawling red light districts cater to every dark and vile appetite there is; a land of shadows within a glittering city that symbolizes avarice, greed and sin. Iyancine is emblematic of the West's problem of having too much money. When folks speak of the "Empire of Sin," they often have Iyancine in mind.

Iyancine Description & Code Key

Regional Plaza

This is where the family members of House Taerea reside, hold court, and maintain a large portion of their Regional Army. This walled compound is like a small fortress within an already well-fortified city. Just a month ago, a group of Major Elementals were summoned by an unknown enemy (House Taerea has its suspicions) to smash the Taerea Regional Palace. They were successfully defeated but seriously damaged the west wall and several embassy houses. Until complete repairs can be made, security will be insanely tight on the palace grounds to prevent any enemies from slipping through the breach. House Taerea also has its own supernatural forces (**elementals** and lesser demons) patrolling the grounds.

1. House Taerea Royal Compound.

1b. Palace.

1c. Barracks and Armory.

1d. Stables.

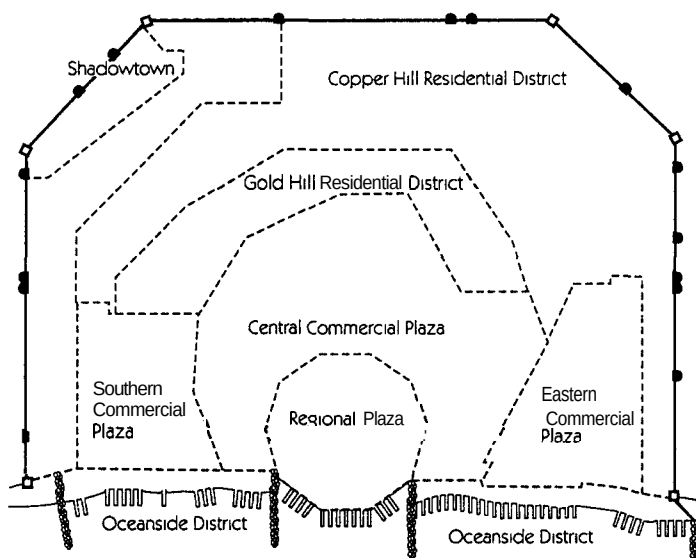
4a. **Wizards' Guild Chapterhouse.** The Wizards' Guild is a staunch ally of House Taerea and has its operations here both for safety and quick access by royal personnel.

2. **Imperial Garrison.** Extremely tight security. They will allow nobody in without written authorization from the Garrison Commander or House Taerea. Will use deadly force on anybody caught inside.

3. **Embassies.** These are meant for use by visiting foreign dignitaries and for Provincial Nobles to use while attending Regional Court. In the recent attack, all of these houses suffered extensive damage and are currently uninhabited while undergoing repair.

4. **High Temple of Kirgi the Rat God.** Who better to pray to in this city of greed?

5. **Regional Dockworks and Harbor.** Only ships on official Imperial or House Taerea business are allowed into this port. All intruders will be destroyed without warning by the siege weapons and Water Warlocks or Wizards assigned to security (typically 3rd-6th level).



Oceanside District

6. **Lower Barraduk Commercial Shipyards.** A massive shipbuilding and repairing venture managed by a syndicate of over 100 local merchants. The **syndicate's** "parliament" votes on major issues affecting the shipyard. These shipyards employ over 1400 workers total and can build a large warship in 30 days.

1. **Shipside.** A restaurant and tavern that caters to the Lower Barraduk Commercial Shipyards. Has a huge lunch crowd. On weekends and when new ships come to town, this place gets pretty rowdy.

8. **Floyd's.** Floyd is a human shipwright who does contract repairs, mostly for **out-of-towners** passing through. He has several other associates: Roger, David, Nick and Richard. A fifth associate, Syd, used to work for this place when it first started, but he has since developed a scorching drug habit and was fired. Syd's whereabouts are unknown.

9. **Cartographer.** A wizened **Eandroth** rogue runs this ace map-making business. A copy of any of the Eandroth's 100+ maps of the world will cost 100 gold each, but they are very, very accurate. Aside from having a pair of Gromeks providing security, this shop is a well-known place for exotic nonhumans to crash for the evening if they receive rough treatment by human supremacists in town.

10. **Bolston Bross Marina.** This is the largest of the many private marinas in the Oceanside District. This place charges ship captains 25 gold per night to dock here, or 150 gold for the

week. The owners are a pair of Changelings masquerading as humans. They are also keen on gossip concerning the noble families and secretly do a little freelance spying and snooping for royal families and wealthy merchants; each Changeling has several identities.

11. Don't Leave Port Without Them. That's what's painted in bright green letters over the door of this naval supplies store. It is run by a crusty ogre of indeterminate age (8th level retired seaman). His entire staff consists of very attentive and courteous Hobgoblins quick to serve customers. Prices are pretty standard; tends to cater to the monster races, but treats everybody the same. The store has every piece of ship, fishing and wilderness equipment one can imagine, plus five gallon kegs of Western ale and rum at the wholesale price of tengold a keg.

Central Commercial Plaza

12. Armored Courier Service. Run by a 7th level elven Long Bowman and assisted by four 5th level elven Rangers. The rest of this crew consists mostly of 3rd and 4th level human and elven meres and retired soldiers. Five hundred gold buys the client a one-way, four-man escort to anywhere in or around town, or to the shipbuilding town of Tyraval. Each additional armed escort costs another 100 gold, and the final price is doubled for protection on the return trip. A 3rd-5th level Wizard or Mystic can be added to the group (the elves have an arrangement with the Wizards' Guild), but costs an additional 500 gold. The escorts wear distinctive, stylized plate and chain armor (their trademark) and shields. The owner stashes most of his earnings in a large safe built into the building's foundation. He deposits his money in the bank every week. Such visits are accompanied by 10 or more of his finest fighters.

13. D. Barton, Bookseller. Run by Darius Barton, an aging human scholar. Barton maintains one of the largest personal libraries in the Western Empire, and will have one of his scribes pen a copy of any of his volumes at the price of 5 gold per page. All orders are delivered within 36 hours.

14. Games of Chance. Cards, darts and billiards are the games of choice at this place. A favorite haunt of young noblemen and gentleman card sharps. Heavy security is placed discreetly throughout the premises to prevent any armed shenanigans. No "monster races" are allowed inside, and all weapons must be checked at the door. Newcomers are charged a 50 gold, first-time entry fee.

15. Through the Looking Glass. A beautiful elven maiden runs this shop on behalf of her best friend, an elderly human woman. The store sells one-of-a-kind fine glasswork. Most items here are small, hand-held items that cost at least 50 gold. One piece, done by a famous glassblower before he died last year, currently sells for 10,000 gold. The store enforces a strict no touching policy on all merchandise. Giant-sized patrons are asked either to wait outside or come around back into the courtyard.

16. The Kighfalton Inn. The nicest hotel in town, with all the luxuries a nobleman might expect. Rooms start at 350 gold per night and can go up to 2,500 per night. But, as they say, it's worth it.

17. Hammer Jack's. This metalsmith works equally well with gold, silver, copper, bronze, tin and iron.

18. Open-Air Market. An upper-class establishment that rotates between being a general merchandise forum, a farmers' market, and a flea market. (10% chance of finding something truly worthwhile or even magical at the flea market, with a 90% chance that the seller of the object isn't aware of the thing's value.)

19. Sweet Things Confectionery. Makers and sellers of rich candies that are often sold to export merchants, who have made this confectionery famous as far away as the Wolfen Empire.

20. Diabolist for Hire. "Lord of Letters" Enonus Gron is an 8th level Diabolist who will perform any of his abilities at the going rate, and will even teach young students the art. Enonus was hit by a cart three years ago, and has lost the use of his legs. Many say he's only grown more powerful since that sad day.

21. Hats Off! A peculiar haberdashery run by an energetic and quirky elf-human pair who twitter and chat while they fit customers. Expensive.

Southern Commercial Plaza

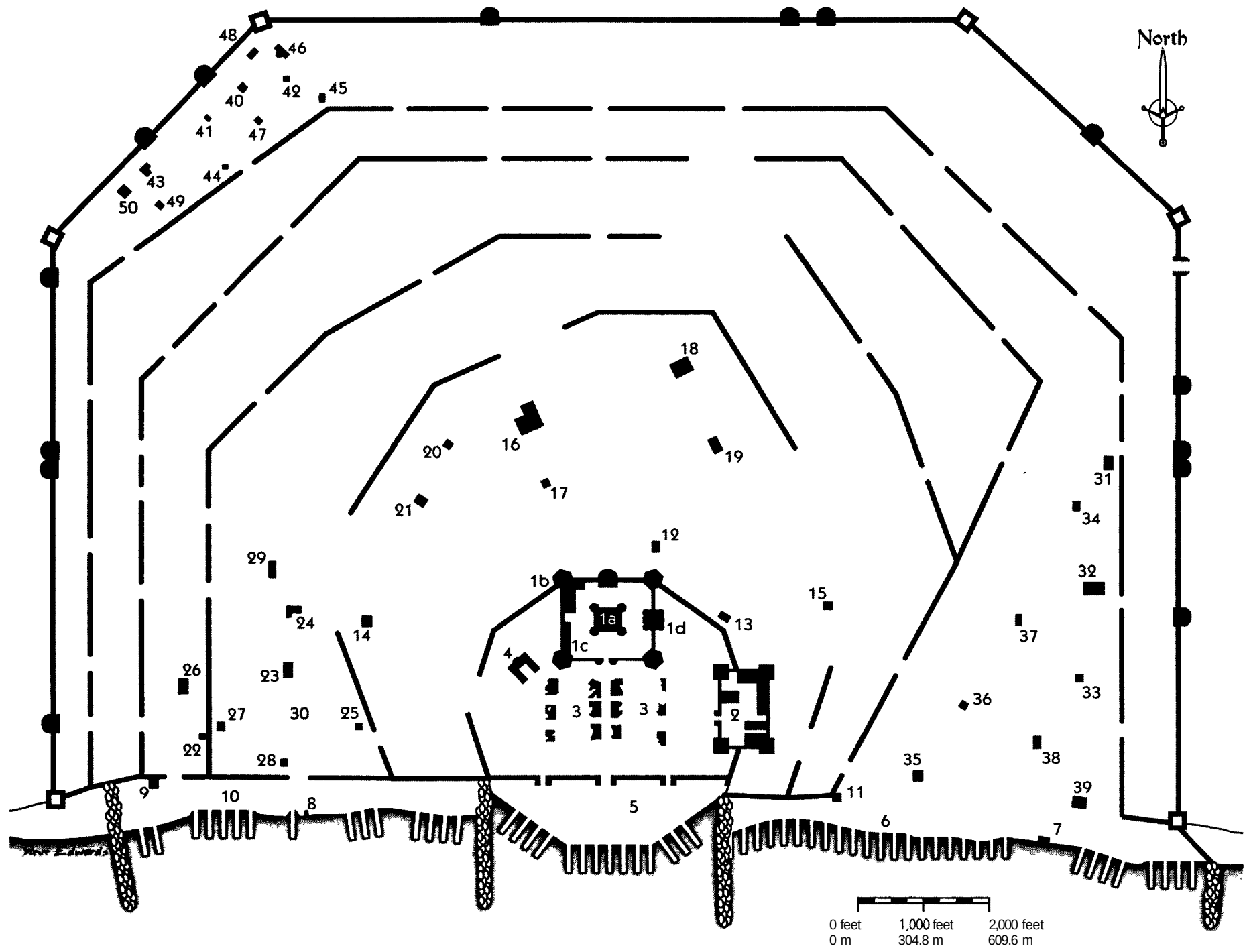
22. Xibler's Jewelers. The oldest jeweler in the Western Empire, being able to trace its heritage back 4,000 years. The owner, Yihong Xibler is the 101st direct descendant of the original Bhran Xibler, who founded the establishment. Sells only top-notch gems and jewelry; the reputation of the place alone allows them to jack prices up to 25% over book value on all merchandise. They gladly buy, sell and trade gems and jewels with adventurers, but are ironclad negotiators. Security here is extremely tight, with many mercenaries and a few freelance wizards on the side. Yihong Xibler's sister died recently under mysterious circumstances — some say she was murdered by cultists.

23. Lower Barraduk Regional Bank. A large, well-protected financial institution holding no less than 3 million in gold, cash. Security is at least as tight as what you'd find in one of those Caer Itom banks.

24. Mighty-Magic. This superstore boasts a huge staff, large selection of inventory, and really low prices (average 25% below book price everyday, with sales up to 40% off!). The trouble is they specialize in inexpensive, low-end items such as most every type of powder, fumes, common magic components, herbs, drugs, poisons, protection charms, and low level magic items. However, they do *not* carry magic potions of any kind, or powerful or rare magic items. Spell scrolls, when available, are seldom higher than 3rd level. Worse, a lot of the scrolls and magic items malfunction, backfire or bear curses that nobody is aware of. Buyer beware!

25. Icemaker. A trio of young human Water Warlocks own and run this small establishment, using their magic to create large blocks of ice on demand. Each 25 lb. (11 kg) block goes for 30 gold. A dozen orc slaves help with the heavy work.

26. Spice Varieties. A large and busy spice grinding, processing and shipping operation that employs over 200 humans, dwarves, and free kobolds. Almost every kind of major Western spice is processed and sold here, using bulk ingredients shipped in from the Yin-Sloth Jungles, the Kighfalton Plains and the Vequerrel Woodlands. A large fire destroyed part of the premises last year, and the owners are still rebuilding.



27. Fine Liquors. Specializes in fine fruit-flavored brandies and other sweet after-dinner drinks. Sells mostly to fine eateries in town, nobles and visitors with discerning tastes.

28. Woodworld. The owner, **Mubrennan Serelleannen**, is a **skillful** elf who has devoted her life to creative woodworking. She works only in exotic hardwoods, and receives her entire inventory from the **Vequerrel** Woodlands. She makes lots of small baubles and such, but occasionally does larger pieces, such as furniture. She charges a great deal of money for her services, and has a lot of wealthy, loyal customers, but her shop (and residence on the second floor) doesn't look it. What she does with all of her money, nobody knows.

29. Merchants' Guild Headquarters. This powerful organization holds all meetings here, including secret ones at which members cut deals on illegal merchandise, smuggling knowledge, or trade information concerning the local underworld.

30. Import/Export Forum. A central clearing area for most of the city's shipping. Wholesale customers and those with special appointments can come here to buy goods fresh off the ship before they are resold at retail stores in town. Security here depends on the particular shipment.

Eastern Commercial Plaza

31. Quadrangle Shirt Co. A very large, productive and prosperous outfit. Twenty-five years ago, there was a massive fire here that killed a number of the **orc** spinners. It is said that their ghosts have roamed the place ever since, causing minor mischief. The workers have always been respectful to the spirits dwelling here, but ever since a new manager took over the place and laughed at the stories of ghosts and specters, mysterious things have happened. Spinning wheels have been breaking unexpectedly, supplies have turned up missing, and even a few employees (mostly managers) have been pushed or hit by unseen forces. The manager, now thoroughly spooked, is on the verge of calling in some specialists to clear the place of any supernatural presence. If he does, he can expect one heck of a fight on his hands as the place is infested with a dozen Poltergeists, eight Haunting Entities, two Syphon Entities and one Tectonic Entity (see *Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition* for complete stats on entities).

32. Textile Mill. This place makes clothing and other textile goods for export to the Yin-Sloth Periphery and to the Ophid's Grasslands Colonies, two of their largest clients.

33. The Bag Lady. An old, grandmotherly human who specializes in selling bags of all sorts with permanent **extradimensional** pocket cast on them. Small bags like belt purses and pouches run 20,000 gold. Medium bags like saddlebags and shoulder satchels run 45,000 gold. Large bags like large sacks run 60,000 gold. The shop is magically protected and the old woman has mysterious "helpers" in the back that nobody ever sees.

34. The Alchemy Shop. Has a 01-55% chance of having any run-of-the-mill magic item. Will custom make magic scrolls to order within 48 hours at 50% the standard rate. Has a 01-10% of having rare, unusual or powerful items. All prices are marked up 30% from book value, but all are guaranteed to work perfectly and he'll knock 10-20% off for bulk purchases or big sales (100,000 gold or higher). Does not carry potions of any kind.

35. Moneychanger. Offers moneychanging rates with only a 9% commission, one point below what most banks in town charge. This is a slipshod operation, and it's only a matter of time before somebody robs it of the nearly 250,000 in gold (various denominations and foreign currency) stored in the back room safe.

36. Fortune Teller. Mistress **Kalla** is a genuine psychic and can foretell the future. For this, she charges 150gold per vision.

37. Auction House. Imports and Exports that couldn't find their way to the shelves of **Iyancine's** retail stores often are sold off here every evening. Most items are sold in bulk (huge quantities; crates and cartloads, sometimes shiploads) at serious discounts (60-85% below list price). Occasionally, rare, magical or specialty items are sold individually or in small lots, but these items can sell for anywhere from 40% below list price to 40% above.

38. Glassblower. A lone glassblower works from this cramped and old shop. He also secretly works as a middleman for pirates and smugglers. He's actually a 6th level thief himself.

39. Second Skin. An armorer's shop run by a dwarf and his three human understudies, who he treats as his own sons. Extremely good quality and fair prices (list prices to 10-20% below for common items). Two kobolds also work with him and he has six **orc** slaves. Can make repairs in under a day.

Red Light District ("Shadowtown")

40. Imperial Pleasures. Once an upscale brothel, this place has become increasingly seedy and has come to cater to decadent and freaky tastes as well as the usual sexual fare. Extremely popular among sailors.

41. The Chickenhouse. Another seedy establishment that runs a striptease bar downstairs and a brothel upstairs, where clients can meet their favorite dancer. The place gets its name from the fact that the bar serves tasty fried or roasted chicken dinners and a mug of beer for four gold.

42. Drug Den. Although it technically is an herbalist's shop, this seedy place is a well-known drug den.

43. Red Lights. The working women in this upscale brothel treat each other as a kind of family. As they get too old to continue working, they stay on to manage the place. Any client who roughs up one of these girls or starts trouble within the house will be lucky to escape with his life — all of these girls can handle themselves and keep a variety of weapons hidden in each room. They're also known to hire assassins and sorcerers to carry out vendettas on those who deserve it.

44. Sailor's Dream Tattoo Parlor. Dirty, unsanitary, and frequented by lots of unsavory types. The front operation for the Longknives, a small thieves' guild.

45. The Ore's Demise. This tavern is the hangout for the most outspoken and vile human supremacists in town. Only humans and elves are allowed.

46. Temple of the Cult of Chantico. Draws lots of nutcases and would-be powermongers.

47. Stonebones. A **drinkery** that caters exclusively to giant-sized clientele. Nobody under ogre-size is admitted. Guarding the door is a Cyclops (5th level assassin) and two trolls (both 6th level meres, one with minor psionics). This is a

rough and tumble joint where fights and rowdy behavior break out all the time, much to the customers' delight. Drinks here are double-strength, so newcomers had better be careful when ordering one for the road. This place is very popular with giant-sized gladiators from the city arena and sailors. It also is quite popular with the Cyclops ambassadors who are always in town.

48. Turk's. This disreputable fellow runs a grimy smoke shop, is a known drug dealer and has connections with the thieves guild. The city guards have been looking for an excuse to crack down on this place for months.

49. The Magic Dagger. A magic shop that specializes in magic weapons, potions and magic that control and manipulates the minds and wills of others, poisons, drugs and herbs. It is a popular place among pirates, assassins, thieves and other villains.

50. Temple of Aco & The Juggernaut. The high priest (7th level) running this place is a dangerous fanatic who will destroy anybody who opposes his gods. He set up a temple here to recruit members for his cause. Five second level priests help run things.

Gold Hill Residential District

This is the nice part of town with lots of gated communities, mansions, and **walled-off** manors. The residents here have a lot of pull with the local nobles and authorities, so any illegal behavior by adventurers will be dealt with most severely. Noteworthy residents of Gold Hill include:

- A retired 5th level **Summoner** (unprincipled) who once brought a demon lord to this dimension. He lost control of it, and the thing destroyed an entire town before it returned home. Ever since, this guy has hung up his spurs and is afraid to use his powers.
- A Za who's got a king's ransom of treasure in a secured vault in the basement of a mansion that looks like a small castle.
- A regional soldier who got rich off of war booty from the ongoing noble war and retired early.
- A shopkeeper who inherited her beautiful mansion but can barely afford the upkeep. She will resort to almost anything to keep from losing the family residence.
- A musician and bard made famous for his songs and stories about the Provincial Wars.
- Clavel Taerea, youngest brother of the Overlord, and his family, the black sheep of the Noble House. Rumors run wild about why the rest of the family won't have anything to do with them, but nobody really knows.

Copper Hill Residential District

The poor part of town. There used to be a Silver Hill, too, but it was destroyed 300 years ago when an fire elemental rampaged through it. Most of those who survived moved to Copper Hill. Crime is a problem here, as is casual street violence, and all of the other things that give Western cities a bad reputation. Out-of-towners are warned to steer clear of this place. Noteworthy residents include:

- A baker who is organizing his neighbors to combat the local gang.

- The **guildmaster** of the thieves' guild lives in a large, well-maintained house.
- Mistress Harlock, an evil **elven** wizard and diabolist who specializes in casting curses and manipulating others. She is the real power behind the thieves' guild (8th level, diabolic, P.B. 21).



Provincial Overviews

The many Provinces of the region are generally rich and roughly equal to one another, which is why they can sustain their infighting and rivalry for years to come. A few are a bit run-down and shabby, but most are upscale and prosperous places. The other provinces here are **Barraduk**, Cord, Zansha and Jonin.

1. Provincial Overview: Barraduk Province. In terms of sheer territory, this is the largest province in the region. A mix of bad leadership and rotten luck have yielded much of this province to House Taerea's temporary control, but House Barraduk is considering launching a massive offensive to regain its lost territory. With all the fighting here recently, shipping traffic has dropped seriously and the rest of the province is beginning to feel the financial pinch from it.

House Barraduk: Barraduk was the previous regional house of Lower Barraduk but was deposed by House Taerea just shortly before Emperor Leopold I reunified the Empire. House Barraduk has vowed to destroy House Taerea if it's the last thing it ever does.

Provincial Capital: Garicon (65,000 people). This wealthy merchants' city is completely run by various guilds struggling against each other to best represent their own interests. There is little law enforcement in town; rather, the Lord officially endorses the town's mercenaries guild (The Hitters' Union) as a **per-contract** defense force and law enforcement brigade rolled into one. It's expensive, sure, but with the money this place makes being a major mercantile crossroads, the town can spare the cost. The Hitters enforce the peace by walking in three-man patrols, wearing their trademark red scarves. The only real sign of authority in a town where money buys justice, and justice is often found at the point of a dagger.

2. Provincial Overview: Cord Province: The last of the three inland provinces of Lower Barraduk. Cord is the eastern most province, so it normally gets less merchant traffic than most others. However, it has stayed fairly unscathed by the political infighting, and is strong overall.

House Cord: House Cord is allied with House **Barraduk** over a dispute with House Taerea concerning "taxation without representation." Once House Taerea is defeated, House Cord will turn its swords against House Barraduk.

Provincial Capital: Crosslanes (42,000 people). A major engagement was fought here just before the Reconstruction, and the resulting carnage seriously depleted the population. Although that was nearly a century ago, the city still **hasn't** rebounded.

3. Provincial Overview: Zansha Province. This province consists of the large western island in the strait leading to the Sea of Scarlet Waters. The nobles of this island, regardless of what house they are allied to, have always wanted to make this place a ritzy, cosmopolitan community and vacation resort like Phi or Lopan. If they got a break from the political infighting, maybe they could get their chance. To their dismay, most merchant ships often bypass this island in favor of **Iyacine** or the Jonin Province.

House Zansha: House Zansha also had been rebelling against House Taerea, but has been bought off recently by Taerea in return for help against Houses Cord and Barraduk. So far, all House Zansha has done with the money it got from House Taerea is use it to finance a war against House Jonin. Houses Zansha and Jonin have been warring rivals for years over a disputed zone between them and where each other's shipping lanes lie.

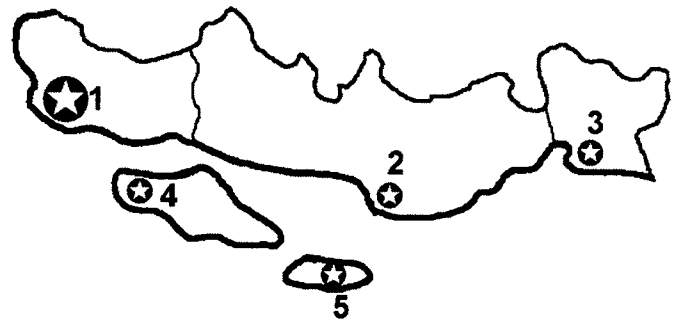
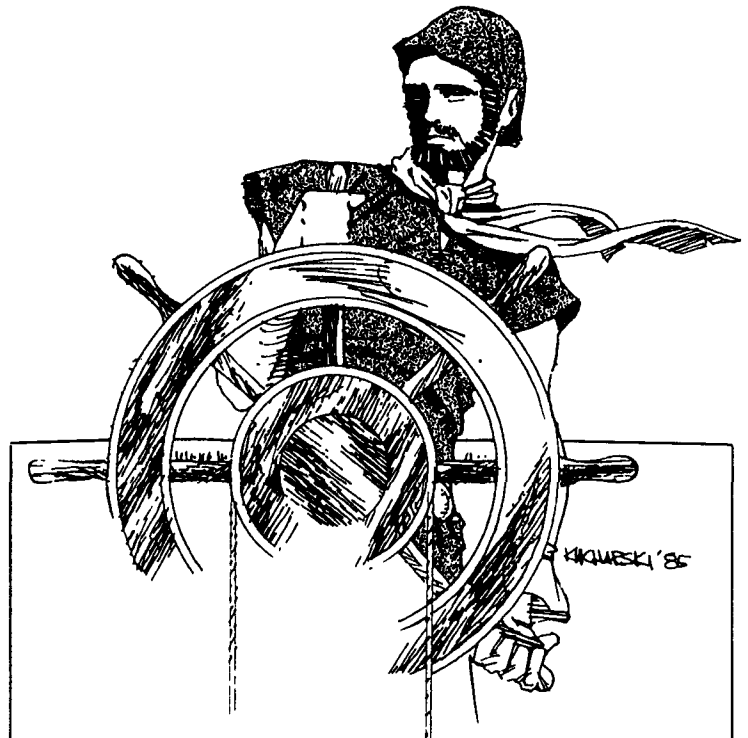
Provincial Capital: Island City (29,000 people). The population has gone down dramatically, leaving the stagnating island for greener pastures elsewhere. There is still a large shipping and port industry here, as well as fishing and vacationing by nobility, but it just hasn't been able to become the important town its nobles dream about. Other than that, the majority of the city is clean, quiet and fairly safe. However, potential war is brewing with the Jonin House.

4. Provincial Overview: Jonin Province. The other, smaller island in the Strait of Scarlet Waters is controlled by the Jonin House. It is similar to the Zansha Province in most respects except that it's a little more wealthy and developed. Still, it must import most of its food, which is its primary weakness if blockaded.

House Jonin: This house is sympathetic with House Taerea and has been a long-time ally. It will support most anything the Regional House suggests and is currently petitioning the Overlord to do something about the military build-up and threats from House Zansha. If the neighboring province declares war on it, House Jonin will have its hands full. Lord **Erivin** has suggested testing the demon army on the defiant Zansha if they take military action against the Jonin House. So far, the Overlord has only issued words of caution to the Zansha nobles. House Jonin is very fond of hiring assassins to murder the leaders of enemy noble houses.

Provincial Capital: Gearead (31,000 people). A clean, organized and well-run city whose only serious problem is the lack of a strong city-state ruler. Most of the city government is handled by the Council of Six, appointed by House Jonin. As for the local nobles, the presiding Lord unexpectedly took ill and died a year ago, a suspected assassination courtesy of House Zansha. The Lord's son, a nobleman adventurer, returned home from the Timiro Kingdom, where it was said a horrible illness

had befallen him; some say madness, others say a magical curse. The truth is he has been infected by the Contagion as detailed in the Place of Magic adventure in *Palladium RPG Book II: Old Ones*, and is steadily going mad. As he loses control of his mind, his fellow adventurers, a scurvy lot also infected by the Contagion, have taken over the local thieves' guild and are initiating a city-wide crime spree.



Provincial Overview of Lower Barraduk

- 1 Regional Province Provincial Capital Iyacine
Ruling Noble Family: House Taerea.
- 2 Barraduk Province Provincial Capital: Garcon
Ruling Noble Family: House Taerea.
- 3 Cord Province Provincial Capital" Crosslanes
Ruling Noble Family House Cord
- 4 Zansha Province Provincial Capital: Island City
Ruling Noble Family House Zansha
5. Jonin Province. Provincial Capital Gearead
Ruling Noble Family House Jonin

Note: All ruling families reside in their provincial capitals



Regional Overview #6: The Vequerrel Woodlands

By Bill Coffin & Kevin Siembieda

The racial breakdown of the "civilized" regions — a domain of man:

61% Human
16% Elf
6% Dwarf
6% Orc
4% Goblin
1% Gnome
6% other

Note: The statistics above do not include the slave population, which is roughly equal to 40% of the number of free citizens in the region (40% Orc, 10% Ratling, 18% Goblin, 12% Ogre, 5% Kobold, 5% human, 10% other). Nor do they include the wilderness population of the Vequerrel Woodlands.

Estimated Vequerrel Woodlands Population:

At least 30,000 Faeries of all varieties; probably 3-5 times that number.

5,000-10,000 Other Faene Folk of all varieties (possibly more).

5,000-7,000 Humans; mostly loggers and woodsmen.

6,000-7,000 Orcs; mostly small, scattered tribes.

2,000-3,000 Goblins; mostly small, scattered tribes.

5,000-6,000 Sallan; mostly small, scattered tribes.

4,000-5,000 Forest Elves; an unknown force.

2,000-3,000 Others.

These are fairly small numbers considering the **size** of the area, and don't forget that Faerie Folk are tiny and elusive. They do not include transients or the current thronging multitudes of bounty hunters and opportunists rushing to battle the faeries.

Note: The mysterious Vequerrel Elves, or "Forest Elves," are a small, unallied **Elven** nation divided into seven tribes. They consider **this** forest their homeland. Little is known about these elves, except that they live in the deepest and most inaccessible parts of the forest and shun magic, civilization and contact with the outside world. It is believed that they moved to the Woodlands after the Elf-Dwarf war, forsaking the company of other elves and adopting the ways of the forest as their own. They are on neutral terms with the faerie folk (a mutual respect more than anything else), and are incredible Rangers and Archers (+1 to strike and +1 attack with a bow and arrow; 20% are farmers,

druids and psychics). Western nobles have tried to recruit these elves for years. Except for a few individuals who have been lured away by Western gold and civilization, the majority remain woodland recluses. For the moment, the Forest Elves have avoided taking sides in the conflict between men and Faerie Folk.

The **Vequerrel** Woodlands region is one of the least developed territories in the Western Empire. Nearly 60% of this region is taken up by the famous Vequerrel Woodlands, an ancient forest thick with towering hardwood trees. The quality of these hardwoods is on par with the finest exports from the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the Great Northern Wilderness. They can be made into very valuable furniture, ship pieces and other products. The Western Empire has plumbed these forests for lumber for centuries, but never has the demand for this wood been greater. Mills and lumber operations represent 50% of this region's wealth, and that number would be much higher if not for the faeries.

The dense Vequerrel forests are home to Faerie Folk, tribes of Sallan, the smaller members of the Worms of Taut, and rare creatures such as the Unicorn, **Kilin**, Watemix and the occasional **Syvan** and dragon (often **metamorphed** into a much less threatening form). Most of these beings tolerated conservative logging, but in recent decades the greedy nobles of Vequerrel have taken to clear-cutting the woodlands and have, in just 20 years, obliterated 25% of the forest, turning the northwest section either into treeless farmland or devastated expanses of chopped tree stumps and scrub.

At first, the Faerie Folk just harassed and bothered the logging crews, but as the Westerners continued to eradicate the forests, the faeries decided to fight back. The escapades of these tiny folk, supported by other woodland folk (including druids, Kilin and dragons), have practically shut the Vequerrel logging camps down. A full-blown guerilla war has erupted in these woods, with logging crews being escorted by large groups of heavily armed soldiers **and/or** men of magic to counter the faerie attacks. However, most of these efforts are futile as they are hopelessly outnumbered by swarms of determined faeries — and faerie magic is powerful. Despite their best efforts, hundreds of loggers have gone missing; mostly fools who dared to brave the deep woods and have never returned. Thousands more have fled the region (not just the woods) after harrowing experiences that have left them bruised, battered **and/or** terrified out of their wits; most vowing never to return no matter how much pay they are offered!

The Vequerrel nobles dare not cease their efforts, because the hardwoods represent tremendous profit and half of their income. If this continues, it will plunge the region into economic ruin. In fact, the faerie trouble has already caused serious shortages and price increases of 50%, and people are still clamoring for the wood! This has only whet the nobles' appetite and renewed their fervor to log the damnable forest. Of course, they won't reduce the price now that they know they can get it. **Ironically**, proper "conservation" techniques to preserve and regrow the forest have met with surprising success and faerie approval, but the greedy, short-sighted nobles don't want to spend the time and money necessary to keep the forest healthy and viable for generations to come, and are determined to clear-cut 50% of the woods over the next decade.

The Vequerrel Regional Overlord has petitioned Emperor Itomas for help. However the Emperor isn't foolish enough to send the Imperial Army against the magical creatures of the Vequerrel Woodlands to help one irascible Noble House. The Imperial House has ruled that the miserable affair is a regional "monster" problem, and therefore the sole responsibility of House Jaoradon, the Regional authority. The Imperial House has also suggested that conservation of the forests would benefit both the region and the Empire, and that while the Faerie War is **frustrating**, the strange little beasts have a point well taken, and one the Jaoradon House should consider. Warlocks, druids and rangers have also suggested the Regional House stop clear-cutting and try to nurture the valuable resource of the famous woodlands. Unfortunately, House Jaoradon will listen to none of it. They are deaf and blinded from anger, obsessive revenge and greed.

The situation is quickly dissolving into chaos. The one good thing for the nobles is that the Regional House has placed a bounty on faeries, offering to pay 2000 gold for the complete body of a faerie or 100 gold for every wingless faerie corpse, and 500 gold for the carcass of every non-faerie little folk. This is a fabulous deal for hardened mercenaries, bounty hunters, adventurers, cutthroats and desperate peasants who don't mind hunting and killing innocent intelligent life forms. Most justify this genocidal "war effort" as being legal, sponsored by the Regional Noble House (so it's good for the Empire), or killing dangerous monsters and protecting humans. As for the argument that a pair of magical faerie wings is worth more than 2000 gold, most of these opportunists wouldn't have any means to sell the valuable wings, especially in large quantities, and 2000 gold is really quite fair (most Western magic shops pay 4,000-8,000 gold per pair). It's an even better deal for the Noble



Houses in the region who can turn around and sell pairs of wings for 2-3 times what they paid, or export them to foreign lands and get 6-8 times more than they paid. In fact, selling pairs of faerie wings wholesale to alchemists and practitioners of magic worldwide should compensate them for the lost lumber revenues and make a profit! Best of all (or so it would seem), the nobles aren't expending their own military resources on the effort, because they are attracting bounty hunters and opportunists working on speculation and getting paid piecemeal, there are no overhead expenses.

Thousands of roughnecks, adventurers, mercenaries and thrillseekers have begun to pour into the region. This has stimulated the local economy with foreign trade from fortune hunters and the curious alike, although it is a rough and tumble lot of undesirables one doesn't usually like to attract. Adventurers, ex-soldiers and hardy individuals looking for work, but unwilling to kill faeries, are often willing to risk becoming **Vequerrel** lumberjacks. Many mercenaries, men at arms and practitioners of magic offer their services as armed escorts, guides and protectors. Meanwhile, thousands of hardened adventurers, men at arms, bounty hunters, bandits and cold-hearted practitioners of magic engage in "extermination" of faerie kind throughout the region.

The Faerie War

The Regional House's bounty on faeries sounded like a great idea on paper, but there has been a great number of unexpected turns of events.

The unprecedented "Vequerrel Faerie War" is quickly turning the once quiet woods into a wilderness war zone with a real "Wild West" feel. Bounty hunters and opportunists abound. Not just faerie hunters, but thieves, bandits, gangs and bushwhackers to snake oil salesmen, merchants and adventurers taking advantage of the hunters. It's a free-for-all that is quickly getting out of hand. As for the economic boon these adventurers have supposedly brought to the villages, towns and logging camps in the region, when not hunting or plying their various other (often illicit) trades, they are celebrating their fortunes, drinking, gambling, brawling, hooting and hollering and causing damage and trouble. The nobles tell themselves that these roughnecks will leave in a year or so after exterminating the troublesome faeries, but nobody knows how long the war will last. Certainly more than a year. Much more. But this is the least of the regional nobles' problems.

Large numbers of Warlock guilds, sects and individuals have lodged protests and boycotted the region. Some have vowed to never work for the noble families as long as they rule the land. Likewise, most rangers, **druids** and **conservationists** refuse to have any part of the madness, and numerous Noble Houses, knights, dignitaries and heroes throughout the world have voiced their condemnation of this genocidal "war." To many outsiders, this sort of bloodthirsty behavior and display of greed is indicative of the Western Empire's immorality and ruthlessness, and an example of why to fear them.

Perhaps even worse, it has drawn other creatures to the faerie's cause. The genocidal aspect of the Faerie War and its legion of murderers and cutthroats come to stalk the tiny folk, has galvanized the forest community. Rivalry between different tribes and races of faeries has ceased, creating a united front



against a common enemy. Likewise, the other, more nasty Faerie Folk, like Bogies, Pucks and Toadstools, have joined forces with their handsomer, nicer cousins to stop what they call "the onslaught of man." Leprechauns actively pick pockets and steal the "blood money" of the bounty hunters, Spriggans busy themselves setting traps involving rock slides, mud slides, pits, tumbling trees, and collapsing bridges. Bogies lead coordinated attacks and raids with troops composed of Toadstools, Hairy Jacks, Pucks and Satyrs (these bands can have anywhere from 6-30 members). Pixies and Brownies engage in acts of sabotage, Sprites engage in reconnaissance and scouting, and Faeries (the most numerous of Faerie Folk and the staunchest defenders of the war) are the frontline troops. **Kinnie-Ger**, Kelpie and other truly evil members of the faerie family simply use the situation as a good excuse to slaughter humans. However, to them, *any* human or "big person" (dwarves, elves, **orcs**, etc.) is a target.

Most woodsmen, druids, warlocks, dragons, and other woodland inhabitants, human and inhuman, were disapproving of the destructive logging operations, but never took action against the loggers. That has changed. Trappers, **huntsmen**, rangers and druids who never had any particular like for Faerie Folk (the little folk are usually more trouble than anything else) are **misdi-**

recting would-be assassins, sabotaging the nobles' war effort by making noise, destroying faerie traps, ruining salt barriers (faeries can't pass over salt), warning Faerie Folk of danger, and sometimes intervening in the wholesale murder or slaughter of Fair Folk. Meanwhile, a small number of Druids, Warlocks, **Beastmasters**, knights, and **humanoids** of various occupations, have actually joined forces with the faeries and engage in battle against the most wicked of the **humanoid** hunters to save both the forest and the Faerie Folk. These individuals routinely sabotage logging camps and otherwise hinder hardwood production and the slaughter of Faerie Folk. House Jaoradon has posted large rewards for the capture of these rebels, which has drawn lots of bounty hunters into the area.

A dozen Unicorns, two **Kilin**, four **Waternix**, six **Syvan**, a sphinx, a half dozen young dragons (only 3-4th level) and one, old Thunder Lizard (scrupulous, 18th level **wizard!**), have also sided with the faeries, serving mainly as their protectors. Tribes of Sallan rob and kill big people who come into their territory without mercy; they never liked big folk much to begin with. So far, the conflict is mostly regional, but outsiders and additional heroes and hunters are likely to join the Faerie War.

As if all this wasn't bad enough, some of House Jaoradon's old enemies are looking at the War as an opportunity to cause trouble and exact revenge. The entire situation can only spiral further out of control with each passing week. **Note:** Complete details on Faerie Folk, Kilin, Sallan, Syvan, and most other races and monsters can be found in the pages of **Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition**.

Combat Notes: Most (not all) bands of Faeries attack individuals and small groups in swarms of 20-50! This means being hopelessly outnumbered and unlikely to survive saving against the magic of so many attackers. Most faeries are satisfied with chasing away or defeating their opponents rather than killing them. True to their nature, this means using debilitating magic and charms to control, embarrass, frighten and exhaust would-be assailants. This tactic has proven extremely effective, because even those witless fools made to strip naked and jump into raspberry patches and other thorny bushes, or made to dance until they dropped from exhaustion, realize how helpless they were against faerie magic and how easily the faeries could have maimed or killed them. Faeries become murderous only when they see several of their comrades slain **and/or** tortured, but even then, they usually kill in the heat of the moment and do not hold onto lasting hatred or murderous vengeance. The same is true of Brownies and most Tree Spirits, Pixies, **Spriggans**, **Merrows**, Nymphs and **Will-O-The-Wisps**. By contrast, Bogies, Dead Moon Hags, Grogach, and Leprechauns can be merciless, murderous and vengeful in the extreme, with Kelpies, Kinnie-Ger, Hairy Jacks, **Pucks**, Satyrs, and Toadstools being the most bloodthirsty, killing wantonly and for pleasure. This last batch of miscreants also engage in torture and the killing of innocent women and children.

Pranksters by nature, Faeries, Pixies, Bogies and other intelligent and playful Faerie Folk, like to use guerilla tactics, setting traps and ambushes, but their favorite is using psychological warfare (embarrassing, frustrating and frightening traps, tricks and attacks) to drive their opponents insane with **frustration**, anger or fear. This approach frequently drives the invading Big Folk away, and even if it does not, it usually makes them so an-

gry/emotional or distracted that they are less effective in combat. The monstrous members of the faerie world tend to use more direct, confrontational forms of combat, preferring to hunt and kill rather than play games. To a large extent, the war is **just** a big, serious, deadly game to the Faerie Folk, even though it involves saving the forest and their people.

Note: The **Vequerrel Woodlands** is one of the last sanctuaries for Faerie Folk and creatures of magic in human dominated lands, especially in the Western Empire.



Regional House: House Jaoradon

The Jaoradon nobles rose to power after they were expelled from the Middle Kingdoms for religious reasons. For a century and a **half**, they were homeless, wandering from region to region just trying to survive. Finally, when all of the major Noble Houses were cleared out of the Vequerrel Woodlands during the last round of **Civil Wars**, the Jaoradon family saw its chance and successfully held onto the region. Although logging and wood processing is the main industry, the region also engages in farming, cattle ranching, fishing along the coast, and trade. Phi, Lopan, and the Eastern Territory are among their main trade markets, although the hardwood is sold around the world.

Faeries have always been a problem, but it has gotten intolerable over the last ten years. The current "Faerie War" has taken a serious toll on House Jaoradon's logging efforts, but the nobles have recently won some skirmishes against the woodlanders. Decent hardwood production has resumed and the campaign against the "little monsters" appears to be going well, despite public outcry opposing the war. Between the export of hardwood at inflated prices, sale of faerie wings, and other business,

House Jaoradon expects to make more money than it has in years. To their credit, the Jaoradon's nobles aren't using this windfall as an excuse to get lazy, they are reinvesting it in the Regional Army, new fortifications, and improvements of key communities and ports, as well as modest efforts in reforestation some of the clear-cut lands (Druids, rangers and Faerie Folk have done a hundred-fold the amount of work the nobles have, but the Noble House takes the credit).

The Regional Overlord, Case Jaoradon, is displeased with recent reports that the "Faerie Relocation Program," as he calls it, has been stalled. He was even more displeased to learn that contingents of Druids, **Beastmasters** and "nature lovers" have joined forces with the faeries to thwart their efforts — he refuses to believe reports that dragons and other creatures support the faeries. All citizens of the **Vequerrel** Region who dare to oppose the Regional House have been branded as outlaws and traitors to the realm. The most notorious have bounties of 500 to 2,500 gold placed on their heads, but the bounties don't seem to be helping very much.

All of this commotion has removed House Jaoradon from the larger political scene of the Western Empire. House Jaoradon is oblivious to the mounting tension building up between the western pro-Imperial Houses and the rebellious House Kaze to the southeast, or the pirate problems in the west, or any other problems other than their own. As a result, it has declared neutrality, and has abstained from voting on issues in the Imperial Court. This annoys the Imperial House, but House Jaoradon has always been something of an unpredictable loose cannon, so it may be a good thing that they have distanced themselves from affairs of the court (if push comes to shove, House Jaoradon will side with the Emperor). Strategically, the Vequerrel Woodlands are so dense and the current Faerie War so dangerous, that no large number of troops dare to move through them, which will keep the region from becoming a battleground if civil war does break out.

House Jaoradon is one of the few hard-working, sober and relatively honest Noble Houses. Jaoradon's conquest of the woodlands is not because these nobles are evil, but more because they see no other way to keep their region strong and healthy. Greed and pride has prompted the Overlord and his advisors to make rash decisions and get carried away in their "war." If this Noble House would put a stop to the madness (which is quickly spinning out of their control) and somehow forge a peace with the faeries of Vequerrel, they could continue responsible lumber operations with minimal trouble from the Faerie Folks. The first step would be to call off the war and remove the bounty on faeries, then declare the deepest part of the woods a permanent nature/faerie preserve (off limits to loggers and settlers), and then stop clear-cutting and observe conservation techniques, and the entire affair could be settled in less than a year.

Notable figures of House Jaoradon:

Regional Overlord Case Jaoradon: A seasoned veteran and Ranger himself, he knows the Vequerrel woodlands better than any other human in the region. He's always rather liked Faerie Folks, and regrets that his people and the faeries have come to war. He's also wondering how things have gotten so out of hand (constant pressure from powerful lumber mills, merchants, Lo-

cal and Provincial Houses, and members of his own family). He wishes the two sides could make peace, but fears he'll look indecisive and cause an uprising among the nobles. At the same time, he feels that too much blood has been shed on both sides for a lasting peace to be made. At heart, Case is a good man who is not proud of the death and destruction his rule has brought to this majestic wilderness. He is also concerned about the **low-lifes** flooding into the region, and the concept of genocide does not sit well with him. Unfortunately, he is getting bad advice and reports colored to continue the war. **Quick Stats for Case Jaoradon:** 10th level Noble and Ranger of scrupulous alignment; age 51. He is in excellent health and physically fit. Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 11, M.A. 23, P.S. 18, P.P. 14, P.E. 15, P.B. 10, Spd. 16

Lord Laoro Jaoradon: Case's father. Laoro was seriously wounded 10 years ago while inspecting one of the family logging camps. His entourage was attacked by a group of Hairy Jacks and Pucks and left for dead. Laoro lost his right arm and sustained other injuries so severe that it took over three years to recover, and he still suffers from chronic pain and the trauma of being crippled. During this time his son, Case, assumed command of the Regional seat. Feeling half a man, the crippled Lord Laoro willingly gave his seat of power to Case. However, the old man serves as the Overlord's most trusted advisor and has a great deal of influence over his son and many nobles and merchants throughout the region.

His unfortunate experience has left him emotionally scarred, and has turned the once vital Goodman in to a bitter, vindictive old man obsessed with revenge against all faerie people. It has been Lord Laoro who has been pushing for this war and who has been coloring and concealing information from his son concerning the war efforts. Meanwhile, Overlord Jaoradon is beginning to realize that he cannot trust his father in this affair and that the Faerie War may not be in the best interest of the region. Stopping the war will crush the old man who will resign from his advisory post and estrange himself from his beloved son. **Quick Stats for Laoro Jaoradon:** 15th level Noble and 6th level Ranger of anarchist alignment (was scrupulous); age 71. He is in poor health and emotionally unstable. His lust for revenge overshadows what's good for the region. Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 6, M.A. 21, P.S. 8, P.P. 9, P.E. 5, P.B. 9, Spd. 8

Greenshadow: A "Forest Elf of great skill and renown (8th level Long Bowman), Greenshadow was one of the first Forest Elves brought on by Case Jaoradon to train Regional soldiers in forest warfare. Forest Elves are a particular faction of elves who, after the Elf-Dwarf War, decided to forsake civilization and magic to live simple lives in the Vequerrel Forests (the only acceptable O.C.C.s are Farmer, Long Bowman, Ranger and Druid; those with psionics can be one psychic O.C.C.).

Greenshadow's behavior and motivations are a mystery. Unlike other Forest Elves, he seems to enjoy living in town and associating among Western city folk. However, he frequently disappears for long sojourns into the woodlands, but always returns as if nothing has happened and avoids talking about his wilderness experiences. He is a loner by nature, and doesn't speak much. He is an ace marksman with the longbow and possesses a quiver full of arrows with a wide variety of weird magical properties. (Notable ones include arrows that return after being fired, arrows that burst into flame when launched, a half

dozen Cyclops lightning arrows, and a few arrows that seem to have the same magical effects as certain faerie arrows. Greenshadow thinks the Faerie War is bad for everyone and fears tribes of his people will join the side of the faeries. He can be identified by the blue-green stripes of face paint he always wears. **Quick Stats for Greenshadow:** 8th level Long Bowman of anarchist alignment; age 37, looks 20. Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 12, M.A. 10, P.S. 15, P.P. 21, P.E. 12, P.B. 20, Spd. 15



Pallisade: Regional Capital

Population: Approximately 70,000

Pallisade gets its name from the tall wooden walls that enclose the settlement, making it look more like a giant, sprawling fortress than a regional center of trade, industry and government. Beyond the towers, gates and pike-topped walls is a bustling lumber town full of sawmills, wood shops, loggers, carpenters, woodworkers, and military recruiting centers. There also is a thriving merchant and entertainment district, catering to the hard-driving vices of the rough and raucous adventurers who come to tame the Woodlands.

Law and order is strongly enforced by local police and the Regional Army which is garrisoned here. Particularly because the local nobles run most of the entertainment and illicit trades themselves. However, the exploding Faerie War and the influx of mercenaries and opportunists have brought bandits, thieves and unsavory elements with them. However, most of these roughnecks stay in or around towns and villages of the undeveloped forest region, so Pallisade is not greatly affected by them.

The local authorities have serious discipline and desertion problems from the logging **camp**s, Regional Troops, and troubles with mercenary and roguish adventurers. News of (often exaggerated) atrocities and losses sustained in the Faerie War keep leaking out, and a lot of the loggers, soldiers, meres, and roughnecks in town figure that working here is more dangerous than they anticipated, and not worth the risk. As a result, strikes, mini-riots, drunken and disorderly conduct and desertions are at

an all-time high. The city guard has its hands full keeping the rowdies of Pallisade in line, and every weekend the jail fills up with those arrested for public drunkenness, disorderly conduct, brawling, vandalism, lewd and lascivious conduct, petty theft, and mischief (only occasionally murder). Despite the violent and bawdy fun, Pallisade hasn't got much of a serious crime problem.

Since desertion has gotten so bad, there are temporary shortages of manpower for guard services, cargo haulers, mill workers, and loggers, and even the local police and Regional Army have had a problem with desertion, even though they aren't directly involved in the conflict. While many feel safe in the city, they won't venture into the woods even with the promise of high pay, bonuses, and special privileges.

In the towns and villages around Pallisade, local authorities have taken to forming militias by pressing any able body into service. These militias are extremely unpopular and only compound the level of desertion at these locales. Lots of loggers, lumberjacks and others pressed into militia service resent and fear it, so they desert whenever they think they can get away with it.

House Jaoradon also has begun hiring spell casters as military specialists. Wizards and Summoners have answered the call in droves, as well as psychics and certain priests. Most Warlocks have boycotted the region.

Still, after the initial excitement of coming here, and the tales of guerilla combat, magic, monsters and battle in the forests, those living in Pallisade learn that life here really is very boring. The city is a hundred miles (160 km) from the nearest fighting, and most of the heavy conflict is much farther than that. Life in this blue-collar city means day after day of back-breaking work in sawmills, lumberyards, woodworking shops, shipping firms, or **lumberjacking**. Even those assigned to guard duty, patrols and escorts find the work boring and uneventful 95% of the time — punctuated with faerie ambushes that are usually more embarrassing or frightening than murderous. Still, there are those who swear that life here is better than elsewhere in the Empire. For these hardworking souls, Pallisade or the many farms and small towns around it are wonderful; 28% percent of the **Vequerrel** Region is devoted to farming, 13% to raising cattle and other livestock, and 7% to fishing. The rest is mostly the lumber industry.

Pallisade Description & Code Key

Regional Compound

A small fortress within the fortress where House Jaoradon and **VIPs** stay. Security here is unbelievably tight because of the numerous military units also housed here.

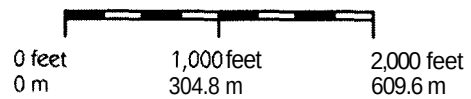
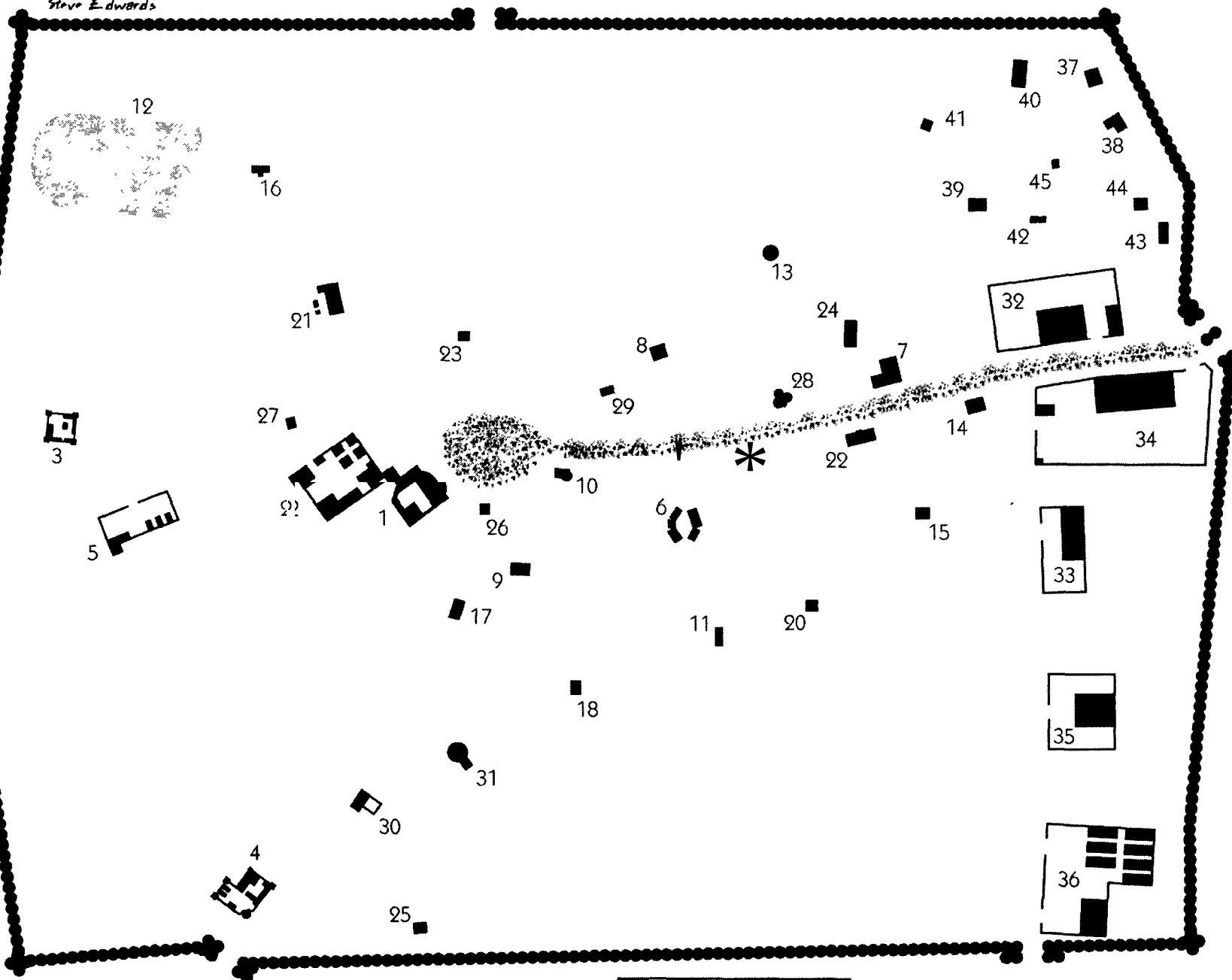
1. Jaoradon Plaza. Contains House **Jaoradon's** Regional Palace, administrative halls, and other offices.

2. Regional Garrison. A large military complex housing part of the Jaoradon Regional army. Over 7,000 troops (3rd-6th level on average) are stationed at this garrison, including an extensive 1,200 man cavalry (4th to 7th level) and 1,000 long bowmen, as well as siege engines and magical combat branches of the army.

3. City Garrison. The Pallisade City Police are housed here, a force over 5,500 strong (2nd to 4th level on average). Not

Steve Edwards

North



quite as well trained or specialized as the Regional army, but their numbers make them a formidable fighting force.

4. Imperial Garrison. Two companies (320 troops) from the Imperial Army assigned to keep an eye on things and as defensive support of the city. They are not to participate in the Faerie War.

5. Central Militia Rally Camp. Here's where the local militia meets and performs exercises. It has also become a meeting place for mercenaries and bounty hunters, and is the city outpost where one can make claims on bounties.

Commercial District

6. Pallisade Furniture Stores. Actually, a collection of five different stores all in the same small cluster of buildings located around a central courtyard. They all work together as sort of a small merchant coalition and share inventory, **costumers** and profits.

7. Home Furnishings. A furniture-making store run by a burly human ex-mercenary and a well-groomed ogre. They buy lower grade hardwoods from local sawmills and then they and their staff of artists carve it into ... interesting ... furniture. Most of it looks like bizarre implements of torture with spikes and jagged edges, decorated with carvings and engravings of weapons, snarling animals or fighting soldiers. Snooty humans consider this stuff offensive or bizarre, but **orcs**, ogres, human soldiers and other rough-and-tumble types love them. The ogre is the brains of the outfit and runs a good business. He is extremely intelligent and cordial.

8. Archery School. The Headmaster is a 7th level Forest Elf Long Bowman living in the city. For 450 gold, you can take a month-long course to **learn** W.P. Archery. It does not teach longbow proficiency under any circumstances, but anybody learning from this excellent school gains a bonus **of +1** to strike when using W.P. Archery. The school also teaches an advanced course for another 450 gold that confers the W.P. Targeting skill.

9. Bows by Gabriel. This fine place is run by Gabriel, a wise-looking elf who is fond of wearing lots of purple and black clothing. He doesn't say much, but when he does, it's usually something fairly interesting or important. Gabriel is not a Forest Elf. The shop sells high quality bows and arrows of all variety, as well as custom-made bows designed for the specific needs, body, quirks and strengths of the bowman (a unique design skill).

Such specialty bows sell for 1,500 to 3,000 gold, but are extremely strong and durable, and one will provide the user it was designed for the following bonuses whenever it is used: +1 arrow attack per melee round, +1 to strike, and an extended range **of +100** feet (30.5 m). Others using the bow are -1 attack and -1 to strike. Such orders take at least a month to complete and require a 50% deposit.

10. Alchemist's Shop. An average establishment that specializes in magical armor. The shop can perform custom work in 25% less time for 35% more money. No questions asked. There is a 01-50% that it will have most fumes, potions and talismans in stock at list prices.

11. Carpenter & Lumberyard. He makes ordinary enough items, but all out of the local hardwoods, so they are of exceptional durability and appearance. The lumberyard offers an ex-

cellent selection of wood, timber and building materials at good prices.

12. Cemetery. As the Faerie War drags on, this sad place just grows and grows. Folks of all faiths are buried here, and it isn't uncommon for the ghosts of the recently slain to roam these hills in search of friends and loved ones, only to disappear at morning's light, frustrated, angry and alone. Or so locals say.

13. Temple of Aco & The Juggernaut. Very popular because it attracts woodsmen, laborers and the many fighting men of Pallisade. Receives a huge amount of tithing each month. So much, in fact, that the temple's high priests have taken to depositing it in the city bank for safekeeping. They have no idea what to invest it in.

14. Cooper/Barrel Maker. Typical operation, except the hardwood used to make the barrels, coupled with their unique construction, makes them very durable (50% higher S.D.C.).

15. Dip and Strip. The four elves who run the operation are so good that nobles from neighboring regions (except the Middle Kingdoms) will ship old furniture here to have it **refinished**. High prices, exceptional quality.

16. Funeral Home/Mortuary. Offers a "Fallen Hero" special for poor soldiers who die in the line of duty. Little does the proprietor know, but his lead assistant is a 1st level, miscreant, Necromancer who works here so he can gather body parts.

17. Hardware Store. Specializes in logging equipment, saws, axes, hammers, woodworking tools and adventuring equipment.

18. Harley Tiro, Woodworker and Craftsman. Harley's business is one of a dozen in Pallisade that makes and sells fine woodwork, ranging from small **knickknacks** to large furniture. He won't make weapons or religious icons, but other than that, he will carve anything you commission. Typical prices range from 100 gold for a small carving to 10,000 for an especially large one (like the four-poster bed he once carved from a single, massive slice of a hardwood tree, wheeled in from the outside). Harley is much better than any of his competitors, none of whom wish him any ill because they all respect his skill so much.

19. Temple to the Church of Light and Dark. A large and powerful organization here, as it is throughout the realm. The priests here are diligent and proud.

20. Herbalist/(Western) Apocathery. Sells every known drug, herb and poison at 10% below list price. Run by a scabby and emaciated human who smells like licorice.

21. Hospital. Although the care is free here, it offers only non-magical services, so any serious injuries are likely to receive very crude (and painful) treatment. Poor soldiers all fear that one day they're going to get hurt and sent here for mending, only to have their hurt limb **amputated...without** anesthetic.

22. The Depot Inn. This is really more of a flop house than an inn or hotel. It used to have a name painted out front, but it's worn off, so people just call it the "Depot." Charges 5 gold for a mangy old bed in a tiny room for 24 hours. Bunk beds are available (still 5 gold each), and a community bathroom is located on the second floor. It is run by a very tough and cantankerous dwarf and his family, with a dozen **orc** and goblin slaves. The proprietors love to give elves and gnomes a hard time and charge them double. Will rent to all races and since the war, the

place is constantly packed with poor adventurers and fortune seekers.

23. Pawn Shop. This place has a standing offer for any soldier or woodsman: before they leave for a trip into the woodlands, to leave their worldly and most favorite possession(s) there. If the clients return to pick up their stuff within six months, the shop's owner will pay them 10 gold for each item. Those who don't return for their stuff in six months, forfeit their belongings, which are then sold for 33% to 50% of their worth. So far, this business has boomed and has more inventory than it can move.

24. Temple to the Northern Gods. Especially popular among woodsmen and foreign warriors. Specific shrines for **Od**, **Epim**, **Locknar**, **Hoknar** and **Heim**. The shrines for **Belimar**, **Wolvenar** and **Hel** have been destroyed by vandals, presumably opposed to the temple for religious reasons.

25. Vitellius Coton, Sage. Not a bona fide sage, but a very learned (13th level) scholar. He charges 20 gold per consultation, but this is just to cover his costs. Vitellius's memory is so sharp that he has the same benefits as the psionic discipline Total Recall at all times, at no I.S.P. cost.

26. Quills of Lightning. Run by a group of ten young men and women who recently graduated from **Caer Itom** University. All are considered 2nd level scholars. Most of their business is duplicating books and other important (non-classified) documents for local merchants, soldiers and nobles. Business has been so good that they recently commissioned an alchemist for 20 magical pens that will never run dry of ink.

27. Damage, Inc. A freelance security and mercenary outfit. They specialize in detective work and armed escort. Since they do lots of business for the rich and powerful in town, the hitters who work here never get pressed into military duty, making this place a very enviable business to work for if you're a 6th level man at arms or higher. Prices vary depending on the job, but tend to be expensive.

28. Temple to the Sect of Elementalism. Once a popular place among Warlocks before they left in protest to the war.

29. Slave Market and Pens. Offers a limited selection of humans (foreigners), **orc**, **goblin**, and **ogre** slaves of average quality. Prices can range from 100-1000 gold, occasionally more for prime specimens. Ratlings can be had for 100 gold each, but most people in this region don't want these troublesome beings.

30. Horse Stables. Fair prices of eight gold per day or 50 gold per week to stable one horse and get good service.

31. Sorcerers for Hire. A small enclave of six wizards (3rd to 6th level), two Psi-Mystics (3rd and 5th level), a Diabolist (4th level) and a Summoner (5th level) and a dozen assistants versed in magic, faerie and monster lore (1st to 3rd level scholars). They work in two and three man teams (one always being an assistant), and will take most any job. Jobs are priced according to the danger. Minimum charge is 500 gold. Dangerous and labor intensive jobs typically cost 500-2,000 gold per day per mage, plus expenses and a 5%-20% commission if it involves protecting or acquiring valuables.

Industrial District

Each of the five big operations here employs at least 200 workers and often 2-10 times that number. All produce huge

amounts of finished goods. The lion's share of the Province's cut lumber comes from or goes to here for processing.

32. Wheelwright. Fast, reliable service, high quality goods.

33. Woodworker. Makes almost any kind of wood product, but specializes in construction timbers.

34. Saw Mill/Lumber Yard. Takes freshly cut wood and cuts it down to size for other workers to process. Sells wholesale to clients outside of the region, but sells retail to local businesses and individuals.

35. Furniture Manufacturing/Retail. Makes lots of the fine furniture seen in the more prominent noble courts of the realm. A small portion of their inventory is sold on the premises.

36. Import/Export. Imports all kinds of out-of-town luxuries like tobacco, herbs, spices, liquor, glass, and many other products. Exports freshly cut wood, large shipments of finished wood products, cattle and farm products.

Mill and Loggers' District

Within this residential district housing 99% of the town's loggers, is a mini-district of entertainment places. The townspeople like this arrangement, since it keeps loggers within their part of town on weekends, when they can blow their pay on fun times.

37. Nomo's. A large, rowdy tavern frequented by laborers, adventurers, soldiers of fortune and shady types. **Fistfights** are common, as is gambling. In fact, there is a house tradition of honoring bets on almost anything, and one of the walls has a large chalkboard for marking down the various wagers of the evening. Other sporting games, like darts, arm wrestling and competitive drinking, are all popular pastimes here.

38. Gaming Hall. Best known for its L-shaped pool tables and games of chance.

39. Mary Go Round. A brothel run by Smiling Mary, a somewhat famous **elven** madam who has been in the business for nearly 100 years now. She's got dirt on anybody who's got a skeleton in the closet. Many of Mary's girls are elves, demanding double the usual price, but alienating most other non-human clientele.

40. Casino. A flashy place that's always doing a good business, even during the day. Security is run by a wily, 9th level human knight who came here because he fled some political trouble back in the Koerdian Mountains. All games are legitimate and fair. Those caught cheating get their hands **and/or** arms broken. Victim's choice.

41. Open Market. Fresh fruit, vegetables and meat, as well as horses, livestock, canned foods, jams, breads, cheese, tobacco, booze woodworks, leather goods, clothing, furs, animal pelts, inexpensive jewelry, used weapons, and other types of products are sold here; 50% is a farmers' market. The only permanent structure is the shop of the owner which serves as a coordination center and moneychanging facility. The rest of the sellers are farmers, craftsmen, small-time merchants and adventurers who rent space to sell their wares. Every ten foot (3 m) length and eight foot (2.4 m) table costs 30 gold per day. Those who bring their own tables, carts, and even tenting get a 20% discount. The prices of food and wood items are usually low (10-30% below book price), but prices vary with each vender.

42. House of Healing. Psychic healers ply their trade to those who need it. Half price for local citizens working in the mills or lumberyards.

43. General Store. A good selection of everything from dried food and salted meats to clothes, bolts of fabric and adventuring supplies. Book prices with occasional sales on special items. A tailor and seamstress work in a shop attached to the store.

44. Theater. This place needs help. It's falling apart and has got the worst acts. The owner is considering having an earth elemental friend of his cast an Earthquake spell on the place, regardless of what collateral damage that might cause.

45. Razzmatazz. A somewhat seedy showhouse that has a racy burlesque show each night.

Residential District

Most of the homes here are modest wood structures, but there are some stone houses and buildings, particularly churches and schools. As this core of permanent neighborhoods spreads, the extent of stone aqueducts, underground sewers, paved roads and other urban infrastructure also increases. Tents and ramshackle camps of visiting adventurers and fortune seekers are found scattered around the Pallisade walls outside the city proper.

Notable residents of this district include:

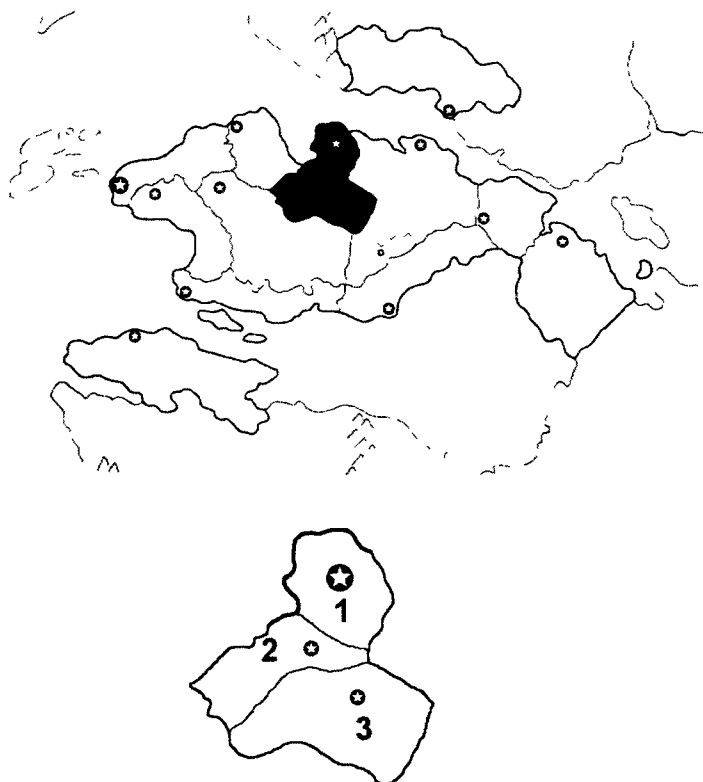
- **Captain Markalian**, a recently retired mercenary who banked most of his payrolls and now lives in one of the nicest homes in the **district**. He still likes action, and sometimes comes out for "this is my last job" special assignments. He is a **10th** level mercenary who owns a minor rune war hammer named Foehammer. He is also a commander in the volunteer city militia.
- **Lord Fennimore Hymdere**. A pompous merchant from **Caer Itom**. He exports hardwood back home, but he hates it here and never has anything nice to say about this "backwoods, peasant village."
- **Capt. Randal Asfaland**. A 7th level spy from the Middle Kingdoms posing as a logging captain.
- **Long Feather**. A Forest Elf who was expelled by his people for reasons unknown, and now lives in the city. He appears to make his living as a hunter and trapper, but is reputed to have ties to a criminal operation in a neighboring region.
- **Michael Winchil**. A scholar-adventurer investigating the notion that the Forest Elves are really Changelings.

Provincial Breakdown of the Vequerrel Woodlands

The Vequerrel Woodlands themselves are a dense and mysterious expanse of forest covering much of the region. It is said that half the trees are over 2000 years old. One won't travel far in these woods without coming across some denizens of the place. Most of the forest creatures don't like intruders, and some attack on sight. Despite the fighting here, this is a remarkably beautiful place that teems with wildlife. Large bands of nomadic Forest Elves roam the eastern half of the forest, while faeries are present throughout. There is a cluster of three ley line nexuses all within a quarter-mile of each other somewhere in the middle of the woodlands. It is said that a giant sentient oak tree of mag-

nificent power grows between these nexuses, and is something of a deity to both the Elves and the Faerie Folk.

Aside from the Regional Province, there are only two other provinces in this region. If and when the Vequerrel Woodlands are entirely cleared, or more developed, the region should be able to support two or three more provincial powers. All of the nobles in this region have parceled out their share of the Vequerrel Woodlands to harvest, and none have had any problems getting along.



Provincial Overview of the Vequerrel Woodlands

- 1 Regional Province Provincial Capital Pallisade
Ruling Noble Family House Jaoradon
- 2 Rylan Province Provincial Capital Holyoak.
Ruling Noble Family House Rylan.
- 3 Toth Province Provincial Capital Talltree
Ruling Noble Family House Toth

Provincial Overview: Province Rylan

This province has the least cleared land because it focuses more on raising cattle in their grasslands and processing lumber than actually clearing forest land. Still, fighting is fierce among the bounty hunters and meres hunting Faerie Folk in their forests just five miles (8 km) away from the provincial capital. No place in the cleared lands or cattle range is safe from faerie raids, which are sometimes accompanied by boulder-hurling Spriggans.

House Rylan: The Rylan nobles are particularly brutal in their efforts to pacify the woodlands. Ultimately, this might have a negative effect for the entire region if House Jaoradon tries to forge a peace with the faeries. To the faeries, all these westerners look alike, so they blame all soldiers and hunters in this region for the atrocities committed on behalf of House Rylan.

Provincial Capital: Holyoak (43,500 people). This place is populated more by financiers, craftsmen, cattlemen and professional soldiers than by the lumberjacks, mill workers and mercenaries found elsewhere in the region. Thus, Holyoak is a more cultured and refined city than others in the region. Rowdiness is infrequent, and there are even a few quality theaters, art galleries, and other luxuries. Many visiting nobles would rather stay here than in Pallisade.

Provincial Overview: Province Toth

This province yields just as much lumber as its sawmills and craftsmen can handle, and are responsible for much of the clear-cutting. Since there is no feast or famine cycle here, the economy is stable and everybody prospers. Fighting is very fierce with the faeries, especially since there is a large faerie mound not far from a recent clear-cutting area.

House Toth: This large and affluent Noble House controls most of the region's lumber mills, and makes a good deal of money distributing cut timber. Since the lumber mills are far from "the war front," the risk of attack from faeries is low, although fighting most elsewhere throughout the province is intense. This Provincial House covers the area bordering the Kighfalon Plains region and as such, is more concerned with the Middle Kingdoms crisis than other nobles in this territory.

Provincial Capital: Talltree (25,500 people). The people here are growing restless with the constant problems with faeries and the invasion of ruffians to combat the little blighters. Most residents are calling on their lords to make peace with the faeries. The lords won't have it, and only try harder to eradicate them.



Regional Overview #1 & 8: The Middle Kingdoms

Racial demographics for the Middle Kingdoms:

84% Human	6% Orc
4% Elves	2% Goblin
2% Dwarves	2% Other

The Middle Kingdoms are largely human and human supremacists, thus there are only a small percentage of nonhumans, including elves and dwarves.

Ah, the Middle Kingdoms. No other region is as resource-rich, self-sufficient, or as promising. No other region is

so rebellious, warlike and detrimental to the safety and stability of the Western Empire. No other region is so ... complicated.

This region was settled thousands of years ago by religious pilgrims who wanted nothing to do with the *Kighfalon* Lords or their wars of conquest. For a millennium, the Middle Kingdoms lived in isolated peace and quiet, promoting the Church of Light and Dark as the **one**, true religion of the Palladium World.

The ever-expanding Empire saw this vast cultivated and civilized land as a great jump start on "humanizing" the eastern frontier. Absorbing it into the greater Empire was never in question — either the Middle Kingdoms would acquiesce, or they would be beaten into submission. To make a long story short, the Middle Kingdoms fought against Imperial absorption and lost. Ever since, this region has been a hotbed of rebellion and terrorism.

The Middle Kingdoms have the power and resources to act as their own nation, and don't have to rely on trade with other regions. The majority of its residents are devoutly religious (some would say fanatic) and bent on converting the rest of the world to worshipping the Church of Light and Dark.

Naturally, the religious diversity of the Western **Empire** is repugnant to the Middle Kingdoms, and is the source for a great deal of political tension and rebellion. At first glance, it might seem that religious differences are what's keeping the Middle Kingdoms and the rest of the Western Empire at odds, but the hostilities run much deeper than that. The Middle Kingdoms have tried over two dozen times to break free of the Western Empire, causing a regional civil war each time. Even though the Middle Kingdoms have never succeeded, their persistence encourages Imperial subjects to regard this region as a bunch of dangerous, untrustworthy rebels and religious fanatics. Folks from the Middle Kingdoms see Imperial citizens as barbaric and godless oppressors bent on pushing their filthy ways on a once proud and independent people. A solution to this vicious cycle is nowhere in sight.

The Middle Kingdoms' last try for independence was 45 years ago, during the Reconstruction. Since then, things have been quiet, but rebel forces have been gathering their strength and plan on lashing out once again. This time, though, with the tacit help of House Kaze, they might actually succeed in breaking away — or so they dare to dream. *House Kaze* is filled with excellent spies, manipulators and politicians, and they'll make sure that all is in their favor before attempting another war of secession. Following House Kaze's leadership, and joined by the *House Krugazi* of the southern Middle Kingdoms, the united people of the Middle Kingdoms wait for the right time to strike. And when they do, the Empire will shudder from the blow.

As mentioned previously, The Middle Kingdoms have a little bit of everything: a long expanse of coastline leading to the channel of the **Phi-Lopan** Inner Sea, deep, wide rivers ideal for fishing and river transportation, woodlands, flowing plains, lush meadows, mineral deposits, and plenty of fertile crop land. The Middle Kingdoms also have a very large military presence, despite Imperial efforts to keep it down. With religious conviction and the promise of a great holy war against the evil Empire, House Kaze can draw upon legions of zealous volunteers and patriots whenever it wants. Although men of magic and psychics are virtually nonexistent here (due to religious reasons and Imperial influence), the Middle Kingdoms' military honestly be-

lieves it has gods on its side — and a legion of warrior priests to accompany their troops into battle. These warrior priests provide spiritual leadership for the troops as well as added **firepower** from spells and **deific** boons. So far, the Middle Kingdoms' priests have never gotten their deities to directly intervene during a battle, but there's a first time for everything. And, surprisingly, that's got Emperor Itomas worried.

The important thing about the Middle Kingdoms is that another civil war is inevitable. To keep the Middle Kingdoms from amassing further forces would require Emperor Itomas to invade the region, inciting the very civil war he hopes to avoid. Furthermore, the Emperor would rather not fight the Middle Kingdoms until he has amassed enough forces to crush the region utterly. But as the region grows stronger every day, it eventually will reach a level of power where it will feel that it can win back its independence. So either way, Emperor Itomas figures the war is inevitable, it's simply a matter of when and who instigates the first move. All he can do is prepare and hope that when the time comes, he will have done enough to prevent the Empire from fragmenting. **Note:** Despite the optimism of the Kaze House, the odds of them winning are slim, even with the unexpected support of the southern Middle Kingdoms.

The Middle Kingdoms also is extremely xenophobic and hard on any nonhumans. As a result, the racial demographic is 85% human, with the remaining 15% being made up of all other races, who are treated like third-class citizens.

The Mouse that Roars

It is important to pause for a moment and mention a little bit about *House Krugazi*, the newest of the Regional Houses and territories. After the Middle Kingdoms' last bid for secession, the Imperial House decided to literally divide the Kingdoms by breaking a third of it away from the main troublemakers. Thus, the southern portion was officially removed from the old families of the Middle Kingdoms and a new Regional Noble House established. The Imperial House needed a family who could be easily intimidated and subservient to it. The royals knew that the people of the Middle Kingdoms would never accept an outsider, so the Imperial House selected a timid little man and his family to serve as Overlord and Regional House. The man was **Uclid** Krugazi (at the time, 40 years ago, he was 26), a young, inexperienced, lesser noble who avoided public attention and ran from controversy and conflict. What they didn't count on was that Uclid was a hard-working man of principle and responsibility. Once elevated to the position of Regional Overlord (a post he didn't want, but was afraid to turn down — deciding it must be the gods' will), he was committed to doing what was best for his people. At first everything went smooth and quiet, but with time, as the new Overlord began to understand the issues and problems of his region, he started to take decisive action. To the surprise of the Imperial House, their carefully selected "mouse" has opposed them on several recent issues. Still, they are satisfied that the Krugazi House will never oppose them militarily. They are wrong.

Acting initially on the request of the Imperial House, Overlord Krugazi has been slowly and quietly (as this methodical, soft-spoken man is prone to do with everything) building a Regional Army. Unknown to the Imperial House, the Krugazi family, like most nobles of the Middle Kingdoms, are patriots who

believe that what's best for the Middle Kingdoms is their freedom. Consequently, Overlord **Krugazi** has made a secret alliance with House Kaze and will stand united against the might of the Imperial Army and Navy to win their freedom. The very idea of the kind of brutal, bloody war that Krugazi knows is coming terrifies him to no end. He is no soldier and hates having the blood of innocent people on his hands, but he has listened to the people — his people — and they scream for freedom. Thus, he prays to his gods for enlightenment and courage to do what needs to be done. Meanwhile, he waits for the Kaze House to make the first move.

Note: The Imperial House has come to recognize that the southern Middle Kingdoms under the control of the Krugazi House is not the quiet sheep they thought they had in place, but they honestly don't believe that Krugazi will stand against them. This surprise will momentarily give the Middle Kingdoms a slight advantage, but in the long run, they cannot hope to win against the combined might of the Western Empire. Worse, they will suffer greatly for their transgression before falling back under the Imperial yoke. The Krugazi House will be obliterated for its role in the war, but will live on as a legend among the people of the Middle Kingdoms. The only real good that will come from this inevitable war is that it will tax the Imperial Army and delay Emperor Itomas plans regarding the invasion of parts of the Eastern Territory and Old Kingdom. The war could take place any time in the next ten years, last 3-6 years and delay other military campaigns for 8-15 years while the Imperial House rebuilds its army, secures the Middle Kingdoms and deals with other trouble that will inevitably emerge as a result of the Middle Kingdoms war.

The Southern Middle Kingdoms: This area is largely cattle-filled plains and farmland.

Regional House: House Kaze

Forty-five years ago, the regional house running the Middle Kingdoms was suspected of harboring rebels and was dissolved by Emperor **Zeketri**. House Kaze, which had been a quiet and undistinguished provincial house, was chosen to occupy the regional seat. **Zeketri** figured the weak new house would be easy to manipulate and control. It was also Emperor **Zeketri** who divided the Middle Kingdoms 40 years ago, and picked House Krugazi to rule it. Even more than House Kaze, the Krugazi family was selected because they had been demure and obedient in the past. These assumptions are the biggest mistakes **Zeketri** ever made and, years later, haunt the Imperial House of Itomas.

House Kaze reigned for only six months before it started showing its true colors — that it felt the Western Empire had no legitimate claim to the Middle Kingdoms, that the Middle Kingdoms were indeed a sovereign nation in spirit and had been chosen by their gods to form a new and righteous kingdom. The Kaze nobles did this shrewdly, dropping loose comments at social occasions and leaking secret letters of support to agitant groups. However, Kaze also made no effort to build up its military, or to encourage other territories outside of the Middle Kingdoms to join their crusade for freedom; all secessionist tactics the Middle Kingdoms had tried before. Although House Kaze did not like the Emperor or being made "slaves" of the Western Empire, they paid their Imperial taxes, obeyed Imperial troop conscription and hosted Imperial garrisons throughout

their territory. Likewise, they stopped their protest regarding the dividing of the Middle Kingdoms between two rulers. Meanwhile, the southern portion given over to House Krugazi was as quiet as a mouse. It seemed that the problem was well in hand.

Eight years ago, however, 22 year old **Ulstrien** Kaze ascended to the position of the Regional Overlord when his father accidentally broke his neck falling off his horse during a fox hunt. At the time, **Ulstrien** had been adventuring in the Old Kingdom, and was called home.

The brash youth had always been a vocal opponent of the Western Empire's subjugation of his country, and would gladly lead his people to rise up and secede. The reason **Ulstrien** was in the Old Kingdom in the first place was because the Imperial House insisted that the loudmouthed, rabble-rouser be sent there as part of the Imperial Armies' efforts to quell border raids by **orcs** and other monsters. They hoped the dangerous wilds of the Old Kingdom might tame the lad and work the rebelliousness out of his system. Instead, hardened and honed by battle, **Ulstrien's** zeal to see his beloved Middle Kingdoms free from the yoke of oppression had only increased. When he ascended to the rank of Regional Overlord he was more confident and committed than ever.

Immediately, **Ulstrien** began making scenes at the Imperial Court, demanding the ejection of Imperial troops from the Middle Kingdoms, complaining about taxes, and questioning the right of the Emperor to expect the Middle Kingdoms to abide by Western laws and customs. The biggest problem about **Ulstrien** was his fanatical devotion to a militant sect within the Church of Light and Dark that denounced magic and psionics as unholy perversions of the mortal mind. By this way of thinking, Emperor Itomas himself is a living affront to the Middle Kingdoms, all the more reason to separate from the Western Empire.

Despite his rhetoric, the young Overlord continued to live up to his commitments to the Empire and was foolishly considered by many in the Imperial Court as nothing but a loud, barking dog without a bite. Emperor Itomas feared otherwise, so he was not surprised when Overlord **Ulstrien** suddenly more than tripled the Regional Army in direct defiance of Imperial decree. This "new army" consists mostly of volunteers signing up for a holy war against the Empire. This means most are inexperienced fighters rather than trained soldiers, and the Middle Kingdom's denouncement of magic means their magic forces are limited to priests, but he knows from past experience that religious fanaticism can more than compensate for these shortcomings. Thus, when war comes, and it will be soon now, it will be a long, hard-fought one with a high cost to both sides. The imminent war angers the Emperor because it will cause additional dissension and civil unrest in the Empire and delay his plans for military expansion by at least a decade, if not two. He has already vowed that this time, he will make certain that the Middle Kingdoms are crushed, and that House Kaze (and Krugazi) is utterly obliterated.

Meanwhile, the widespread anticipation of war has galvanized the people of the region. Most Imperial troops have been withdrawn due to constant vandalism, sabotage, and incidents of insurrection. House Kaze has stopped the payment of Imperial tribute and the people are clearly preparing for war — increased production and storage of food, the building of new fortifications, etc. For merchants within the Middle Kingdoms, times

have been very, very good, so the coffers of House Kaze are swelling to overflow levels. The signs of impending war have, ironically, stimulated business among merchants selling to the Kingdoms on a "cash only" basis. House Kaze, in turn, is taking most of the tax money collected and pouring it into military spending — fortifying cities, building siege weaponry and warships, training troops and hiring mercenaries.

For Emperor **Ulstrian**, this is a tricky period, because the Middle Kingdoms aren't quite strong enough to secede from the Western Empire (in truth they never will be), but they are strong enough to openly defy Emperor Itomas and shake things up. He hopes that their actions will cause other revolts and civil war to divide the Imperial Army and resources of the Empire and may be even get one or more of the Noble Houses to support their sovereignty. If this happens (not likely, at least not on a scale that will help their cause), the Middle Kingdoms will have a chance for freedom. Meanwhile, his messengers at the Imperial Court continue to assure the Imperial House that despite reports to the contrary, the Middle Kingdoms aren't preparing for war, but are merely taking advantage of their current prosperity to complete much of the rebuilding that Leopold I started when he reunified the Empire. They don't buy any of it, although they pretend to, and are formulating strategies for an appropriate military response.

Back home, House Kaze has nearly unanimous public approval. Most of this is because of the wave of nationalism rippling through the region. But part of it is because House Kaze maintains a huge staff of spies and assassins that ruthlessly quiet any voices of dissent. Indeed, the Overlord's secret guardsmen are some of the most shadowy and efficient enforcers in the Western Empire. They are so good, in fact, that more than one Kaze noble has suggested they be used to strike at the Emperor and the members of the Imperial House directly. The murder of the Emperor would certainly weaken the Western Empire and create chaos.

Notable figures of House Kaze:

Overlord Ulstrian Kaze: The driven leader of House Kaze. He is young and a religious fanatic, ultra-nationalist and hero to the people of the Middle Kingdoms. He won't compromise anything for the sake of the Middle Kingdoms, and he will gladly die for his cause. He is no fool, and likes to choose his fights wisely, which is why he is holding off declaring formal hostilities with the Imperial House for as long as possible. He is cunning, merciless against his enemies and obsessed with freeing the Middle Kingdoms from the Western Empire. **Quick Stats for Ulstrian Kaze:** 7th level Noble Knight of scrupulous alignment; age 30. Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 18, M.A. 19, P.S. 17, P.P. 13, P.E. 15, P.B. 12, Spd. 15

Lady Cencille Kaze: Ulstrian's younger sister and major *domo*. She assists Ulstrian in all aspects of governing the region. She possesses minor psychic abilities, something she keeps secret from Ulstrian, Daera and most other people. If this were found out, she would be expelled from the region and forever ostracized from the family as cursed. **Quick Stats for Cencille Kaze:** 6th level Noble of scrupulous alignment; age 28. Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 17, M.A. 17, P.S. 10, P.P. 12, P.E. 11, P.B. 15, Spd. 14



Lady Daera Kaze: Ulstrian's youngest sister. She helps with some aspects of running the region, but mostly concerns herself with theology. Daera is an extremely devoted 5th level Priest of Darkness. Paranoid and self-righteous, she thinks that anyone displaying less than complete devotion to Ulstrian is plotting against the Noble House. Her loosely based fears have had more than a few innocent people tortured and put to death. As **Daera's** religious fervor increases, she increasingly sees Ulstrian as a divine savior who has come to lead the Middle Kingdoms into paradise. She also believes she is also divine, quite possibly a demigod. The problem with this, besides being scary, is that Lady Daera has become increasingly devoid of humanity and feels removed from ordinary people. To punctuate her madness, she has a growing cult of devotees who worship her and Ulstrian as gods! **Quick Stats for Daera Kaze:** 5th level Priest of Darkness, diabolic alignment; age 25. Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 9, M.A. 12, P.S. 11, P.P. 10, P.E. 12, P.B. 17, Spd. 10; insanities include the delusion that she and her brother are divine, god-like beings sent from heaven to lead the Middle Kingdoms to salvation (even if that freedom is delivered through war and death), delusions of, and obsession with, power, paranoia, and several obsessions, the most notable including revenge upon the Empire and protecting her brother at all costs, for he is the savior and she his herald and protector.

Lady Vorette Kaze: Ulstrian's mother and one of his few critics. When he began stirring up trouble as Overlord, she noted to him that his late father would not have approved, and that his

talk of war would only bring death and destruction to their Noble House and the Kingdoms he wishes to save. Overlord Ulstrien went into a rage and had **Vorette** locked away in a tower at the Regional Palace, where she lives a lonely life of despair. He then told the court that she had died in her sleep and held a grand funeral for her. Lady Daera visits only to 'speak' of prophetic dreams and of how she knows Vorette is the anti-prophet and a devil. **Quick Stats for Vorette Kaze:** 7th level Noble Priest of Darkness, diabolic alignment; age 51. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 11, M.A. 15, P.S. 8, P.P. 10, P.E. 11, P.B. 14, Spd. 9.

Despite House **Kaze's** efforts to root out all those opposed to Ulstrien, they've missed a large number of "old-timers" loyal to Ulstrien's father and Vorette. If the people ever discover what Ulstrien did to his mother, and if she speaks against him, it would shake the confidence of at least a third of the people (and give House **Krugazi** reason to reconsider its support, crippling the region's chances for seceding, and saving the southern Middle Kingdoms). However, the majority of people in the northern Middle Kingdoms are so worked up that they are ready to follow their (unofficial) "King" to hell and back.

Regional Capital: Epiphany

Population: 180,000

Human: 153,000

Other: 27,000

This does not include the 51,500 slaves, mostly **orcs** and **goblins**.

This city's people are nearly pathologically afraid of magic and psionic powers. They believe such powers and abilities are unnatural for humans and equate them with demons, devils, witchcraft and evil monsters like dragons and Faerie Folk (they approve of the genocide going on in the **Vequerrel** Woodlands and would gladly join in, except they have other, more pressing matters to attend to, like their budding war against the Empire). Large signs, totems and shrines to the gods of Light and Dark located at the junctions of roads and on the outskirts of towns, inform all visitors that,

"Those lost souls touched by evil and corrupted by magic and psychic powers are not welcome and shall be executed before the eyes of the righteous gods."

Hanging and beheading are the most common forms of execution, after which the bodies are burned. Travelers often report seeing bodies hanging from the outer walls of Epiphany and other cities as a warning. Fueling this fire is the high number of psychics secretly living here. This has led to a secret underground of psychics dedicated to teaching other psychics how to harness and hone their powers, and escape the religious fanatics of this region. Most communication is done by telepathy, but for those unfortunates without telepathy, the much more hazardous route of asking around is their only recourse. Most of the psychics executed in Epiphany are found out when their powers first manifest themselves and the youths don't know how to conceal them, or when trying to locate the psychic underground. Those already inside take special pains not to compromise their

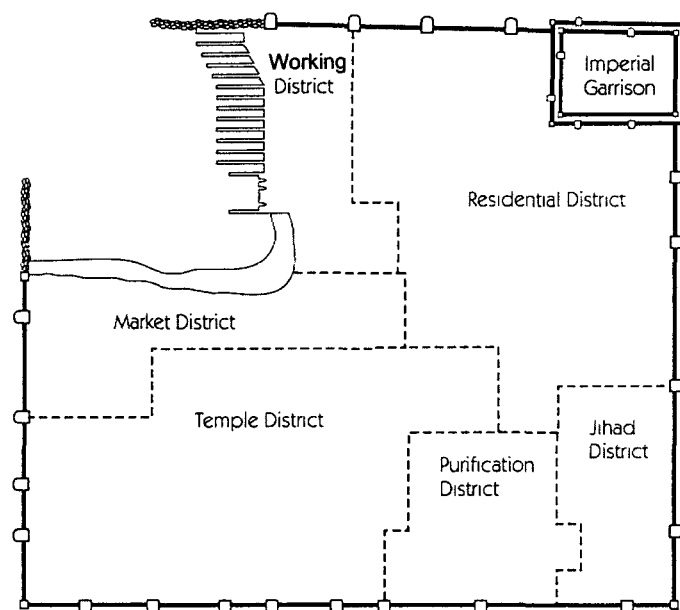
organization, and the mutual understanding that the city folk will kill the entire group keeps members from "ratting" on each other or doing anything stupid that would give them away.

The religious interpretation that magic and psionics are unnatural and evil is unique to the fanatical religious sect that has taken root at Epiphany and among the Kaze House. The beliefs of Epiphany and others in the Middle Kingdoms are not shared by worshippers of the Church of Light and Dark worldwide. Approximately 55% of the Middle Kingdoms' citizens do not ascribe to this "extreme" view, but follow Overlord Ulstrien because he is a powerful leader, not because of his religious beliefs.

The city of Epiphany is a fairly plain community with many of the same industries and businesses found in other parts of the Western Empire. Crime and social decay, however, are virtually non-existent, and shrines, temples and churches to the Gods of Light and Dark are everywhere.

Magic, other than the "divine powers" of the priests, is considered blasphemous in the Middle Kingdoms and forbidden. Practitioners of magic may enter the region at their own risk, and are relatively safe as long as they don't discuss, promote, use or display magic or magic items. Adventurers who use magic weapons will see themselves surrounded by local authorities and/or priests come to confiscate their magic weapon(s). Whenever possible, magic items are then destroyed. Those that are difficult to destroy are locked away in chambers and vaults hidden in churches of Light and Dark.

Note: The Imperial House has established a number of spies and sympathizers scattered throughout the northern Middle Kingdoms.



Epiphany Description & Code Key

Temple District

The largest non-residential district in town, dominated by grand temples, shrines, fountains, plazas, holy monuments, and 12-40 foot (3.6 to 12 m) tall statues of the Gods of Light and Dark. House Kaze soldiers patrol everywhere.

1. The High Temple of Light and Dark. This massive building is topped by a 500 foot (152 m) dome that is a testi-

mony to the engineering genius that went into designing this place. Here, all of the Middle Kingdoms' top religious officials gather, make policy and meet with the Kaze nobles to report on regional developments. Once a week, the temple is used for religious services that attract as many as 20,000 people. Over 1,110 priests and priestesses (mostly 1st to 3rd level), hundreds of monks (mostly 2nd-5th level) and 2000 acolytes (religious students and faithful assistants) are housed here full-time to run the temple and to serve the church. A corps of 111 warrior monks (ranging from 3rd-5th level) provide security. Approximately 22 High Priests (levels 5th-8th), five bishops (8th-9th level), and Arch-Bishop Azander (11th level; aberrant evil and an avid supporter of the Overlord) represent the authority here. **Note:** Although the entire pantheon of gods of Light and Dark are worshipped, the priests and Kaze House actually lean more toward the gods of war and darkness.

2. Plaza of Light. An open-air cobblestone courtyard where hundreds of people can walk and meditate among statues and fountains depicting the gods. The gardens here are beautiful and peaceful.



3. Plaza of Dark. A mirror image of #2, above.

4. House Kaze Regional Center. This walled-off mix of buildings is part fortress, part palace, part temple, and part city hall. Here the Overlord, the Kaze family and other nobles and religious leaders live and work. They rarely venture outside unless to address the public. A secret underground passage connects this compound to the *High Temple of Light and Dark*,

allowing Kaze nobles and church officials to freely pass between both sites without going outdoors.

5. Regional Military Center. Home of the House Kaze Regional Army (1st-3rd level) and currently, a huge percentage of his civilian recruits (1st-2nd level) for the Holy War. Unlike most other noble armies, House Kaze stresses these soldiers to be loyal to the Middle Kingdoms first and to House Kaze second. This fosters unusually strong loyalty and enthusiasm among these troops. Most are highly motivated and eager to serve and defend the people of the Middle Kingdoms, which makes up for their lack of training or experience. The average raw recruit is only 16-19 years old, thanks to waves of young boys and men who signed up for service in the hopes of being part of the historic holy war that will free their people from Imperial rule. The Regional Military Center currently houses 33,000 troops (not included in the city's population numbers), and that number is growing by the day. The center can only hold 50,000 troops, after which House Kaze will either build another center or continue to assign troops to other strategic locations and cities — another 21,110 are scattered throughout the region. The troops are organized into brigades of 1,111, each accompanied by 11 combat priests, 111 cavalymen, and 11 siege weapons.

Market District

Folks come here to buy what they need, then they leave quickly. Spending too much time here is seen as being overly materialistic and/or a waste of time.

6. Outrigger & Sail Shop. Sells all manner of sails, netting and rope works for ships and fishing boats.

7. Bits and Pieces. An antique shop carrying a huge selection of all kinds of things. The best spare parts store around.

8. The Showhouse. This used to be a popular theater before Ulstrien Kaze came to power. Now it stays afloat by putting on weak shows glorifying the Middle Kingdoms, House Kaze and the gods.

9. Central Marketplace. An empty courtyard during the week, but it is filled with local merchants and farmers selling their wares on weekends and holidays. Fair prices, big selection.

10. The Packrat's Paradise. Basically a junk shop. The woman running it is a sweet grandmotherly type, and her charm often convinces people to buy stuff just to help her out. The local neighbors absolutely love her.

11. Leatherworker. Belts, clothing, bags, hats, whips, leather pieces, and even basic leather armor. Fair work, fair prices.

12. Scribes for Hire. This aging scribe isn't as fast as he once was, but still incredibly skillful. Charges only 10 gold per page, and works under the strictest of confidentiality. He has a team of seven young apprentices who work for half the price.

13. Gem Cutter. Will divide, reshape and finish rough and finished stones for a modest fee. Decent work. The shop also does appraisals for two gold per item, and will pay 30-40% for gems of exceptional quality.

14. Roddell Rethskeller, Attorney. Roddell is a 160 year old elf (looks 30ish) who is quite skilled in Western law and knows his way around the courts. **Unfortunately**, he drinks too much and is prone to behaving erratically in court. He is on the

verge of getting disbarred. He has two elf and three human assistants.

15. Not Just Cheese. Despite the title of this place, all it really does sell is cheese. All kinds, all prices, all tastes. Customers with an acute sense of smell will find it hard to stay in here for long.

16. By the Sea. A renowned restaurant and tavern that specializes in seafood. Prices are fair, the selection vast, and quality excellent. Rumor has it, however, that the proprietor is a depraved evildoer/ex-pirate who will, for the right price, sell you a flank of mermaid. Where he would obtain such exotic meat, nobody knows — and that's because all of this talk about evil-doing is just a vicious lie spread by his competitors.

17. The Gods' Healing House. A for-profit hospital controlled by the Church of Light and Dark. It requests at least half payment of the estimated cost before any healing is performed and the balance before the patient is dismissed. The place is like a fortress and all exits are guarded by Regional troops (2-4 2nd-4th level soldiers). Since priests and monks are the main healers, the facility has magical and military resources to draw upon when needed. Those who can't pay are put into a work program where they are pressed into forced labor until their bill is paid in full, with additional time and cost considerations for the food and prison-like accommodations while in the program. Local citizens, nobles or other prominent figures are given a tab and can pay it back at their convenience. The priests only keep 15% of their fees. The rest goes to the church's coffers.

18. Dark Street Asylum. This forbidding place is where the ever-growing numbers of Epiphany's insane are sent. Dark Street has an agreement with The Healing House to have all insane patients sent here. This operation collects minimal money from its clients, and many wonder how the asylum manages to stay open. It's important to note that enemies of the **Kaze** House and those who dare to suggest life under the rule of the Western Empire is not so bad, are frequently deemed insane and placed in the facility at the request of the Overlord or Lady Daera.

19. Sage for hire. Knowledgeable on many subjects, but a nutcase with an armload of conspiracy theories. Those willing to listen to his ramblings get work for half price.

Purification District

Also known as the judicial and penal district. Nowhere else in the Empire can one find a city as obsessed with upholding the law as Epiphany. The courts are always filled with lawbreakers — often poor souls arrested for the tiniest of infractions. Many of these "criminals" are just children who didn't know any better or who were brought in because of a rumor or unfounded suspicion. Thankfully, the children are regarded as young, misguided and still young enough to be "saved" from a life of sin and depravity. Adults are judged much more harshly.

20. Court House. All blasphemers and offenders of the faith and the State are tried and sentenced at this large, impressive building. Years of hard labor, decades of imprisonment and execution are the usual penalties. City clerks, filers and attorneys also have offices at this building. It is guarded by 44 troops and 11 priests.

21. Jail House. This building doesn't see much use, since it's really just a holding area. Justice is swift in Epiphany. Criminals

usually stay here while awaiting questioning or trial. It can hold up to 50 prisoners and has 15 separate cells and two interrogation rooms. It also has a small, hidden armory and the stone building can be used as a defensive bunker in times of war.

22. Constable's Headquarters. This place is really a small barracks where soldiers from the Regional Army get a cushy, month-long assignment on city patrols. After a while, though, boredom sets in, and the troops become restless for action, so they begin busting citizens for the most minor of infractions. A total of 44 troops are usually assigned here, broken into four groups of 11; can accommodate up to 111 troops and can be used as a defensive bunker in times of war. A secret, underground passage leads to just behind the Court House.

23. Public Sentencing Yard. An open courtyard where criminals have their sentences read aloud, and then receive public punishment. There are stocks, cages and chain posts where those accused of comparatively minor offenses are placed to be spit upon or pelted with rotten food, whipping posts for floggings, and the rack and tables for torture. The gallows and crematorium are located in the northeast corner. Such displays are heavily attended and are considered a form of entertainment. Thirty foot (9 m) tall statues of **Anhur**, Slayer of Enemies, and **Osiris**, the Lawgiver, loom in the background.

Jihad District

Another series of open-air plazas, lesser temples, religious schools, and community centers all devoted to strengthening the religious resolve of the people, frequently by persecuting the tenets and worshippers of other faiths.

24. Holy House. A youth hostel and school for younger folk. Run by a zealot who will report anybody to the authorities if they appear the slightest bit opposed to the Church of Light and Dark or supportive of magic or psionics.

25. Rally Yard. Every weekend, large crowds of young people gather here to hear and give inspirational speeches.

26. Museum of Light and Dark. A building that houses all kinds of priceless paintings, mosaics, statues and other works of art depicting the history of the Church of Light and Dark and its involvement with the Middle Kingdoms.

27. Religious Supply Store. Caters to the Church of Light and Dark, of course. What the public doesn't know is that the owner, a crafty Changeling named **Entwyn**, is a 9th level Mind Mage and the chief contact for the city's psychic underground.

28. Shrine of the Dead. This temple-like structure houses huge racks of small candles. For a small donation, you can light a candle in remembrance of a dead loved one, especially one who died trying to win the region its independence. A statue of **Anubis**, Lord of the Dead, stands over this shrine.

Working District

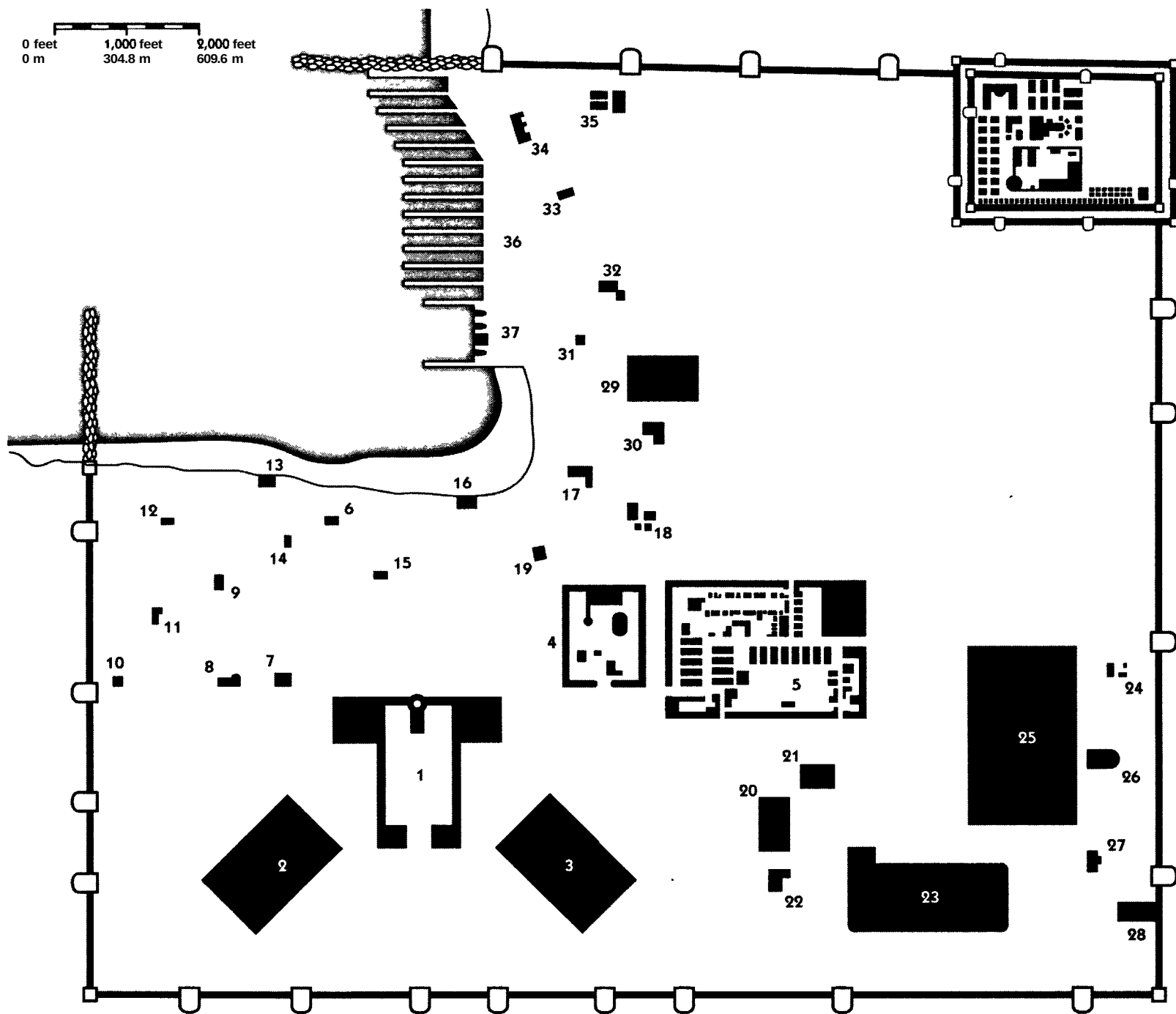
The industrial center of town. Unlike the manufacturing centers of most Western cities, this one is clean, neat and orderly. Folks come here for their workday, put in **their** time, and then they go home. The only folks who hang around are foremen, bosses, rebels and spies. The latter sneak among the storage yards and dock works while making their underground contacts.

29. Foundry. A large, formidable operation consisting of a series of storage yards where ingredients and finished products

0 feet
0 m

1,000 feet
304.8 m

2,000 feet
609.6 m



Steve Edwards

are stored. Tall chimney stacks spew smoke and soot high in the air, darkening the sky for blocks and covering all nearby buildings with a fine layer of soot and ash. The foundry makes large quantities of steel, which goes straight to the regional barracks where military armorers and weaponsmiths shape the metal themselves. Large shipments of coal, lime and other materials necessary for steel production are carted in from nearby quarries. Worker injuries here are high, and new employees come in constantly. These poor slobs aren't skilled enough to do their jobs without getting hurt, so many only last a few months before they need to be replaced. Only the high pay keeps people working here.

30. Arco Stone Mason. This business cuts all sizes of stone blocks. Most are used for construction and repair, but these guys also perform finer work, too, such as carving gargoyles, religious statues and other ornamental stonework. Surprisingly low prices.

31. Bluemouse Clothing. Run by a young human woman who is an artist at creating brightly **patterened** clothes. Bluemouse has one of the largest fabric mills and tailor in the region, spinning cotton, silk and wool.

32. Greencat Spinning. Oska Shen, a bitter old elf, competes with Bluemouse Clothing, and vows to destroy the company. Despite Oska's vow, he is too poor of a businessperson to put Bluemouse under, and he is too much of a coward to hire thugs to take care of Bluemouse by illegal means.

33. Remnant Warehouse. An old warehouse that is mostly unused. A small portion of it is a shop selling all kinds of carpets, rugs and remnants. Also sell lots of handmade baskets for very little.

34. Blacksmith. A big operation working out of an old warehouse. Makes lots of weapons and armor for the local military. Also does a lot of non-weapon work too, like horseshoes, tools, and ornamental metalwork.

35. Woodcarvers' Workshop. Produces lots of furniture. Very austere stuff.

36. Dockyards. Where all ship traffic stays. This area is very highly policed and all incoming ships are subject to a thorough inspection by House Kaze soldiers looking for any contraband or hidden passengers. A second inspection of vessels leaving the port is conducted to make certain nothing is being smuggled out of town.

37. Shipyard & Dry Docks. Owned and operated by House Kaze. Any ship built here requires the personal, formal approval of Overlord Ulstrian Kaze before construction can commence.

Residential District

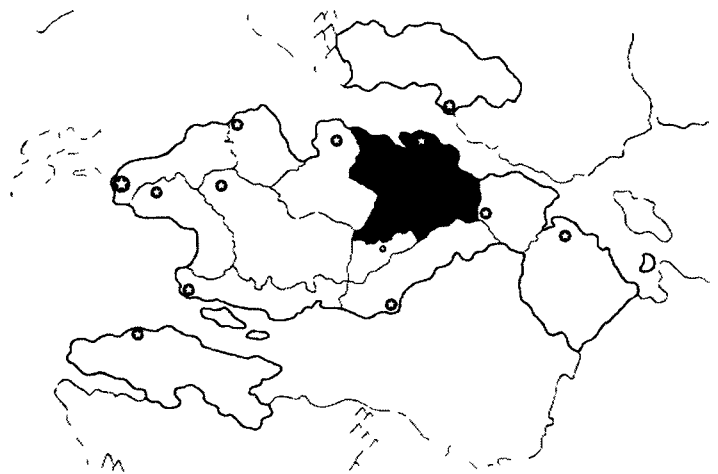
Far and away the biggest section of town. Rows and rows of densely-packed houses make for narrow, twisting streets and alleyways. The occasional temple breaks up the local landscape, as do corner groceries or other small stores. The standard of living here is fairly low, but most of the folks are content.

The Imperial Garrison. This massive military complex is walled off so that it really isn't part of the city proper. Emperor Itomas keeps a force of nearly 10,000 troops here on a constant lookout for any trouble. Since House Kaze has kicked its rebellious talk into high gear, the soldiers here have been forbidden to go into Epiphany for any reason. This garrison is very

self-sufficient, with a large staff of warlocks, wizards, priests and priestesses, Summoners and Diabolists to offer lots of magical **firepower** if ever the garrison found itself in the middle of a regional rebellion. The radical citizenry refer to it as the house of sin.

Notable residents include:

- **Almaglo Crum**, reputedly a retired **elven** scholar (looks to be a hundred years old so he must be ancient), who is really an alchemist who runs a secret business in his basement, and works as a spy for the Imperial House. Accepts only highly-recommended customers, and by appointment only. Accepts no more than three customers per month.
- **Justiciar Toloffa** is an ex-justice of the peace known for his particularly strict interpretation of the law. He is an insane, religious zealot who during his 40 year tenure, sentenced no less than 1,000 people to death. This old man is stern and solemn, but is a very respected member of his community. Rebellious elements in town have considered murdering him to make a political statement. He is one of Lady Daera's chosen few who secretly worships Overlord Ulstrian as a god.
- **Ramis** is an elven priestess of light (6th level, scrupulous) who worships **Isis**, but masquerades as a simple musician. She does this because she leads a rebellious movement to bring religious freedom to the region. While Ramis wants to bring about change peacefully, she will fight if she has to. She has a cache of magic items and 2,000 gold hidden under the floor of her home if ever she becomes a hunted woman.
- **Lynn Daben**, an 18 year old, human woman who leads a completely normal and pious life, so she will be terrified when her psionic powers awaken (major psionic). How she and her family avoid a public lynching is undetermined — they will probably need outside help.
- **Samuel Newton**, a spy for House Kaze listening, is for any leads about the presence of men of magic, psychics and spies. A dark and evil fellow who enjoys sending people to the torture chambers.



Provincial Breakdown of the Middle Kingdoms

There are five other regions in the Middle Kingdoms, all of which are, to some degree or another, ready to rebel against the Western Empire and make a claim for independence. House Kaze keeps these provinces in line through tact and diplomacy.

Most are completely committed to this latest bid for freedom. At one time, each represented a separate, individual kingdom (with several others that have been dissolved by the Imperial government).

Provincial Overview: Province Hihhod

A relatively small region dominated by its many foundries, glassblowing kilns and spice grinding houses. The religious zealotry of the people here is unbelievably high, even for the Middle Kingdoms' standards.

House Hihhod: Even more religiously fanatical than House Kaze, if that's possible. These nobles have killed or imprisoned just about every person exhibiting magical or psychic ability in the province. The persecution has gotten so bad that many innocent people are languishing in jail, reported as "outlaw brain-breakers" or "demon mages" by their hysterical neighbors. If these "witch hunts" continue like this, half the province will either be living their lives in jail or swinging at the end of a hangman's noose. House Kaze likes this kind of enthusiasm, and has been taking notes on Hihhod's methods of "interrogation."

Provincial Capital: Venturetown (33,300 people). An ordinary city distinguished by the fact that each year, tens of thousands of pilgrims from across the region begin a walking journey from here to the High Temple of Light and Dark in Epiphany as a rite of spiritual cleansing.

Provincial Overview: Province Alragin

Located in the dead-center of the Middle Kingdoms, this province has often considered itself the heart and soul of the Middle Kingdoms. The culture here hasn't changed for thousands of years, and the Church of Light and Dark is every bit as powerful as the ruling lords, although it does not ascribe to the belief that magic and psionics are evil. Any sign of a pro-Imperial sentiment here is set upon most fiercely from the citizens. Saying a good word about the Emperor will get you stern glances and a verbal harassment (under the best of circumstances) or a challenge to a street fight or a formal duel (in the worst).

House Alragin: Die-hard enemies of the Emperor. House Alragin has been preparing for the next "war of independence" ever since they lost the last one. After many years of low-key training, recruiting, and weapons acquisition, House Alragin is ready for war. Alragin soldiers (3-6th level) already have well-drilled plans for destroying all of the Imperial Garrisons in their province. The Alragin nobles routinely send taunting and threatening messages to the Imperial garrison at Epiphany (most others have been withdrawn) in a half-hearted attempt to get the Imperials to start a fight they know they can't finish.

Provincial Capital: Equinox (40,000 people). The people of this stark, angry and desolate city expect war at any moment. Otherwise, it is similar to Ghowell, the capital of the Cureau Province.

Provincial Overview: Province Elial

A bountiful harvest region, and the breadbasket of the Middle Kingdoms. The province makes a ton of money raising and selling a rare strain of blue-red apple that is the key ingredient in "red indigo" wine, a potent and popular alcoholic beverage exported throughout the realm and the world.

House Elial: As the wealthiest Noble House in the region, these guys have more to lose if the war for independence fails. Thus, the Elial nobles are reluctant to jump on the anti-Imperial bandwagon. They support the bid for independence but would rather see attempts made through diplomatic channels and are not vocal opponents of the Imperial House. House Elial will be the first to surrender (and beg forgiveness) when things go badly in the Holy War. They also don't feel comfortable with the persecution of sorcerers and psychics, which they feel are in direct contradiction with their religion's teachings. To avoid conflict and persecution themselves, the nobles have declared the use of magic and psionics illegal, but do nothing to enforce it. While House Elial doesn't make these feelings public, they are well known by the members of other nobles of the Middle Kingdoms and have earned the disdain of the Overlord and Lady Daera. Most zealots fear that House Elial has succumbed to the sin and decadence of the Western Empire. Emperor Itomas is already looking at ways to exploit the Elial Province as the weak link in the rebel movement and will consider making the Elial House the new Overlord of the Region, assuming they survive.

Provincial Capital: Gadlantine (25,500 people). This city has only about 6,000 more people in it than the average city in the province. Nobody knows why all of the cities in this province are so small or of such similar size, but in Gadlantine's case, the low population owes itself to a recurring cycle of Goblin Fever.

Provincial Overview: Province Skryme

A province bordering the Tarldet Plains Region in the Southern Middle Kingdoms, and known for its farms, orchards and vineyards. The people here are predominantly human (85%) and devout members of the traditional Church of Light and Dark. Religious fervor isn't insane here and they look at the extremists with concern. This province has never seen the horrors of civil war either and while they'd like to return to being an independent kingdom, they don't feel they are suffering in any way under Imperial rule. Thus, the folks here are more understanding and tolerant of other people's views and philosophies.

House Skryme: The Skryme nobles base their political decisions on the omens and divinations of the cadre of priests and priestesses living at the Provincial Palace. Many say that House Skryme's residence more resembles a massive temple compound than a noble court or political center. Lately, the palace has drawn large numbers of pilgrims wanting to stop by for a blessing or encouraging vision before venturing south into the Scarlet Mountains or West into the Kighfalon Plains ("heathen country"). Along with this influx of pilgrims are a fair amount of whackos of every stripe, including a newly formed cult of particularly disturbed individuals who believe themselves hand-picked incarnations of *Chantico* and are causing no small amount of mayhem as they spread this insane god's teachings. House Skryme has made no effort to crack down on these religious splinters, seeing them all as manifestations of a single divine truth, whatever that means. This particular policy is alienating House Skryme from the more radical and zealous nobles of the Middle Kingdoms, making fertile ground for a secret alliance between this house and House Elial.

Provincial Capital: Brandywine (75,000 people). An unusually large city for a provincial capital, Brandywine is the regional center for wine, beer and liquor production (As devoutly

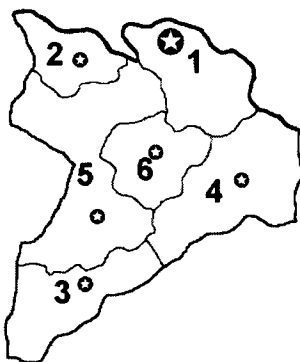
religious as the Middle Kingdoms is, it's not forbidden to drink alcohol ... at least not yet). The city also has large religious festivals once per season, at the times of solstice and equinox.

Provincial Overview: Province Cureau Southern Middle Kingdoms

A farming and cattle raising province on the edge of the Kighfalon Plains. Political tension is especially acute here, since every civil war concerning the Middle Kingdoms has started in this province. The people here are spoiling for a fight, and armed groups of farmers and city folk routinely go across the border into the Kighfalon Plains to rustle livestock, burn crops and pick fights.

House Cureau: The Cureau nobles routinely give inflammatory speeches and pep rallies to whip the people into an anti-Imperial frenzy. The House thinks it is ready for a civil war, and has enormous stockpiles of weapons, food, and other vital supplies hidden in great caches throughout the province. It is widely whispered that many of this House's younger members are addicted to the war-drug **Gorvon**. Or so say the merchants who bring huge quantities of the substance into the region. House Cureau and its people have had a profound impact on Overlord **Krugazi's** decision to stand against the Emperor and join the bid for freedom.

Provincial Capital: Ghowell (29,800 people). A rapidly growing city, as patriots from all over the region continue to flock here in case the border of their region needs to be defended against "the Imperial tyrant from the West." This locale also attracts rebels and dissidents from provinces beyond the Middle Kingdoms and even outside the Empire (1D6 x 1,000 will arrive every three months until war starts). The city has been in military mode for months, with food and water stockpiling and rationing, strict curfews, and revved up weapons and armor production. The city temple is churning out hundreds of new priests of Light and Dark to fight in the impending civil war.



Provincial Overview of the Middle Kingdoms

- 1 Regional Province Provincial Capital: Epiphany
Ruling Noble Family House Kaze
- 2 Hihhod Province Provincial Capital: **Venturetown**.
Ruling Noble Family House Hihhod
- 3 Cureau Province. Provincial Capital: Ghowell
Ruling Noble Family House Cureau
- 4 Skryme Province Provincial Capital: **Brandywine**
Ruling Noble Family House Skryme.
- 5 Elial Province. Provincial Capital **Gadlantne**
Ruling Noble Family House Elial
- 6 Alragin Province Provincial Capital Equinox.
Ruling Noble Family House Alragin.

Regional Overview #9: The Scarlet Mountains

Racial demographics for the Scarlet Mountain Region:

45% Human
16% Dwarf
10% Kobold
14% Orc
15% Other

Note: The statistics above do not include the slave population which is roughly equal to half the number of free citizens in the region (50% Orc, 12% Ogre, 14% Goblin, 10% Kobold, 4% human, 10% other).

The Scarlet Mountains, like the Koerdian mountain range, is home to strong and proud mountain people. Within the last century, this mountain chain has revealed vast mineral deposits, touching off a major mining boom. Like the Koerdian Mountains of old, prospectors, miners, and freebooters from all over the realm are rushing here in high hopes of striking it rich. This is a heady time for the Scarlet Mountains, with the promise of wealth and opportunity everywhere.

The region is rich with precious stones such as diamonds and emeralds as well a strange type of cream-colored marble with crimson veins. So far, huge quantities of the stuff have been extracted and cut up, but House Valocek, the regional power, wisely controls how much "Blood Marble" can be on the market at one time, thereby keeping the prices for it sky-high. But that doesn't mean scores of people aren't making a killing mining and selling valuable rock. Even at the cut-rate prices at which miners unload their finds, many of them retire very, very early, and the rest make a very good living. Of course, many spend their money as fast as they make it. As long as the mining boom lasts (and it looks like it will continue for at least another 30 years), this region will fit the stereotype of the rich, overindulging Western city with more money than it knows what to do with — extravagant, wild and sometimes depraved and cruel.

All of this money has caused the region to develop rapidly over the last 50 years. Consequently, many of the towns and cities have brand new roads, defensive walls, aqueducts, sewers, etc. There is also a rapidly growing population of alchemists and freelance practitioners of magic, a sign that the region has finally made it as a major Western population center.

House Valocek gets a percentage of all the mineral wealth mined in the region, so money has been pouring in. Pouring in so fast that they've been too busy counting it, partying and making new political connections in upper society to seriously concern themselves with ruling the province. As a result, crime has skyrocketed in the mining region and a large number of minor



injustices go by unnoticed throughout their domain. Chief among these is a growing conflict among rival mining consortiums and some of the lesser Noble Houses, which are battling to control the major mines, banks and commerce. If left to grow out of hand, this squabbling could turn **into** civil war and disrupt the mining operations. There's some bad blood in these mountains, and whether or not House Valocek will be able to keep all of the various parties from going at each other's throats remains to be seen.

The people of **this** region have always been independent and headstrong. In this isolated and hostile environment, they've learned to live without much Imperial interference or assistance. Now that the Western Empire has reasserted firm control over the region, plenty of the common folk here aren't very happy about **it**. Feeding this feeling of rebellion **is** House Valocek itself, which both resents Imperial authority, and has been courted by the Middle Kingdoms to **join** with them in a plan for open rebellion. When their "War for Independence" finally comes (presumably in the next 18 months), the people of the Scarlet Mountains will have to decide whose side they are on. Right now the nobles are talking about supporting the Middle Kingdoms, but they don't know. Actually, even if they do throw their lot in with the rebels, it would be from a political and financial viewpoint (supplying the rebels with food, goods, and moral support); they'd never take up arms against the Empire. They also presume that they are so important to the Empire right now, that Emperor Itomas isn't going to level the region for its sedition, at least, not until it's through **with** the Middle Kingdoms; and by that **time**, the Scarlet Mountains can switch back and

make amends before it too gets put to the Imperial sword. It **is** a dangerous game these arrogant nobles are playing. They just better make certain their assumptions are correct before they make a move that could destroy the current structure of nobility in their region. Emperor Itomas is only understanding and forgiving to a point.

Regional House: House Valocek

Like House Oslof of the Koerdian Mountains, the Valocek nobles are hardy mountaineers who have ruled their mountain chain for ages. House Valocek used to be one of the poorest Major Houses, living off the forbidding mountains without even a trace of precious metal to mine. As House Oslof grew fat from **its** rich mines of gold and silver, House Valocek scrambled to make a sparse living quarrying marble and stone; exporting slate, granite and other cheap stone. They also had a modest but strong fur trade, and some lumber operations. Parts of the hilly lowlands were adequate for farming, although sheepherding and the wool trade probably represented the **main** secondary market. Tiny fishing villages dotted the rugged, rocky coastline, and one major seaport (well, major for the region, small compared to most; 18,000 residents) prospered below the foothills at the western edge of the Scarlet Mountains. The rest of the coastline is either sheer cliff facings at the edge of the sea, or jagged, rocky hills and thin forest that rise **into** the Scarlet Mountains; not the nice sandy beaches of Lower Barraduk.

Fifty years ago, Valocek miners discovered a large amount of unusual marble deep within the coastal mountains. It earned the rather unflattering name, Blood Marble, because the stone is a

creamy white colored base with crimson veins running through it. This unique and attractive marble became instantly popular throughout the Western Empire and within a decade, coveted throughout the world. The money House Valocek made from this (and continues to make today, selling for 3-5 times the cost of fine marble) was enough to clear its debts and finance more exploratory mining efforts in the heart of the mountains. Twenty years after the blood marble strike, Valocek-sponsored miners hit the mother lode: a chain of caverns encrusted with diamonds, emeralds and other precious stones. House Valocek began mining these caverns immediately and established a series of large garrisons to protect them. The precious stone trade coming out of the Scarlet Mountains skyrocketed House Valocek into prominence; ironically, as the old mining dynasty in the Koerdian Mountains was fading.

Learning from House Oslof's mistakes, the Valocek nobles are investing wisely in reasonable regional improvements, strongholds and the Regional Army. In fact, while living well, most are hoarding and hiding their fortunes while basking in their newfound prominence among finer society. In addition to local stockpiles, House Valocek has millions of gold pieces' worth of precious stones stored in secret depositories at *Caer Itom*, on the *Island of Lopan* and the *Island Kingdom of Byzantium*. They are also carefully controlling the flow of all their mineral assets to keep from flooding the market and keep prices at a relatively high and stable level. If anything, House Valocek is being a bit too cautious and frugal. They could release 30% more of the precious gems without hurting their market in the least, and they could triple the production of Blood Marble without flooding the market and still charge top dollar. Part of this comes from a lack of knowing how big and rich these mineral deposits really are, but so far, they seem quite impressive and there is no sign of diminishing reserves.

The Region's biggest problem is claim jumpers, bushwhackers, robbers, bandits and professional con artists and gamblers of all races, from all over the world. Raids on mining camps, especially small, private operations, individuals, and cargo caravans are constant. An entire army has been garrisoned near the major diamond and emerald mine and caravans from the mine get the accompaniment of a full battalion (640 men, including men of magic). The miners also have trouble with small bands of adventurers and daring opportunists sneaking into the mines and grabbing what they can before making a run for it — the wisdom being that even a few diamonds are worth the risk. Wildcats, freelance independent prospectors without a land deed or permission to do mining, are also swarming the region and constantly being arrested and escorted out. Again, the logic is that if they hit, they could make a fortune before they have to flee (if one gets caught he loses everything, so the trick is knowing when to quit). Dwarves and kobolds are the worst offenders when it comes to illegal mining operations. However, the authorities have gotten a pretty tight rein on the known veins and most wildcats haven't found much in other parts of the mountains.

House Valocek, like most Western Noble Houses, is greedy and power-hungry. Now that the house has struck it rich, its wealth and physical distance from *Caer Itom* makes it more inclined to defy the Emperor. House Valocek is tired of paying Imperial taxes and even more tired of hosting Imperial garrisons. If the Middle Kingdoms to the north successfully secede



from the Empire (unlikely), the people of the Scarlet Mountains Region would seriously consider doing likewise. To that end, House Valocek has forged a loose alliance with House Kaze, offering them a sweet deal on buying wholesale gemstones to help finance their rebellion. The money from selling the gems abroad can then be used to buy weapons and hire mercenaries. In return, House Kaze has agreed to similarly assist House Valocek if and when it decides to secede. House Valocek is unsure if House Kaze will honor the deal, but that's a risk they're willing to take.

Valocek nobles are tough from years of mountain life, but their recent wealth has totally gone to their heads. Dealing with this bunch can be irritating at best, and unbearable at worst. Valocek nobles are extremely haughty, brazen and rude. Most are also opportunists who will do anything to get ahead or make more money. Not surprisingly, the predominant alignment among the Valoceks and other nobles in the region is *miscreant*, which also helps to explain the Valocek family's history of back-stabbing each other. This tendency spills over in how the House conducts itself politically. No alliance they ever make lasts for long, a fact that the Middle Kingdoms would be wise to remember.

Important members of House Valocek include:

Overlord Adleth Valocek: Adleth is one of the very few female House elders in the male dominated Western Empire. She was born to a privileged noble family that, like many others in this region, has since gone the way of the dodo bird. When she was just 16, her father married her off to then 29 year old *Vadja Valocek*, the heir apparent to that Noble House's top seat. From the start, Vadja mistreated her in every way imaginable. When he inherited control of the Regional House, Adleth began plotting his death, knowing that without any strong male heirs, she could gain control of the house for herself. Wickedly intelligent and wily, Adleth manipulated the other lords of House Valocek to mistrust each other enough to kill themselves off in not-so-covert assassinations. Once her competitors had weeded themselves out, Adleth and her secret lover, Zhosa Sakai, murdered Vadja Valocek. Adleth bought off anybody else who would oppose her and assumed control of the Regional House. Being a not very important House at the time, nobody made much of a fuss. She hasn't looked back since.

Now 54 years **old**, she spends most of her time overseeing the regional mining operations, hoarding vast treasure troves, and figuring out how she can get House Kaze and House Itomas to play off each other in such a way that will make her the most profit. She plans to betray House Kaze at the most opportune moment, and, unlike some of the younger members of her family, is not foolish enough to think the Middle Kingdoms (or her region) can ever slip from the clutches of the Western Empire, at least not while Emperor Itomas is in power.

She knows there will be a fierce battle to see who controls the House once she dies, but she doesn't care. She's in this for herself, not the greater glory of some stupid Noble House she married into. Whatever happens after she's gone is somebody else's problem. In fact, the only reason she agreed to the secret pact with the Middle Kingdom, was to have something to hold over nobles beneath her. **Quick Stats for Adleth Valocek:** 9th level Noblewoman, diabolic alignment; age 54. Attributes: I.Q.

17, M.E. 15, M.A. 14, P.S. 12, P.P. 11, P.E. 14, P.B. 13 (used to be 15), Spd. 11; a spiteful, manipulative, vindictive and treacherous old witch if ever there was one. Given enough thought and if she lives long enough (she's the picture of health), Adleth will consider tearing down the entire Noble House before she dies.

Zhosa Sakai: This 59 year old hails from a now-defunct noble family. He had been a wealthy merchant in the region when he hooked up with Adleth, became her lover, and helped her bump off her husband, the late Lord Valocek, nearly 30 years ago. Since then Zhosa has gone soft. He nurtures an on-again, **off-again** addiction to Utopium, and has developed fairly unsavory sexual appetites. Adleth has very little contact with him anymore, but her memories of him in his youth keep her from having him eliminated ... for now. **Quick Stats for Zhosa Sakai:** 7th level Merchant and aristocrat of miscreant alignment; age 59. Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 10, M.A. 13, P.S. 14, P.P. 9, P.E. 8 (used to be 14), P.B. 10 (used to be 15), Spd. 9

Mrabe Mugullus: Mrabe is a big, dumb hunk, just the way Adleth Valocek likes her men. She found him seven years ago as an actor in a traveling troupe that played at the Regional Palace. After Adleth took Mrabe home with her for the evening, she kept him on to perform certain tasks Zhosa was no longer up to. Since then, Mrabe has stayed on as a second consort to Adleth and lives in the lap of luxury. He is very strong and good-looking, but dumb as an ox. He obeys Overlord Valocek's every command, despite the fact that he secretly shares his bed with her daughters, Nallo and **Evyie**, when she's away. Incredibly, nobody has realized that Mrabe is ... **um** ... servicing all the ladies of the Valocek House. If Adleth ever discovers this, heads (well one anyway) would certainly roll. Thankfully, **Sohn Valocek**, the eldest son, is too dim-witted to discover this for himself. If he did, he would use the information to blackmail his sisters. **Hmm**, maybe Mrabe isn't as dumb as everybody thinks. **Quick Stats for Mrabe Mugullus:** 6th level Actor (and obviously a very good one) and something of an opportunistic con artist of anarchist alignment. He knew the other nobles and family members would feel threatened by him, so he "plays" the handsome stud with the brain of a pea. He has no political aspirations or lust for power, he just wants the easy life, which is what he's got with Adleth and her girls. He has squirreled away gems and jewelry worth close to half a million gold and will flee at the first sign that he's overstayed his welcome. Age 35. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 11, M.A. 18, P.S. 21, P.P. 10, P.E. 17, P.B. 20, Spd. 15

Lady Nallo Valocek: Eldest daughter, Nallo is incredibly beautiful and spoiled. She lacks her mother's intelligence and ambition, although she thinks of herself as quite smart and hates it when she thinks people are making fun of her. This difference in personalities has caused many fights between daughter and mother. As a kind of revenge, Nallo (believes she has) seduced her mother's lover, Mrabe, and has kept a torrid affair with him for nearly two years now. She also appears at court events where she makes a spectacle of herself. The rest of the time she amuses herself by spending obscene amounts of money. She is a notorious flirt, and has at least a dozen suitors waiting on her hand and foot at formal events and dress balls. Nallo has no intention of ever letting one of these suitors get anywhere close to her and her money; she just enjoys stringing them along. **Quick Stats for Nallo Valocek:** 6th level Noblewoman of miscreant

alignment; age 30. Attributes: I.Q. 7, M.E. 9, **M.A. 11**, P.S. 9, P.P. 8, P.E. 10, P.B. 23, Spd. 12

Lady Evyie Valocek: Adleth's youngest child is a quiet, plain-looking young woman who has wisely rebuked the many suitors who want her hand in marriage as a means of attaining wealth and power. Evyie possesses a sharp intelligence, has a keen sense of politics and an uncanny ability to predict the actions of other nobles and political figures. Adleth keeps her on as a political observer and advisor. Evyie has no romantic ties yet (she considers her ongoing fling with **Mrabe** to be of no consequence), keeping that part of her life open for a political marriage somewhere down the line. She sees great things for the Valocek Noble House and feels much closer to it than her mother or siblings. She secretly desires to be the next Overlord, but knows her mother would never give her the satisfaction. Unbeknownst to her mother, Evyie has procured the location of every secret treasure vault of the Noble house and has secretly plundered parts of them (not enough to be noticed without a complete inventory) to finance her own schemes. **Quick Stats for Evyie Valocek:** 5th level Diabolist and aristocrat of anarchist alignment; age 21. Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 15, M.A. 12, P.S. 9, P.P. 14, P.E. 12, P.B. 9, Spd. 15

Lord Sohn Valocek: Eldest son, but a middle child that mother never really wanted or liked. He looks too much like his abusive father so she has always treated him with cold disdain and deliberate cruelty. He is a traditionalist along the mold of the Oslof nobles and hates his mother, so he can not fathom how his mother, a mere woman, could have the brains to ascend to Regional Overlord and the will to hold the position. Sohn never knew his father, but resents his apparent weakness for falling to the guile of Adleth. He has also heard the rumors that mother had his father murdered and believes them to be true.

Sohn is a deeply bitter and dark man, angry that both of his sisters have high-ranking positions in the House while he is treated like a bastard and left to live an idle life of contemplation and misery. Sohn yearns for more purpose to his life, but can't seem to find it. Maybe he could have real power if he slew his mother and sisters, but the truth is, he simply lacks the brains and backbone to do so. **Quick Stats for Sohn Valocek:** 5th level Nobleman of anarchist alignment; age 26. Attributes: I.Q. 7, M.E. 8, M.A. 10, P.S. 19, P.P. 13, P.E. 12, P.B. 20, Spd. 12

Regional Capital: Colfax

Population: 122,500

Human: 49,750

Dwarf: 19,600

Orc: 16,400

Goblin: 12,250

Kobold: 7,350

Other: 17,150; does not include the slave population of approximately 57,000 (40% **Orc**, 20% Ogre, 10% Goblin, 10% Kobold, 5% Ratling, 15% other).

Colfax is a mighty city built on the ruins of an ancient **dwarven** citadel. The city was initially a scavenger camp formed by adventurous miners while they prospected in the mountains. While sinking a new mine shaft, one group broke through to an abandoned underground complex. News spread quickly of the complex, which is the stronghold of **Kabarras**, a legendary

dwarven warlord who fought in the Elf-Dwarf wars. As the story goes, he built an incredibly large underground base where he and his army could take cover and not worry about enemy troops finding their way inside. **Kabarras'** complex was one of the last sites where the legendary rune weapons were produced.

Since then, hundreds of adventurers have descended into the depths of the catacomb-like ruins. About 25% never return to tell the tale, while those who do report finding nothing but dust, dirt, cobwebs and the occasional rat and Ratling. Most folks figure that the legendary treasure either never really existed or was recovered centuries ago. Chances are, nobody's ever going to find anything. But if the rumors are true, there could be an arsenal of rune weapons, magic items and other secrets deep underground somewhere, untouched since the end of the Elf-Dwarf Wars. And nobody can explain the many disappearances. The Regional House has requested that the catacombs be sealed off, but bold and foolish adventurers can find their way in any number of ways. **G.M. Note:** Exactly what the catacombs may be are left to your imagination. There may be a secret passage to an entire underground city still occupied by dwarves or kobolds, or there could be a dimensional nexus that carries those who pass through it to some distant land, like the Yin Sloth Jungles, Great Northern Wilderness or Land of the Damned, or to some other world or dimension. In any case, it is difficult to escape **and/or** takes years for the people to travel back home, and home probably isn't Colfax, so they're never seen again.

Colfax is a growing city that gets more and more cosmopolitan every year. Many first-time visitors can tell that the city is patterning itself after the big, old cities the Western Empire is famous for.

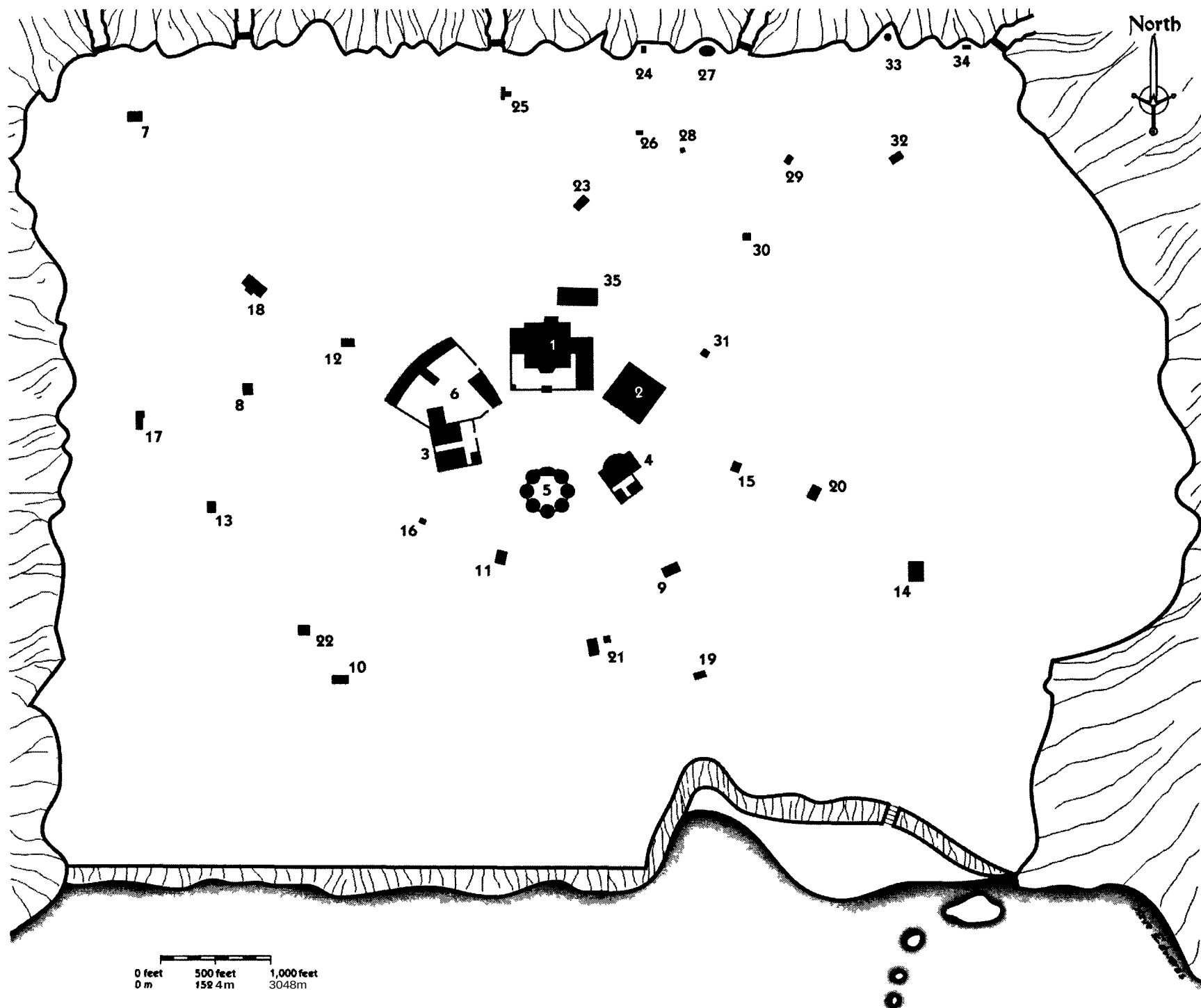
Colfax Description & Code Key

House Valocek Regional Plaza

The literal and figurative center of Colfax. All major roads radiate out from this area, like spokes on a wheel. Folks traveling from one side of town to the other must at some point, travel on the "ring road," a circular roadway going around the grandiose Regional Palace and other buildings of this plaza. Some say the road is designed that way so everybody ends up admiring House Valocek's grand palace.

1. House Valocek Palace. A huge and opulent series of buildings that are topped only by the Imperial palace in **Caer Itom** in terms of size and dignity. The complex includes the servants' and slaves' quarters, visitors' wings, guard chambers, and the regional military headquarters. House Valocek is quite uptight about receiving uninvited guests, so this compound is heavily patrolled and guarded by magical and non-magical minions. Rumor has it that a Summoner working for the Regional House summons demons to watch over the palace, but that's just street talk. Or is it?

2. Valocek Family Vault and Mausoleum. This incredibly large, imposing structure houses every deceased Valocek since the family began. All of them are inside stone sarcophagi that are slotted into tight-fitting chambers bored into the walls of the mausoleum. Throughout the building are statues and other commemorative pieces celebrating the more influential members of the family. The building is heavily warded so only true members of the Valocek bloodline may enter. Outsiders who do get past the wards will have to contend with a trio of demon Guardian



Stones in the central sarcophagus chamber. Why all the security? Because every thief in the region knows that Valocek nobles are put in their coffins wearing their **precious** jewelry and with other valuable items (magical and non-magical). Whoever gains access to this mausoleum could make a fortune robbing the dead.

3. Regional Garrison. Houses nearly 3,000 troops, mostly infantry. The mountainous terrain makes cavalry and siege engines impractical, but House Valocek is putting together an aerial cavalry unit (approx. 400 troops), with half the crack soldiers riding trained gryphons imported from the Isle of the Cyclops and the others riding magical flying carpets. When this unit is up to full speed, it will become a fearsome addition to the Valocek military, making the region very, very difficult to invade.

4. Imperial Garrison. This battalion (640 troopers) has been bought off with handsome bribes and privileges. Thus, these guys look the other way as House Valocek does whatever it wants, and they submit fraudulent progress reports to their Imperial overseers in Caer Itom. Eventually, Emperor Itomas will discover what's going on, and the Imperial garrison will be punished severely, while House Valocek will be reprimanded and lose political status.

5. Wizard and Warlock Towers. This ring of towers is where House Valocek provides housing for the ever-growing legion of wizards and warlocks it hopes to incorporate into the Regional Army and mining operations. So far, nearly 100 wizards and 142 warlocks are in House Valocek's sway. These spell casters mostly range from 3rd to 7th level, with a dozen 8th to 10th level.

6. Military Stables. House Valocek keeps over 300 pure-bred, top-notch war horses here, but has little use for them since the mountainous terrain is so rocky and treacherous. So, it is slowly selling all but 50 of these prized animals to raise money and make room for the 200 gryphons (and flying carpets) of the Army's special aerial cavalry. The stable master is a 5th level Cyclops soldier who oversees a staff of twenty 2nd and 3rd level Cyclops animal trainers and 30 human soldiers. Together, they break the untrained gryphons brought in and mold them into highly responsive, obedient war steeds. The Valocek stables have 64 fully trained gryphons on the ready. Another 10 are in the process of being trained, and a shipment of another 25 are on the way from the Isle of the Cyclops; due to arrive in about three months. Special troops are already training on one hundred flying carpets, with another 120 due to arrive any day.

Commercial District

A fairly average marketplace, but the continuing prosperity of the region it has attracted a number of new upscale businesses, including some alchemists' shops and other magic-oriented businesses.

7. Churyid's Cheroots. A tobacco and snuff shop operated by Churyid, a 5th level **dwarven** scholar who has retired from his teaching days. He is a fountain of trivia concerning smoking, tobacco, excavation and **gemology**. He also is the only dwarven merchant in town who will tolerate elves and kobolds in his place.

8. The Magic Hat. An **elven** alchemist who designs and sells hats, headbands and helmets with all sorts of magical properties.

A favorite item is his "Thinking Cap," a 60,000 gold piece oddity that boosts the wear's I.Q. by 3 when worn. Another type offers +1 to save vs psionic attack, another +3 to save vs magic illusions, another +2 to save vs possession, another makes the wearer +2 to save vs Horror Factor, a helmet with glass eye pieces confers **Nightvision** 4x per day (equal to a 5th level spell), another to see the invisible 3x per day, a headdress that incorporates a Fright Wig, and similar. If the magic can be made into a charm or medallion, it can be made into a magic hat at similar cost. Most of the items noted above cost 32,000 to 45,000 gold and would fetch 25% more in foreign lands.

9. Hack 'n Slash. A quality swordsmith run by a combat-scarred dwarven veteran who will regale any customer with stories of his military career and battle experiences. His retellings of battles are excessively graphic in gory detail, especially when he describes how he received each one of his scars. Spooky. Excellent quality from a staff of fellow dwarves and kobold slaves. Dwarven and kobold quality blade and blunt weapons are available.

10. Gemworks. A nice jewelry store, with gem studded rings and jewelry at 20% less than book prices. The shop has been robbed three times this year, so the owner is skittish about unsavory looking characters (like adventurer types). He has hired a 2nd level Wizard and a 3rd level air Warlock as beefed up security.

11. Potions by Postlewaite. A specialist in potions of every kind. Has a huge inventory of pre-made potions, especially healing potions and superhuman strength (which seem to always be in high demand), but can make potions to order within 24 hours (and with a 40% surcharge). Also offers a wide variety of poisons, faerie drinks, and "experimental" potions at 300 gold.

12. Travellers' Way Station. A cozy little inn that can accommodate parties of up to six. No giant-sized **humanoids**, please. Great food, quality Western Brandy and other drinks.

13. The Burning Wick. An ordinary-looking candle shop with a large selection of candles in all shapes, colors and sizes.

The owner quietly caters to "discerning clients with special needs" (i.e. adventurers, thieves, assassins and adventurers), offering such customers magic fumes, and magical candles that release venomous toxins into the air as they burn. Each type of poison candle is based on the five common poisons (see *Palladium RPG*, 2nd Ed., page 264). Each has the same distinctive smell/taste as the poisons and inflicts the equivalent of a single dose of poison for every ten minutes exposed to the deadly toxin (five **foot/1.5 m** radius). Most burn for 30 to 60 minutes. Typical cost is 400 to 600 gold per 60 minute candle (cost varies depending on the amount of damage it inflicts). He also offers a candle that magically keeps people who have already fallen asleep, to remain so for as long as the candle burns (30-120 minutes) regardless of the volume of noise around them; cost 450 gold. The "night-light" is another magical candle that burns all night (12 hours) and cannot be blown out by breath or wind (can be smothered); costs 100 gold. **Note:** These candles are some of the latest creations of Western Alchemy and are all the rage in Caer Itom and other northern cities in the Empire.

14. Corvok's Wrestling School. For 1,750 gold, you can take a three month long crash course in wrestling that will confer all of the skills and bonuses of the Wrestling physical skill. A popular place among free **orcs**, ogres and kobolds in town.

15. Imperial House of Pancakes. Seems like there's one in every town nowadays.

16. Heraldry Shop. Makes up fake standards for ordinary folks, but the proprietor is an expert in heraldry and can recognize any legitimate standard. He'll explain a standard's meaning and history for 20 gold. Fake standards cost 10 gold. Very popular among men at arms adventurers.

17. Mobius Zeketri, Scribe. No relation to the former Emperor, a 7th level scholar, trained **calligrapher** and forger with ties to the thieves' guild and corrupt nobility.

18. The Grinning Goblin. A popular tavern and pawn shop that's part of a large franchise chain. Food and drink quality here is better than average.

19. Eagle-Eye Optometry. Prescribes, grinds and sells a variety of vision-enhancing eyepieces and lenses. Mostly spectacles and custom-made monocles for nobles and rich merchants. Also makes telescopes of every size and power; sells a lot of them to the Imperial military, sailors and pirates. Also sells magic crystals for 30% higher than book prices.

20. Speedyquick. A messenger and courier service that boasts 24-hour service to anywhere in the region, no matter what the parcel or distance. The place is owned and run by a gnome and his three brothers. Folks suspect they use **teleportation** magic to deliver their parcels and messages, in addition to flying carpets. Costs range from 100 to 2000 gold depending on the distance and size of the package; add 100 gold per 100 pounds (45 kg).

21. Sal's Meat Market. Sal is a skinny elf who runs the business with his gorgeous wife. It is a sizable shop that sells all types of fresh and preserved meats. The slaughterhouse and livestock are located outside and down wind of town. They have 40 employees and 200 **orc** slaves. Pork and fish are sold at half the normal prices (cousin owns a huge pig farm).

22. Opeireth & Raoto. This odd pair of detectives are constantly bickering with each other. Both are humans, one tall and thin, the other, short and fat. Opeireth is a 4th level mercenary and 2nd level wizard, and Raoto is a 6th level thief.

Miner's Quarter

A number of diversions are here for the miner just getting back from the tall country. Easily the rowdiest and most lawless section of town.

23. 1,001 Western Delights. One of the most famous brothels in the region. Boasts a large variety of beautiful women of most every racial persuasion, each skilled in the "arts of the bed-chamber." High **priced**, but said to be worth every penny.

24. Rev's. This seedy establishment is inside what used to be a small warehouse. A 15 gold cover charge is required for admittance. Inside, there are several stages of dancing girls of various races, usually surrounded by crowds of hooting spectators. A grumpy dwarf runs the bar, where you can get lousy food and strong rum. Aside from being a favorite place for workers to hang out, Rev's is also an excellent place to meet underworld contacts. The bouncer, an 8th level Wolfen assassin who fights with paired cudgels (and takes freelance work), knows about every illegal operation in town.

25. Wormy's. A rough-and-tumble alehouse. On weekends, the patrons play a game where they all speak backwards for the

duration of the night. Anybody failing to play along is shown the door.

26. Magic Stones. A shop that sells only magic crystals and stones at prices 20% to 50% higher than book price.

27. The Skull and Rose. The best-known theater in this part of town. Part of the attraction is that the place is said to be haunted by the ghosts of the troupe who died here 15 years ago, all crushed when the roof collapsed. Although the ghosts of the actors are never seen during performances, the curiosity factor keeps people coming, and many claim to have "felt their presence" or seen **strange** shadows or heard odd noises (the latter are tricks performed by the owners to keep people coming). Jugglers, tumblers, acrobats, bards and plays are all performed here. Wednesday is amateur night.

28. Roscoe's Chili House. If people knew what actually goes into the "secret sauce," they'd never return. Let's just say that here, you really are what you eat. How Roscoe gets his "ingredients" is unknown. Popular among the monster races, avoided by most humans, elves and dwarves.

Gemworkers' Quarter

The fastest-growing district in town, filled with plenty of shops catering directly to Colfax's miners and prospectors.

29. Goldstone's. A place where one trades in whatever raw gemstones and minerals he's dug up for quick cash, and no questions asked. **Farnham Goldstone**, a stoic human who looks a lot like an elf (thus spawning rumors that he's a homely elf or a Changeling; none of which are true), offers 33% of a stone's finished value. He'll also purchase jewelry at 20-33% depending on the quality of the materials and the craftsmanship. Goldstone then finishes the product himself and sells the cut and polished stones to any one of the dozen or so wholesalers in the district at a 50% markup, who in turn sell the finished stones to retail jewelers (for precious stones) and tile workers (for blood marble). Goldstone has been in business for quite some time and is quite reputable.

30. Gem Cutter. Will divide, reshape and finish rough and finished stones for a modest fee. Decent work.

31. Jeweler. One of Farnham Goldstone's many buyers. Sells good to high quality gems and jewelry at prices 30% to 50% less than what the same item would cost most anywhere else.

32. Appraiser. The lovely **elven** lass behind the counter here is an ace mineralogist and can accurately identify the worth of any raw or cut stone. Many of the raw gem buyers in the district, like Farnham Goldstone don't like her because she lets miners know the real worth of their find. Charges 3% of the final appraised value of the stone, and her reputation for extreme honesty prevents miners from thinking she's hiking the appraisal to get a higher commission.

33. Boruskus. A sage who's become quite an authority on the underground labyrinth of **Kabarras**. He claims to know of several secret ways in and out of the catacombs and will share them with interested parties ... for the hefty price of 500 gold.

34. Sculptors' studio. A dozen artists make statues out of marble and stone. Quality varies from fair to very good depending on the artist. Prices tend to range from 100-500 gold for small statues, 2,000 to 6,000 for life-sized ones. Double the price for custom jobs made to the customer's specifications.

35. Colfax City Bank. A prospering operation that caters to miners who need a place to stash their money while they go back out to the "tall country." Run by a cartel of rich humans who skim a little from each deposit.

Residential District (Eastern)

A sprawling and expanding collection of beaten-up, old houses and shacks where Colfax's poor live; 60% are nonhumans. The northern half of this district is the city slave pens (house approx. 20,000). A small auction house offers a small selection of slaves for sale every Friday morning.

Notable residents include:

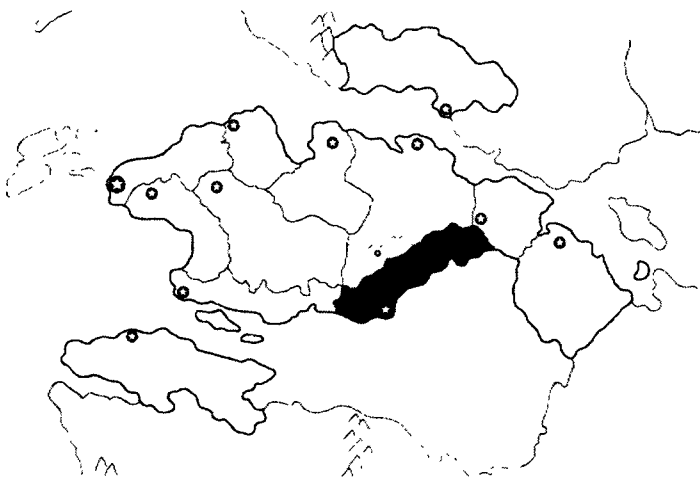
- **Lord Kabarras!** An insane, old dwarf (9th level **merc**) who claims to be the Warlord Kabarras, disturbed from his long sleep by miners looking for his ancient treasure. He roams the **streets**, telling this to anybody who will listen and warns them that the old ruins hold secrets best left alone. According to those in the know, the old dwarf went down into the ruins and disappeared for 35 years before resurfacing, crazy as a loon.
Among his rants and raves is the claim that Blood Marble is really cut from the petrified body of a slumbering Old One (the red spider web patterns being the veins and blood vessels of the monster; a disturbing thought), and that the diamonds and emeralds are part of the hidden royal treasury.
- **Nacaulay**, an 8th level thief and leader of a crew of highly skilled thieves who are planning a burglary of the House Valocek family mausoleum. They have been acquiring information and magic items to pull off this heist for the past three years, and are on the verge of finishing their preparations. Nacaulay vows not to be taken alive if this caper goes wrong. One of their members is a 5th level Warlock.
- **Nate Kingsdyl**, a human miner who made a big strike a few years ago, exposing a vast vein of blood marble, but had his claim jumped by another bunch of miners. Ever since, he's been obsessed with revenge.
- **A secretive trio:** A **Summoner**, Witch and Diabolist (each 6th level) who, together, have discovered the key to awakening an unholy and terrible monster living deep beneath the city in a long-forgotten chamber sealed off during the Elf-Dwarf Wars. Ironically, the crazy old dwarf has tried to warn people about these three, but nobody will believe him.
- **Lieutenant Niles**, an ex-Imperial Janissary who retired early to try his chances out here. He's new to town and looking for some helping hands on his first expedition. This guy is honest, fair, and can handle himself in a fight (6th level soldier). He also doesn't know the first thing about mining and is risking his life savings. His wife and three children are back home at Caer Kurgas.

Residential District (South)

Colfax's more affluent housing district. The district itself hasn't grown much during the city's rise in wealth, since the district is built into a mountainside and has little room for expansion. Thus, the district just keeps getting denser and denser. Housing conflicts and land disputes are commonplace, and a rash of burglaries has plagued the wealthiest households.

Notable residents include:

- **Ivan Kiflon**, a gentleman-thief responsible for about a third of the recent robberies in the district. Nobody suspects this personable and handsome gent, said to be a lesser noble out of favor with his family (9th level thief, M.A. 21, P.B. 18, human).
- **Meliki Mitqel**. Another gentleman-noble who purports to be a retired sea captain in the Imperial Navy. In reality, he is a Changeling and retired 8th level pirate. Retired may not be quite the word, as he is very active as the head of the burgeoning Sea Dog thieves' guild. He and his crew are responsible for the majority of the other robberies in the district.
- **Kline Furnor**, a noble who swears he will find and murder whoever is stealing from him if it takes him forever.
- **Rick Mills**, a 9th level thief who runs a prominent, low profile thieves' guild in the commercial district. All these burglaries have him concerned that rival gangs are muscling in on his turf.
- **Nyx-Zyon**, a 6th level Mind Mage often hired by nobles, the wealthy and local authorities to use his powers to help ferret out crooks, con artists and spies. A prominent but feared elf with steel blue eyes and an unnerving smile.



Provincial Breakdown of the Scarlet Mountains

There are three other Provincial Houses in the region. The lesser houses that run them squander their wealth on drugs, parties, grandiose palaces and not so discretionary spending. It's only a matter of time until one of these Houses spends itself into a hole it can't get out of and begins hornoring in on another province's mineral rights. After that, border disputes and perhaps a minor civil conflict may break out, but as long as House Valocek makes its money, it won't care to get involved.

Provincial Overview: Braska Province

This province is located deep in the heart of the mountain range's tallest and most treacherous peaks. Here the mountains reach 10,000 and 11,000 feet (3048 to 3353 m). Getting around is very difficult if one is not flying, so many of the province's magic shops specialize in flying carpets, flying brooms, and spells, scrolls and potions of flying. Some nobles and wealthy individuals have imported tamed gryphons and the occasional pegasus (super-rare and expensive). A tribe of Rahu-Men also

live in the province high up in the mountains, and it is rumored, one of the fabled monasteries that trains **Undead Hunters** is also located among these peaks. **Note:** The Undead Hunter, Witch Hunter, Bounty Hunter, Spy and other cool O.C.C.s can be found in the **Yin-Sloth Jungles** sourcebook. Some modification for use in the Second Edition will be necessary.

House Braska: Even after House **Valocek's** very heavy taxes, House Braska still makes a remarkable profit from its mining ventures. It is mining its mineral deposits very aggressively, and estimates they have at least 50 more years before their gem deposits begin to dry up. House Braska is tired of the huge profit-sharing tariffs House Valocek has levied against them, so they have begun several **new**, secret mining projects deep in the heart of their province. One of these mines is yielding a mammoth amount of emeralds and copper, which House Braska has no intention of sharing with their Regional Overlord — or anyone else.

Provincial Capital: Jomorra (43,500 people). The oldest city in the province. The folks living here chafe at the fact that House Valocek chose to make Colfax the Regional Capital and not Jomorra. Jomorra has little crime and is a very wealthy place, but it's hard to reach location in the mountains makes it impractical as a regional nerve center and experiences frequent shortages of supplies that must be imported — like textiles, fruit, liquor, and many other goods.

Provincial Overview: Ewendell Province

Even more rocky and dangerous than Braska Province, but with the added hassles of terrible weather, bitter cold, and scathing winds. To keep itself fed and supplied, this province has a large number of spell casters who conjure needed supplies (Create Bread and Milk scrolls sell like hotcakes here) or provide much-needed amenities (like the Diabolists who affix expensive permanent protection by **infliction/mystic** drain cold wards on houses' floors to keep them nice and **toasty** warm).

House Ewendell: This small, ambitious house hasn't had as much luck mining in its province, but it's output has begun to increase. Unfortunately for house Ewendell, most of the mineral strikes in their province have been less valuable stones, such as tourmaline and tiger's eye. The house has, **however**, discovered a large deposit of iron ore and some small deposits of silver.

Provincial Capital: The Town of Ewendell (11,000 people). House Ewendell founded this community and has never relinquished control of it, so they're very protective of this place, as difficult as it may be to live here. New people almost never come to this small, wind-blown place. Those who are born here live particularly hard lives, but treat these conditions as if they are normal. Because of the fierce wind and weather here, air warlocks are particularly valued members of the community, for obvious reasons. In fact, three of them sit on House Ewendell's advisory council.

Provincial Overview: Province Nodd

A less forbidding environment, allowing for numerous settlements to spring up in mountain valleys and meadows. This province also borders the Scarlet Sea, so most of the roadways from the provincial capital lead to the various trade ports on the ocean, where miners can ship out their strikes for quick and easy money. Most of the foreigners who come here to mine the

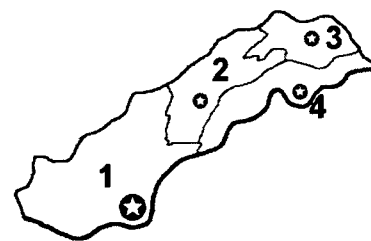
mountains arrive in this province. Those who decide to stay rarely leave Nodd Province, because it is so beautiful and nice compared to the hostile conditions found most elsewhere in the region. As a result, some of the mineral strikes are running dry from over-mining.

House Nodd: This house has invested a good deal of the money it has made from its small mines in improving its sea-ports and establishing stables to breed and train gryphons (a hot commodity in these parts). Elder Lord Nodd got the idea from House Valocek's aerial cavalry. The stables have had poor results in breeding gryphons in captivity, with 46% of the eggs not hatching.

Provincial Capital: Toleroc (66,000 people). This city between the sea and the eastern arm of the mountains just keeps growing and growing. Thanks to the steady stream of mineral profits and growing seaside trade, **Toleroc's** economy can accommodate its population and is growing at a manageable pace.

The Hostile Mountains

The alpine forests, scrublands and snowcapped peaks of the Scarlet Mountains are home for a number of dangerous animals. **Peryton** breed along the seaside cliffs, and Chimeras, Suckers, Nippers, and Fire Worms, as well as the Western brown and black bears, wolves, panthers and mountain lions, stalk the mountain forests and lowlands. Meanwhile, small bands of kobolds, troglodytes, **orcs**, ogres, trolls, giants and wild Ratlings call these mountains home, as does the occasional dragon and sphinx. Entities, Boogie-Men and Tomb Worms haunt ancient ruins, and Devil Diggers, **Gruunor**, Rock Crawlers and Serpent Rats are found throughout the region. Even the occasional **Loogaroo** or Gigantes from the Old Kingdom makes its way to the Scarlet Mountains. **Note:** For reasons unknown, Faerie Folk do not inhabit these mountains.



Provincial Overview of The Scarlet Mountains

1. Regional Province. Provincial Capital: Colfax.
Ruling Noble Family: House Valocek.
2. Braska Province. Provincial Capital: Jomorra
Ruling Noble Family: House Braska.
3. Ewendell Province. Provincial Capital: **Ewendell**.
Ruling Noble Family: House Ewendell.
4. Nodd Province. Provincial Capital: Toleroc.
Ruling Noble Family: House Nodd.

Note: All ruling families reside in their provincial capitals.

Regional Overview #10: The Tarldet Plains

Racial demographics for the Tarldet Plains

Region:

58% Human

2% Kobold

15% Orc

10% Goblin

3% Hobgoblin

3% Ogre

9% Other

Note: There are comparatively few elves, dwarves or Ratlings here. The result is this region has an inordinately high number of **orcs** and goblins as both freemen and slaves. Another anomaly is that the **orc** and goblin freemen are amazingly loyal to their human compatriots and to the Empire. This has to do with the strong influence of the early human frontiersmen and warrior nobles who conquered the land and indoctrinated the inhuman barbarians. These loyal **orcs**, goblins and a smattering of ogres are generally regarded as inferior, second-class citizens but are not abused or mistreated and live happy, productive lives. Most are farmers and laborers. The slave population is roughly equal to 25% of the overall free population.

The Tarldet plains were settled around a thousand years ago, during a big colonization push toward the east. In the region's early days, a huge amount of Imperial resources were thrown at eliminating tribes of inhuman barbarians, clearing land for crops and buildings, and supporting the early colony towns while they got on their feet. After two hundred years, the bulk of the Imperial aid ceased as the region was able to fend quite well for itself as the *eastern frontier* of the Western Empire. A position Tarldet citizens bore with pride.

For nearly 500 years after that, much of this region was militarized, with a long string of fortresses and garrisons holding the line against hordes of **orc**, goblin and ogre barbarians from the Old Kingdom. That these hordes never broke through to the interior of the region speaks for the courage and resourcefulness of these border troops.

After a **while**, the monster hordes stopped their attacks. Without the constant threat of invasion, the Tarldet nobles and their subjects lost the one big thing they lived for — defending the Western Empire. Without the threat of invading **nonhumans**, Imperial colonists now felt it was time to press further east, which they did, founding the Old Kingdom Frontier. Unfortunately, despite the accomplishments (or actually because of them), within 100 years, the Tarldet Plains lost its hero status and became just another territory in an ever-growing Empire.

That wasn't easy for **these** proud frontiersmen. Although there is lots of good land to farm and grasslands in which to graze sheep and cattle, the Tarldet Plains have never been in-



credibly prosperous. This is in part, because they border the Middle Kingdoms which offers a great number of resources and is much more developed. Perhaps needless to say, this has created a certain amount of disdain and jealousy toward the rebel kingdom. It irks the people of Tarldet that the upstart and **rebel-**

lious Middle Kingdoms get preferential treatment when the Tarldetians have been nothing but loyal. They understand why, it's just irksome — Tarldet is considered a comparatively undeveloped wilderness **frontier** region. Without some uniquely valuable resource like gold or diamonds, etc., it has minimal value and low political standing (it's one of the new kids on the block). Of course the region has strategic value and it will grow in importance and Imperial attention once the Emperor launches his campaign of conquest eastward. A period the fighters of Tarldet anticipate with great enthusiasm.

The Regional and Provincial nobles have been notified by the Imperial House that it believes the Middle Kingdoms are gearing up for a new rebellion. They have also made an effort to stockpile food, supplies and troops in Tarldet in anticipation for this conflict, because every time there is a civil war with that troublesome region, the Tarldet Plains loses access to the western half of the Empire — and the markets to which it normally sells its cattle, produce, spices and grains. With those markets cut off, prices drop and nobody makes much money. Worse, it places them and the Old Kingdom Frontier in jeopardy of attack from the monster races of that barbaric land without support from the rest of the Kingdom.

If (when) civil war erupts with the Middle Kingdoms, the Tarldet Plains people will be called on to attack the rebels. An opportunity the Tarldet Warlords are looking forward to. Not only is it a chance to renew their hero status as some of the greatest warriors in the realm (their cavalry horsemen are legendary), but they will get some satisfaction battling their unpatriotic rivals. In addition, the Emperor has placed 30,000 Imperial Troops at the disposal of the Tarldet Regional House (scattered throughout the realm). Emperor Itomas hopes that the Middle Kingdoms can't possibly fight a two-front war and will surrender quickly (not likely, this war will last at least 1D4+1 years). Despite their positive attitude and enthusiasm, the warriors of the Tarldet Plains are not what they used to be. Without wars and conflict, the fighting skills and experience of the military have seriously atrophied since its glory days. The level of experience of the average soldier 2nd-3rd level. The famed cavalry is better, at 3rd to 5th level, but still is ... Thus, when the war breaks out, the people of the Tarldet Region will be just as surprised as everyone else at how poorly their armed forces do. An embarrassment that will haunt Tarldet for years.

Since everybody here figures that the civil war with the Middle Kingdoms is a foregone conclusion, the more cowardly nobles and wealthy cattle barons have emergency travel arrangements to flee the region at the first sign of war. People everywhere are hoarding money and food, expecting there to be serious shortages within 12 months of the conflict. The immediate economic downside to this is that the businesses in the cities are experiencing unpredictable sales patterns with sudden and unexpected rushes to acquire one or two particular goods, suffering from shortages due to hoarding, and seeing periods of very poor sales because people are afraid to spend the money they have left until they have to.

Regional House: House Wenglid

The Wenglid nobles are rough and tumble adventurers who don't take no for an answer and rarely back down from a fight. So far, this roughneck attitude hasn't gotten them into serious trouble, but it's bound to. They, like most **Tarldetians**, live on their past reputation as great warriors and heroes, and while most of the nobles are the equivalent of knights, with experience from crusades or military service (most are 4-8th level knights), they tend to overestimate their abilities and underestimate their opponents. Worse, they highly overestimate the skill and abilities of their Regional armies and local militias.

House Wenglid's greatest concern is their troublesome neighbor to the west, the Middle Kingdoms. Many families of the Tarldet Plains were kicked out of the Middle Kingdoms on religious grounds. Most of these people, including House Wenglid, still bear a grudge about that. Furthermore, House Wenglid continues to receive healthy subsidies from the Imperial House to finish developing the region and is completely loyal to the Western Empire.

For the time being, things are pretty quiet in the Tarldet Plains, and a number of Wenglid nobles are taking time to sponsor grand hunts, games and tournaments. House Wenglid is famous for running exotic games of chance and skill, such as archery championships, sword fighting, wrestling, boxing, staging huge mock battles, enormous chess games using captured monsters as pieces, and **marathon** tournaments of the **bloodsport** known as "Pegs" (an ultra-violent version of **rugby** that incorporates special spell casting players and uses sharpened stakes as the ball). They also always participate in the (**olympic-style**) games held in Lopan and have won their share of events. Once a year, the house sponsors a ten day long tournament of games that the entire region is invited to. The winners of these games are awarded large sums of money, land grants, and even positions at the noble court. The House Wenglid already has several ace champions on hand at their court who represent the house during this festival, but they are always looking for others. The House rarely loses during the games festivals they sponsor, leading some to wonder if they would cheat if an embarrassing loss appeared imminent. Given the cowboy mentality and overall scrupulous to anarchist alignments of the Wenglid nobles, it's possible but not likely. They both won and lost incredible sums of money betting on such games, and the nobles of the House in general seem addicted to this form of entertainment.

House Wenglid is one of the largest Noble Houses in the Western Empire, with over 500 members attached to the family line. Family ties are extremely strong among the Wenglid nobles, and any insult or injury to one of them is considered an action against the entire family. In fact, minor members of almost every other Regional House have lost their lives from offending Wenglid sensibilities. No such event has occurred since the Reconstruction, but the gossip-mongers among the Empire's top social circles whisper that something of that order is due to happen soon.

House Wenglid's major players include:

Regional Overlord Tyree Wenglid: Elder Lord of the house and a real hardcase. Tyree is fond of barking orders, and he expects everyone to follow them to the letter. He is notorious for running personal inspections of his military garrisons and chew-

ing out any officers who don't make the grade in his book. This habit has caused some resentment among House Wenglid's military troops, although most consider it the cost of being an elite fighting force. The Regional army is currently 30,000 strong with 8,000 raw recruits (1st level) undergoing training in anticipation of war. The Army is broken down as follows: 25% cavalry (3rd-5th level), 25% archers (3rd to 4th level), 5% practitioners of magic (1st-3rd level, with a few 5th-7th level), and 40% foot soldiers (2nd and 3rd level); most ranking officers are not over 6th level.

While Tyree is a capable enough leader, he is getting on in years (pushing 70) and spends most of his time watching and betting on arena games. Rumor has it that he will bet on anything, and that he has a spooky ability to convince others to do the same. Rumor also has it that prominent figures in House Kaze, House Valocek, and House Clynn owe Tyree hundreds of thousands of gold pieces in old markers. **Quick Stats for Tyree Wenglid:** 9th level Knight of anarchist alignment; age 69. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 13, M.A. 22, P.S. 17, P.P. 12, P.E. 10, P.B. 11, Spd. 9; many of the physical attributes used to be 2-4 points higher, but age and years as a knight have taken their toll.

Lord Ramo Wenglid: Ramo is nearly 50 and will assume the position of Overlord when his father dies or abdicates. This long wait has not bothered him as it has given him years to go adventuring and crusading. For the last 15 years, Ramo has had to content himself with making diplomatic trips to Caer Itom, overseeing the construction of newer and grander arenas across the region, and building a new, strong army. He has no particular plans for the region, but does look forward to the impending war. **Quick Stats for Ramo Wenglid:** 10th level Knight of scrupulous alignment; age 48. Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 11, MA. 18, P.S. 23, P.P. 19, P.E. 14, P.B. 12, Spd. 15

Lord Kange Wenglid: Ramo's younger brother and ace game player. Any game of the mind you can imagine, Kange has played. Having never had a shot to rule the **region**, he's spent the last 30 or so years entertaining himself at court, but has kept abreast of the politics of the region. His playing of sports and other games has brought his mind to a razor-sharpness. He is an exceptional strategist, diplomat and politician, as well as a cool-headed gambler. Kange now spends much of his time living in Caer Itom, where he engages in politics and has won the favor of Emperor Itomas and most of the Imperial Court. Lord Kange loves his brother, but sees Lord Ramo as a short-sighted, impatient, straightforward warrior, not very skilled at seeing the big picture or accurately evaluating the situation. While Kange has no aspirations himself, he fears Ramo will charge into things without thinking them through completely. For example, Kange does not share his brother's confidence about the Regional Army and fears they are unprepared for the battle to come. **Quick Stats for Kange Wenglid:** 3rd level knight and 8th level noble of anarchist (with leanings toward unprincipled) alignment; age 43. Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 20, M.A. 18, P.S. 13, P.P. 15, P.E. 12, P.B. 14, Spd 14

Lady Jaya Wenglid: A distant cousin of the main family line, Jaya is a fetching young woman who has recently returned from the finishing schools at Caer Itom. She knows all of the social graces and intricacies of the Imperial Court. Jaya, in the grand tradition of many Western noblewomen, is a master spy and diplomat who keeps a close watch of Kange. She has se-



duced several members on **Kange's** staff and has them so brainwashed that they would probably betray their lord for her. Jaya also keeps close tabs on the celebrity game players who live at the noble court and has become a sharp game player (especially Chess, Ganle's Tears, Dropstop and other strategic games). While she is wily and cunning, Jaya is a little naive. Her faith in her ability to charm and smooth talk her way out of trouble will be her undoing, especially if she wages wits against her Uncle Kange. She is working for her father who, unknown to her, is secretly selling information to the Middle Kingdoms. **Quick Stats for Jaya Wenglid:** 6th level professional spy and noblewoman of anarchist (with leanings toward miscreant) alignment; age 23. Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 15, P.S. 12, P.P. 20, P.E. 12, P.B. 20, Spd. 11

Arcadia — Regional Capital

Population: 96,000

Human: 45,000

Orc: 21,000

Goblin & Hobgoblin: 12,000

Ogre: 8,000

Other: 10,000

Plus 24,000 slaves; mostly orcs, goblins, and ogres.

Arcadia has played many roles in its time: military outpost, commercial crossroads, political headquarters, and social center. Nowadays, it is all of those things, yet none of them. True, Arcadia is the most central, most important city in the region, but there are a dozen other places in the region almost as developed. Simply put, the various city-states of the **Tarldet** plains have all become so self-sufficient that they don't need a super-strong central capital to keep them organized. And there's been almost no history of rebellion in this region, so cooperation and mutual support between the communities and Noble Houses is uncharacteristically strong and friendly.

Surrounded by farms, cattle ranches, and small villages (representing another 25,000 people), Arcadia has become the center of culture, learning and entertaining, as well as a strong commercial center. The annual games attract champions and fortune-seekers from throughout the realm, and the merchant sector is fairly cosmopolitan and offers products and entertainment from the sublime and practical to the exotic and immoral.

Most prominent are the city's numerous arenas and gaming halls. House Wenglid, like most of Arcadia's populace, is obsessed with athletics, sporting events, games of chance, and games of strategy (chess is a common form of entertainment among the rich and poor). The city's arenas are always filled, and some of the finest *gladiators* in the Empire either come from or enjoy early training at Arcadia. This penchant for sports, games and gambling has spawned numerous gaming halls and betting on events. All of this action has given birth to a powerful underworld that wars among itself for control of the betting parlors and the other vice houses in Arcadia.

Physically, Arcadia is an impressive place, with concentric rings of defensive walls spreading out from the center of town, like many other cities that have had long military histories. The

walls and guard towers remain kept up, and tower above the rest of the city. The streets are wider than usual, with every major intersection possessing a large outdoor plaza. These plazas are used to accommodate siege engines and colony wagons that move through town, but during special events and festivals, they give party-goers places to gather and have a good time. Over the years, many of the largest festivals have filled the city to overflowing and nonstop parties block traffic and create local mayhem.

With this combination of excitement, activity, hedonism, organized crime, drug use, and periods of **quasi-anarchy**, keeping crime down is impossible. Pick-pockets, muggers, con artists, professional gamblers, cheaters and roughnecks abound, especially during festivals and major sporting events. Thus, the local troops and constables simply try to maintain control and keep trouble out of the residential areas. These people work hard, drink hard and play hard. It is said in Arcadia, everything is for sale, and one can bet on everything from sporting events to the **weather** ... unfortunately, one must beware of losing his sense of morality as well as his money.

Arcadia Description and Code Key

House Wenglid Regional District

A majestic and imposing cluster of palaces, towers, administrative offices, stables, barracks and courtyards, all surrounded by a thick, high defensive wall. The Wenglid nobles often venture outside of this compound to attend public sporting and gaming events, as well as the annual gaming festival and other celebrations.

1. House Wenglid Palace. Home of the regional nobles.

2. House Wenglid Court Hall. Where the Noble House holds court, addresses public concerns, and entertains diplomats, imperial envoys and other VIPs.

3. House Wenglid Stables. Houses over 200 prize horses spanning a dozen different breeds from all over the world. The collective value of these animals is well over 10million gold.

4. Wenglid Family Temple. Contains shrines to Aco & the Juggernaut, the Pantheon of Rurga, and the pantheon of Ra. This is to accommodate the various faiths of House Wenglid's many, many members. House slaves, servants and the military are also allowed to worship here. The temple is overseen by Mother **Ashassa**, a 7th level Priestess of Light (Pantheon of Ra), Brother **Z'kinn**, a 5th level Priest of Light (Aco & the Juggernaut), and Sister **Valean**, a 6th level Priestess of Light (Pantheon of Rurga).

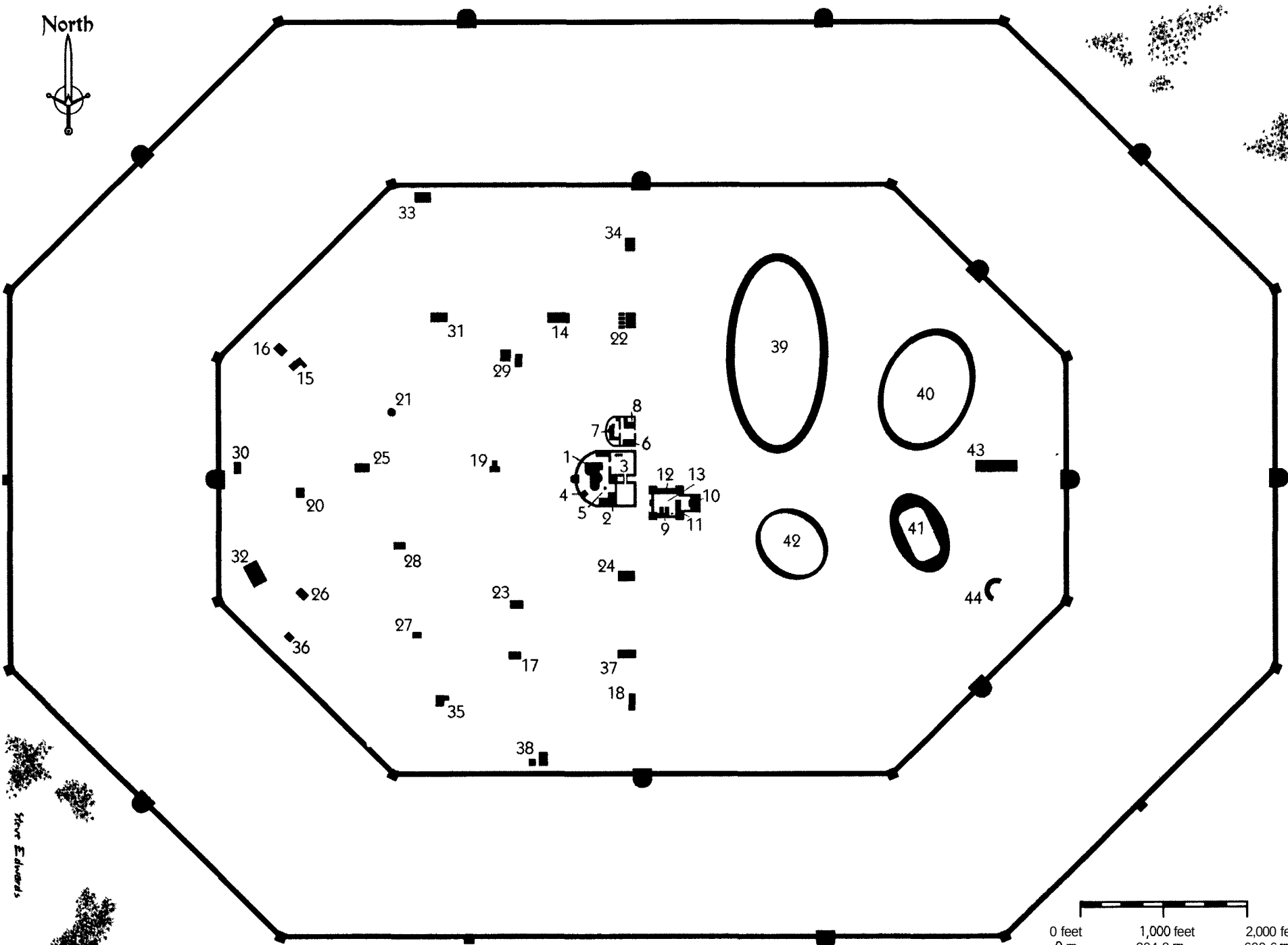
5. Wenglid Plaza. A large courtyard where the nobles and their servants can relax and meditate. In the center of this plaza is a mammoth statue-fountain commemorating the heroism and grace of Lord **Gorut** Wenglid, the family's founding member.

Local District — Arcadia Officialary

The main players of House Wenglid concern themselves only with matters of regional importance, so lesser members of the house are relegated to running the capital city. Those responsibilities are carried out at the Arcadia Officialary district, similar in design to the Regional District, but smaller, less opulent and less heavily guarded.



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6. Arcadia Municipal Building. Matters of city government are handled at this location, from passing laws to collecting taxes, to holding trials and mustering troops.

7. City Palace. Here's where the lesser members of the Noble House live and work.

8. City Barracks. A small military installation housing the city's military force, which is really just a single arm of the House Wenglid's regional military. With no wars to fight, however, these "city troops" just patrol the streets and bust law-breakers.

Imperial Garrison

A formidable fortress serving as an appendage to Arcadia proper. Staffed with a full Field Army of well-supported and well-supplied troops, these guys are ready for anything. Too bad there's nothing for them to do. If civil war breaks out with the Middle Kingdoms, these troops will rally House Wenglid to join them in the battle. 10,000 Regional Troops are garrisoned at the city, plus 6,000 Imperial troops. This is in addition to the volunteer militia of 19,000 — every red-blooded male in the realm thinks he's a great fighter from a long line of great fighters.

9. Imperial Barracks.

10. Command Center.

11. Armory.

12. Stables.

13. Training Yard and Parade Ground.

Commercial District

14. Oranda's Place. A brothel that's popular with sports spectators, party-goers, gladiators and city guardsmen.

15. Tattoo Parlor. A cheap, dirty and nasty looking establishment, but does good work. 50-300 gold for most tattoos; price varies with the size and/or complexity of the job.

16. Brothel. Run by a devious madam who takes in young runaways and presses them into service for her. Clients often get beaten up and mugged here.

17. Kobold Kuts. The kobold owner sells what some races would consider to be unappetizing cuts of meat and stews, but orcs, goblins and kobolds can't get enough of it. A house specialty is Rat Stew! Lots of slave owners shop here to supply their servant kitchens. Low prices.

18. Poetic Potables. This small tavern has a bunch of house specialties, like hardy dwarven beer, Western brandies and Champagnes, and several different wines from around the world. High prices (30-50% higher than average), but a quiet, safe place frequented by the wealthy, educated and aristocratic.

19. Mostly Mead. A dwarven establishment that specializes in ... you guessed it, dwarven mead. They only sell wholesale.

20. Wenglid Alchemist Shop. An average establishment that specializes in potions, powders and fumes at 10% below book prices. It is owned by one of the lesser Wenglid noble families.

21. Smoke and Mirrors. A 7th level Illusionist for hire, but he is also a major-league drug addict, so any custom hallucinations ordered are bound to be trippy. His two students (1st and 2nd level) are inexperienced but don't do drugs.

22. Firewood, Coal and Fuel Oil. Like the name says, this shop sells heating fuels. Since the winters don't really get severe

in the Western Empire, most of the business caters to energy-intensive operations like foundries, large restaurants (got to keep those ovens going), and smithies. Those who buy wholesale receive generous discounts.

23. Leatherworker. Belts, clothing, and even some armor. Fair work, fair prices.

24. Attorneys at Law. The three young humans who run this venture are cooking up a scheme to bring a small noble family into court to soak them for some hush money.

25. Engraver. Run by a paranoid schizophrenic who is convinced angels speak to him. The spooky thing is that they really do. A group of Spirits of Light have, for some reason, chosen this gentleman to convey their messages in the exquisitely beautiful (and somewhat disturbing) engravings he produces. High priced.

26. Ceramic Molder & Potter. A goblin operation that makes good quality pots, mugs, jugs and similar clay and ceramic items. Low prices and will make a mold of or try to duplicate anything.

27. Hob Nob's. A shop specializing in old board games and decks of cards. Most games cost 5-8 gold. A typical deck of cards costs 1-3 gold, depending on how fancy they are. A marked deck (sold under the table) costs 30 gold; loaded dice, 20 gold per pair. The proprietor and workers can direct interested parties to gambling halls, private card games and contacts to the Game Chiefs thieves' guild (of which they are members).

28. Jack Elshiegeth. Jack is a skilled carpenter who "scabs" outside of the city's carpenters' guild. While he's got a big customer base, other carpenters shun him.

29. Bricklayer. Not as fast as hiring an Earth Warlock, but much cheaper.

30. Sine Makir. A well intended orc calligrapher who, if he got over his spelling problem, would be doing great business. He is also a 3rd level thief/smuggler and member of the thieves' guild.

31. Cobbler. Can make shoes to accommodate giant-sized feet and feet of all shapes and sizes. Can also repair leather goods. Fair prices.

Industrial District

32. Textile Mill. Produces huge bolts of cloth for wholesale distribution.

33. Tannery. The aroma of the curing process here draws lots of carrion-eating birds, for some reason.

34. Pigment Manufacturing. Using ingredients shipped in at great cost from the Yin-Sloth Jungles, these ink makers brew an astonishing array of exotic colored inks. Prices are high, so most folks in this district don't buy here, but occasionally a noble will send servants to pick up several vials of special ink for about 200 gold per 4 oz. vial.

35. Stove Maker. Specializes in very sturdy, very heavy, pot-bellied stoves.

36. The Pottery Shop. Elsen NeKuy is one of the finest potters in town. Most of his inventory is standard work but he also does special commissions. Makes a lot of urns for holding the ashes of the recently deceased.

37. Wheelwright. Fixes broken wagons, carts and wheels. The owner is working on inventing a new wheel design that he insists will increase cart and wagon speeds by 25%.

38. Jock Helt, Miller. This guy is a burly drunk, fond of telling racy stories. He operates one of the few grain-grinding windmills in this part of town. He is also a known cheat who skims grind from customers. In addition, Jock is having affairs with at least five different married women, two of which are married to very jealous Regional soldiers.

Sporting District

Easily the most visited part of town. The four arenas are separated by densely packed streets of shops, betting parlors, gaming halls, taverns, stables, hotels and other businesses catering to the arena crowds. On weekends, this part of town becomes insanely crowded and busy, with folks from all over attending the games and the street festivals afterward. Crime is very bad here, but murder is low and most victims are drunk gamers and **out-of-towners**. With so many chumps to fleece and pockets to pick, the thieves here aren't especially violent. So if you stay alert, you probably won't get into much trouble.

39. Hippodrome. This elongated race track hosts lots of different horse racing events as well as races with exotic creatures, such as elephants, Silonars, **Perytons**, Gryphons, Melech (more of a battle than a race), etc., and the occasional foot race.

40. Arcadia Fighting Ring. A huge fighting arena where **bloodsports** of every kind are held. This place draws the biggest crowds in town. Betting is fast and furious.

41. Sports arena. Where less violent endeavors, such as boxing, wrestling, archery, track and field sports, and spikeball, hammerball and **fireskate** are played out. Team sports are very popular here, with Arcadia having several favored teams who play against out-of-town teams.

42. Old Arena. This old place isn't used much anymore except when there are more than two big events in town and the bigger arenas are already filled. The place is a crumbling shell of its former self, but the patrons keep coming here out of respect for it. It is frequently rented out to private parties.

43. Game Halls. A string of storefronts where sports patrons can play out various tavern games like pool, darts, knife and axe throwing, arm wrestling, and Dropcord, as well as roll dice or play cards while waiting to hear the latest arena scores.

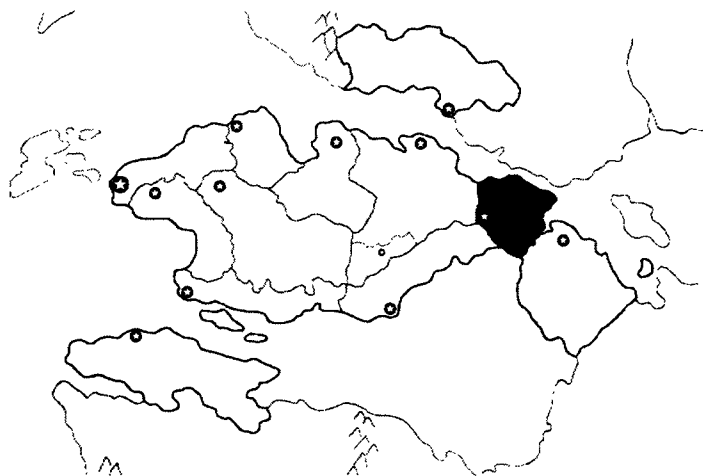
44. Betting Parlors. Another string of storefronts that are thinly veiled front operations for the various crews of organized crime who run the underground gambling rings of Arcadia.

Residential District

This is just one big circle extending outward from Arcadia's inner defensive walls. Generally speaking, the closer to the center of the city, the nicer the home. In Arcadia, how far you live from the arenas determines how rich you are. Most of the homes start outside of the inner city. Notable residents include:

- **Hansa Trygg**, a human gambler of great renown. **Trygg** is a minor psychic who **uses** his powers of clairvoyance and total recall (wonderful for counting cards) to hedge his bets and win at cards.

- **Skrolli**, a 9th level kobold assassin who enforces the will of the Game Chiefs guild — "the" guild in town as far as they are concerned. The Game Chiefs are the oldest and most powerful thieves' guild but there are a half dozen challenging their dominance. He fights with an enchanted spear and magical dagger that returns when thrown, but also uses poisons and usually strikes from behind without warning.
- **Grunt Axeblade**, a retired, 12th level, ogre gladiator who sometime gets hired to help train fighters for big matches.
- **K'mmta**, a Dragonman (5th level mercenary) from the Yin-Sloth Jungles who was enslaved to fight in the arenas here. He escaped a month ago and hides in the sewers of this district. All he wants to do is get home, but not before he breaks out his six fellow Dragonmen still in chains; he's living beneath the Arcadia Fighting Ring.
- **Clyd "Big Spender" Robard**. A 4th level Wizard whose compulsive gambling and high stakes gaming have made him something of a local legend. He must frequently hire out his magic abilities and possessions to pay off gambling debts.



Provincial Breakdown of the Tarldet Plains

The three other provinces of this region are famous for their openness with each other. There are no toll roads, no armed checkpoints, and no restrictions about traveling from province to province. For the most part, this has fostered a sense of brotherhood among the lesser powers of the Tarldet Plains. The impending civil war with the Middle Kingdoms should only unite and make them stronger.

Provincial Overview: Marsa Province

This province has always enjoyed slightly more bountiful harvests than the rest of the region, generating some rivalry and jealousy from other provinces. There is no secret to Marsa Province's success — **just** good soil, great weather, and skilled farmers.

House Marsa. Similar to House Wenglid in many respects except they're not as large (only 150 members to their noble family) and they're not obsessed with sports, gaming and gambling. House Marsa is a good-natured House that believes in working hard and playing hard. The Marsa nobles are loved by their subjects for the low tax rates, and for displaying an unusually strong sense of fair play, personal integrity, and respect for the law.

Provincial Capital: Arenatown (44,000 people). Cut from the same cloth as Arcadia, the only real distinguishing feature of this city is that it has eight medium-sized arenas, all specializing in one or two forms of public sport. Factions of the thieves' guilds virtually run the town, and the Marsa nobles are unaware of how powerless they really are when it comes to controlling crime and gambling in their capital.

Provincial Overview: Haishe Province

Haishe controls the region's entire shoreline along the Inland Sea, and has used it to export agricultural goods from throughout the region. Haishe Province has never aspired to become a major sea power because it is too poor to divide its efforts between seafaring and farming. Besides, the coastline here has never been the best for building large, deep water ports, or for launching newly built ships. Maybe that's why for so many people in this region, the sea is still mysterious and romantic; a faintly irresistible pull that draws more and more young people to the north, where they forsake the ways of the spade and plow for the sail, oar and **adventure!**

House Haishe: This house is seriously concerned with the brewing Middle Kingdoms situation and (rightly so) fears it will suffer the worst of the war.

Provincial Capital: Oceanside (37,000 people). Oceanside is the Tarldet Plains' only coastal city, although there are several large towns and numerous fishing villages. This settlement carries on trade with Phi, Lopan, and the growing trading cities of the Eastern Territory along the east shore of the Inland Sea and along the mouth of the Great River.

Provincial Overview: Bereggia Province

Bereggia is best known for its rolling grasslands, wide-open skies and sprawling cattle ranches. It has a desolate beauty to it and a very low population. Nearly 95% of the people here live in the province's capital city, leaving the rest of the territory a haven for hermits, wanderers, independent farmers, squatters and the occasional group of monsters or bandits.

House Bereggia: House Bereggia maintains as its military, a small force of crack horsemen known as the **Longriders**. These cavalymen are famous for being incredibly fierce warriors and expert shots with their longbows (3rd to 7th level, but only number about 800 strong). Their battlefield tactics are so superior, that they have repeatedly held off invading forces ten times their size through speedy hit-and-run attacks and ambushes. The Longriders carry a variety of distinct arrows, including special arrows with multi-blade heads that do 2D6+4 damage. Another distinct **Longrider** arrow is the "Whistler shaft" — an arrow with a specially fitted whistle on the end instead of a pointed head. The Whistler arrow emits a loud, piercing sound as it flies through the air that can be heard for miles on the flat expanses of the Tarldet Plains. The varying pitches of the five different whistler arrows each has a particular meaning: "use caution," "enemy approaching," "charge the enemy," "monsters," and "retreat." The Longriders have used whistler arrows as a means of relaying messages quickly across the province for centuries.

Provincial Capital: Hrodan (22,000 people). By all accounts, Hrodan is like many other regional centers in the Western Empire. It is a rather unremarkable urban center controlling a number of smaller towns, villages, farms and ranches. It pays its regional and Imperial tributes dutifully and contributes to Regional troop conscription without fail.



Provincial Overview of the Tarldet Plains

- 1 Regional Province Provincial **Capital** Arcadia
Ruling Noble Family. House **Wenglid**
- 2 Marsa Province Provincial Capital Arenatown
Ruling Noble Family House Marsa
- 3 Haishe Province Provincial **Capital** Oceanside
Ruling Noble Family House Haishe
- 4 Beregin Province Provincial Capital Hrodan.
Ruling Noble Family House Bereggia

Note All ruling noble families reside
in their provincial capitals

Regional Overview #11: The Old Kingdom Frontier

Racial demographics for the Frontier:

71% Human
3% Elf
2% Dwarf
10% Orc
14% Other

Note: Clearly, the humans would seem to outnumber the nonhumans in the Frontier territory, except this only takes into account Western settlers/colonists/citizens, not the indigenous population of this hostile wilderness region. There are only an estimated 145,000 Western citizens in the area. There are Western cities with populations bigger than that. If the colonists (and House **Clynn**) aren't careful, they are going to have a full-scale nonhuman revolt. If that happens, there won't be a single human, elf or dwarf who'll escape the territory alive.

This region was formed 110 years ago, during the height of the Civil Wars. The Empire had been ready for another colonization push eastward, but with the homeland so scrambled from savage infighting and civil wars, the Emperor had no resources or manpower with which to tame this wild frontier. Thus, he decreed that whatever land or particular region Western settlers could lay claim to and hold for five years would be theirs to keep and recognized as part of the Imperial Old Kingdom Frontier colony.

The five years came and went. The Emperor tried to live up to his promise, but by that time, his reign was nearly over and he hadn't the power to enforce his will outside the Imperial Capitol, much less in the Old Kingdom. Undaunted, reckless ad-



venturers and homesteaders continued to flood into this area. The people who colonized this region were mostly ordinary folk, small-time businesses, brigands, and lesser "nobles" with no title or privileges to speak of other than a noble name. The fighting and treachery among many of these settlers was terrible and frequent. One had to "hold" his claim to land with cunning, conviction and a notched arrow or strong sword arm. Bands and gangs representing land barons or cattlemen burned out farmers and small settlements, sometimes slaughtering an entire family or community; later blaming it on raids by the barbaric monster races. As for the "monster races," the battle with them was tremendous. Native **orcs**, goblins and other nonhuman people were massacred without remorse, causing them to strike back with murderous onslaughts of their own. The fighting was intense and bloodthirsty. The race to claim a piece of the Old Kingdom Frontier was worse than anything the American West ever experienced, and lasted for decades.

This all changed during the Reconstruction, or at least slowed down. Emperor Leopold the First sent the Imperial Army to establish some measure of peace and established *House Clynn* as the Regional noble power. Furthermore, he gave the Clynn family a great deal of financial and military support. Since then, borders, land rights, and provinces have been established and towns and cities have been allowed to grow without fear of attack from groups strong enough to steal these lands from **their** grasp. Some modicum of civility and order now exists and the Old Kingdom Frontier has become fairly self-sufficient (just

barely). The Imperial House feels the region is growing much more slowly than it should, but recognizes that the Frontier is still occupied by bandits, monsters and inhuman savages. House *Clynn's* disastrous leadership only exacerbates the problem.

The Old Kingdom Frontier is a forbidding country of hilly grasslands, forests, and rugged terrain. For any colonization effort to flourish here, it will take a hundred years of hard, steady work. So far, there has been a good start and the foundation of what could turn into a vital new region and provinces of the Western Empire. However, the territory has two big problems: nonhuman barbarians unwilling to relinquish their homelands without a fight, and the incompetence of House *Clynn*. If they are not careful, there might not be an Old Kingdom Frontier in another 20 or 30 years.

Once part of the Old Kingdom, the territory is populated by tribes of warlike **orcs**, ogres, **kobolds**, goblins, and other members of the so-called monster races. These beings have lived in this area since the end of the Elf-Dwarf Wars, and they don't take kindly to human interlopers invading their territory. It also doesn't help that House *Clynn* is being about as undiplomatic about this as possible, forcing the human colonists of this region and the nonhumans already living there into bitter confrontations. The House has also sent its pitiful Regional Army and battalions of Imperial Army troops into stupid battles they could never hope to win. An estimated 27,000 troops (plus mercenaries, adventurers and settlers, easily triple that number) have been decimated in reckless and poorly conceived military strikes and

entrenchments. This has dramatically weakened the Frontier's defenses, enraged the monstrous barbarian hordes, and given the nonhuman combatants the belief that the colonists are no match for them, and thus encouraging more raids, massacres and battles.

According to Imperial intelligence reports, they have reason to believe several **orc** and ogre warlords are gathering monster troops and enemies of the Western Empire to launch a three pronged attack into the Empire through the Old Kingdom Frontier. Their intent: to reclaim all of the Empire's "Old Kingdom Frontier" and make the Empire pay for its sins by pressing into the **Taridet** Plains and following the coast of the Middle Kingdoms, all the way to Upper Kighfalton! Razing every city, town, village, farm and port they encounter along the way! As incredible as this may sound, something similar has happened in the past, and appears to be happening again. Approximately 170 years ago, inhuman warlords were able to raise an army of 250,000 that set out on a march of destruction that swept from the Frontier zone to the edge of the **Vequerrel** Woodlands. The invading hordes were finally held and three quarters destroyed as the barbarians retreated in disarray. The monster forces had no plan other than to destroy. Once they had worked off a great deal of their anger, and had penetrated so deep into the Empire's interior, they became tired, weak, inadequately supplied and frightened. After that, they were easy to defeat. No similar attempt has ever been made, and the Western Empire has never been stronger. But then, the monsters of the Old Kingdom have never been provoked like they have by House **Clynn's** military affronts and sanction of innumerable atrocities, most without the slightest strategic purpose.

The **Clynn** Noble House denies any wrongdoing or foolishness on their part and argues that the Imperial intelligence report is woefully inaccurate. The seasoned Intelligence Team stands by its report and estimates that over 300,000 of the monsters have already assembled and that more are arriving every day. They fear that as many as a million may be gathering. In their professional opinion, the Old Kingdom barbarians may be preparing to launch the greatest offensive against the Western Empire in 500 years. Emperor Itomas has invited every member of the **Clynn** Noble House to come to **Caer Itom** to present their side of the story and to help determine the amount of military aid they think they'll need to defend the Frontier. In reality, he plans to torture and execute every last one of the sadistic, slothful imbeciles of the **Clynn** House. To avoid widespread panic, the Emperor has not yet released the intelligence information to even his most trusted noble lords. He has, however, sent 100,000 troops to Kighfalton on maneuvers, and has mobilized the Imperial Navy for wargames in the Inland Sea (six Black Demon Ships have also been dispatched). Not knowing what's going on, this has caused rumors to spread like wildfire that the Western Empire plans on invading **Phi and/or Lopan**.

Regional House: House Clynn

Before assuming control of the Old Kingdom Frontier, House **Clynn** was just another provincial house in West Kighfalton. They have a long history of evil deeds, sadism, cruelty, drunkenness, drug addiction, decadence and damaging mistakes born

out of their arrogance, cruelty and laziness. Since most of the family is already en route to the Imperial City where they'll be systematically captured, tortured and killed, there is little need to delve into their history or notable personalities. The Emperor is so enraged that he will make certain that every last **Clynn** is executed, striking one more ancient Noble House from history.

Regional Capital: Shinkasa

Population: 66,000

Human: 62,000

Kobold: 1,240

Other: 2,760

Does not include the 39,000 **slaves**, mostly **orcs**, goblins and ogres.

Shinkasa is a hard and brutal place. Little more than a fortified settlers camp. Every building, road and aqueduct here has the feeling of having just been thrown together at the last minute. Many visitors are left with the impression that this is an ancient city, crumbling down around them from years of abuse and lack of maintenance (which is partly true), rather than the beginnings of a new, central Frontier city.

The outer defenses of this city consist of a double set of high defensive battlements, broken up by guard towers. The towers here are designed to hold up to ten soldiers at once, or four soldiers and a small siege weapon. Typically, light ballistas are kept in the guard towers with lots of ammunition and other siege defense supplies. The outer guards of Shinkasa are hard-bitten and experienced Imperial soldiers who have repelled more than one attack on the city by bands of marauding **orcs**, ogres, or other "monster races." The walls are strong and sound because they were built by engineers in the Imperial Army. The rest of the city is the handiwork of House **Clynn**.

Inside, Shinkasa is a virtual police state, with humans living above the law and all other races (elves and dwarves) receiving extremely harsh treatment at the hands of House **Clynn** soldiers. Random violence against nonhumans is commonplace, and there has never been a single case in the city's courts where a human was successfully tried for any crime against a nonhuman.

Even though the number of human colonists keeps increasing here, the city feels a little deserted since all of the free nonhumans have left. (Would you want to live under conditions like these?) As a result, there is plenty of living space here, and many of the colonists build large, lavish homes for themselves — with the help of a few dozen nonhuman slaves, of course.

Overall, this is a rough and ready frontier town that's used to living by the sword. You're not likely to get rich living here, but you're bound to get lots of combat experience. For many newcomers, that's fine.

Shinkasa Description & Code Key House Clynn Family Compound

This is little more than a keep surrounded by a large wall and complemented by storehouses, barracks for the house military, stables, and recreational courtyards. House **Clynn** holds court here, but since things are so informal, there is rarely any need

for any sort of pomp and circumstance. However, security around and inside the compound is unbelievably tight — unwanted nonhumans found within 100 feet (30.5 m) of the outer walls are shot dead without warning by sentry archers. Any unauthorized people found within the compound are publicly tortured and executed to serve as a public message that House Clynn does not tolerate spies, thieves and assassins.

The Tower. Aside from the 400 or so soldiers guarding the House Clynn Family Compound, the rest of House Clynn's 10,000 man army is housed in this frightening structure. Sitting in the dead center of Shinkasa, this tall military tower provides a clear view of the surrounding territory for about 8 miles (13 km). That's good, since it lets the town know when unfriendly visitors are on the way. It's bad for morale, since it casts a shadow over parts of town during the day and serves as another depressing reminder of House Clynn's tyrannical presence here. The massive tower was the first major structure built in this region, and it is virtually indestructible. Only a prolonged bombardment by the heaviest of siege weapons or magic could topple this monstrosity.

Inner District

Shinkasa is divided into "ring districts" set about the core of the town (where the Clynn compound and the Tower are). These districts are haphazard mixes of residential, commercial and industrial buildings, with little thought to civil planning. The road, aqueduct and sewer **infrastructure** in this part of town is pretty extensive, but it drops off dramatically when you reach the outer districts.

The inner district is where the rich and powerful of Shinkasa live. Most of these folks are slavers, military contractors, magic makers, or practice some other specialized trade. Nonhumans other than elves or dwarves are allowed in this district only when accompanied by their "owners," or with a legitimate travel pass stamped by an official of House Clynn. Unaccompanied nonhumans will be detained, beaten and returned to their owners, arena or the slave yard, unless they can prove their freedom (good luck). If the nonhuman turns out to be free, then he will be fined for taking up the local authority's valuable time and warned about what happens to nonhuman spies and troublemakers.

1. Sword Loser. The dwarf who runs this weapons shop has a very dark sense of humor, which scares away all but the most stout-hearted of customers. Offers a good select of used weapons at 20% below book price, and a small selection of new weapons at standard prices.

2. Textile Mill. A medium-sized facility employing about 30 spinners. Their products are made out of extremely coarse wool.

3. Central Marketplace. An empty courtyard during the week, but it is filled with local merchants and farmers selling their wares on weekends and holidays.

4. The Old Kingdom Playhouse. What a miserable excuse for entertainment! Second-rate actors and bards.

5. Contents of Table. A place specializing in tables of every kind. The house favorite are tables whose top is really a large, glass-topped box in which you can display things. Popular among noble clientele, although folks from all walks of life shop here.

6. Butchers' Shop. Standard fare. Sells a lot of smoked and dried meats.

7. Stable. Travellers can board their horses here for 10 gold a night. Fee includes feeding and grooming. For an extra 5 gold per night, your horse gets top-quality feed.

8. Scents of Luxury. Sells scented oils and perfume. About 50 gold per ounce.

9. Plumber. Works the sewage and water piping for this section of town.

10. Alskis Brage, Alchemist and Sage. He's managed to run out all of his competition, so he's got a temporary monopoly on the sale of information and magic. Specializes in rings, charms and medallions and has a fairly good inventory (01-60% chance of finding most common magic items) but at a 30%-60% markup. Does not carry magical armor and has a poor selection of weapons and most other magic items (01-24% chance of having what one is looking for). He is a 9th level Alchemist of diabolic alignment, and associates with unsavory characters. Local gossip also claims he's a demon worshipper.

Outer District

The middle-class section of town. Theft and racial hate crimes are noticeably worse here, as is an overall high level of adventurers coming into town and tearing up the place.

11. Miss Enneren's Manners School. The young woman running this etiquette school is convinced that the Old Kingdom Frontier will become a nicer place if everybody just **learns** proper manners and etiquette.

12. Veterinary Hospital. A group of **Beastmasters**, Druids and Psychic Healers run this place and will heal any animal for a modest fee. Most of their paying work comes from the stables, farmers and the military. These guys will do work for the poor and needy for 1-5 gold, sometimes for free. They also cater to slaves and other nonhumans, who can't get help anywhere else.

13. Hammer and Nails. A local independent carpenter, blacksmith, and general contractor. Modest prices for sound work.

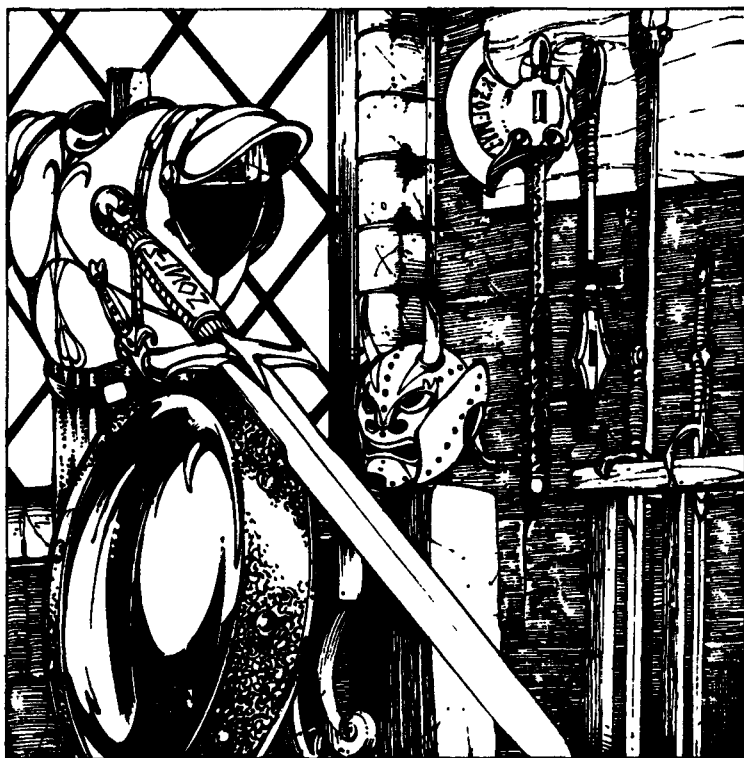
14. William Abernathy, Man of Numbers. A certified public accountant, investment advisor and moneychanger.

15. Antiquary. A run-down antique shop operated by an ancient-looking human woman (must be 90 years old). She is a widow trying to make ends meet. She'll offer nice people of any race milk and cookies and sometimes rambling advice.

The shop is extremely musty and dusty inside. Most of this stuff looks like it hasn't been moved in years. Hidden away in the shop, however, are a few treasures, **but** it will take 1D4 hours to find each one of them. One is a fine quality **Dwarven** battle axe (3D6+4 damage and +1 to strike), a ruby ring worth 1,200 gold but has a sale price of 100 (and she won't take a penny more), a pair of silver daggers balanced beautifully for throwing (+1 to strike) and only 50 gold! A bottle of fine Western brandy only 10 gold, a book on the history of the region for only six gold, a broken jewelry box with a piece of paper lining the bottom (it's a map of the region or a scroll with two first level magic spells) for only one gold, and a small vase-like jar with the lid sealed in wax and radiates of magic (contains the trapped essence of a greater Shadow Beast. Buyer beware!) for only two gold. **G.M. Note:** Feel free to add a few other items of choice that might be fun, funny or helpful for player characters willing to spend hours digging through this junk pile.

16. The Foamworks. A public bathhouse and the site of frequent robberies. It is also a successful beer-brewing operation. With all the money the owner has made, he's investing in a large, beautiful winery being built outside of town. One of the partners in this venture is a madam from a nearby brothel.

17. The Public Library. A feeble attempt to bring some culture to the place. While all the volumes here are a bit beaten up, the variety is surprising. No magical books, but books on almost every subject imaginable are available for reading on the premises. It costs one gold to enter the library. The money is supposedly used for its upkeep, but goes into the pocket of the Clynnns.



18. Splatterhouse Weapons Shop. Orguth and Splott are a pair of nasty-looking kobolds who manage this business. Its owner is unknown, but rumored to be one of the Clynnn nobles. These guys sell nonmagical weapons, mostly of orcish, ogrish and kobold design (the latter being excellent quality). Nobles avoid the place like the plague, but adventurers, bandits and thieves find its reasonable prices keep them coming back.

19. House of Necromancy. The 3rd level witch who runs this place sells lots of different preserved body parts for cheap rates (half book). She is doing this at the behest of her demon lord. Everybody knows the owner is a witch, but they are too afraid to confront her. That, and she isn't causing any trouble ... yet.

20. Produce Market. This place does a great business selling fresh fruits, grains, vegetables, jams, honey, and other farm goods. Being next to the witch's shop (#19) scares away only a few customers.

21. Temple to the Pantheon of Rurga. A separate, large, beautiful shrine exists for Rurga, Cirga, Panath, Kalba and Lista. Assassins have made the gruesome practice of placing the little fingers of their victims at the shrine of Panath, the god of treachery. Sometimes, these fingers will come with a notable ring or other piece of jewelry to let the public know who just got clipped.

22. Temple to Kirgi the Rat God. Really popular with youngsters and rebels.

23. Temple to the Gods of Light. Specific shrines for Osiris, Ra, Thoth, Isis, Horus, Bennu and Apis.

Wall District

The lowest-class section of town that's still within the safety of the defensive walls. In general, this is a poor and dangerous place to live, but not the worst (that's Outertown). This section of town is seedy, dirty and dangerous.

24. Rasiske's. A brothel run by an ugly, old human woman. Her girls are strikingly beautiful and can be had for a pittance. Rumor has it that clients sometimes never return from this place, their fate unknown to all.

25. Ruckers' Pawnshop. This place is a huge junk shop with dozens of bins of assorted bits and pieces. Old books, tired-out clothing, used armor and weapons, and other pieces of beaten-up junk clutter the place. Not even Rucker, the laconic human who oversees the place, knows half the stuff he's accumulated. While searching through a bin (takes one hour per bin), there is a 10% chance of finding something that is of superior quality. Rucker doesn't usually know the difference and charges half book price for most items. He keeps few dozen "prized" items behind the counter. These are quality weapons or jewelry and the occasional magic item which he sells for top dollar.

26. Brewery. A successful beer and moonshine brewing operation that supplies most taverns in this part of town. Also sells wholesale from a shop in the back at half price.

27. General Store. This neighborhood shop is frequented and loved by all in the area, but that still doesn't stop young thieves from knocking it off about once a month. One of these days, the neighbors are going to do something about it, if only they could find the courage. Prices are 10% below the norm.

28. Temple of the Cult of Chantico. Old, decrepit and very defaced, this place would get torn down except for the fact that violence mysteriously visits any city official who plans to destroy the place. So, it stays put, unmolested; a gathering place for the vile, scabrous and mentally imbalanced followers of Chantico (many of whom are drug addicts to boot).

29. Religious Supply Store. Caters to the more obscure and cultish groups, including some paraphernalia for demon and deevil worship. The owner is the leader of a growing cult that worships the demon lord Mictla the Devourer, and plots to summon it to this city.

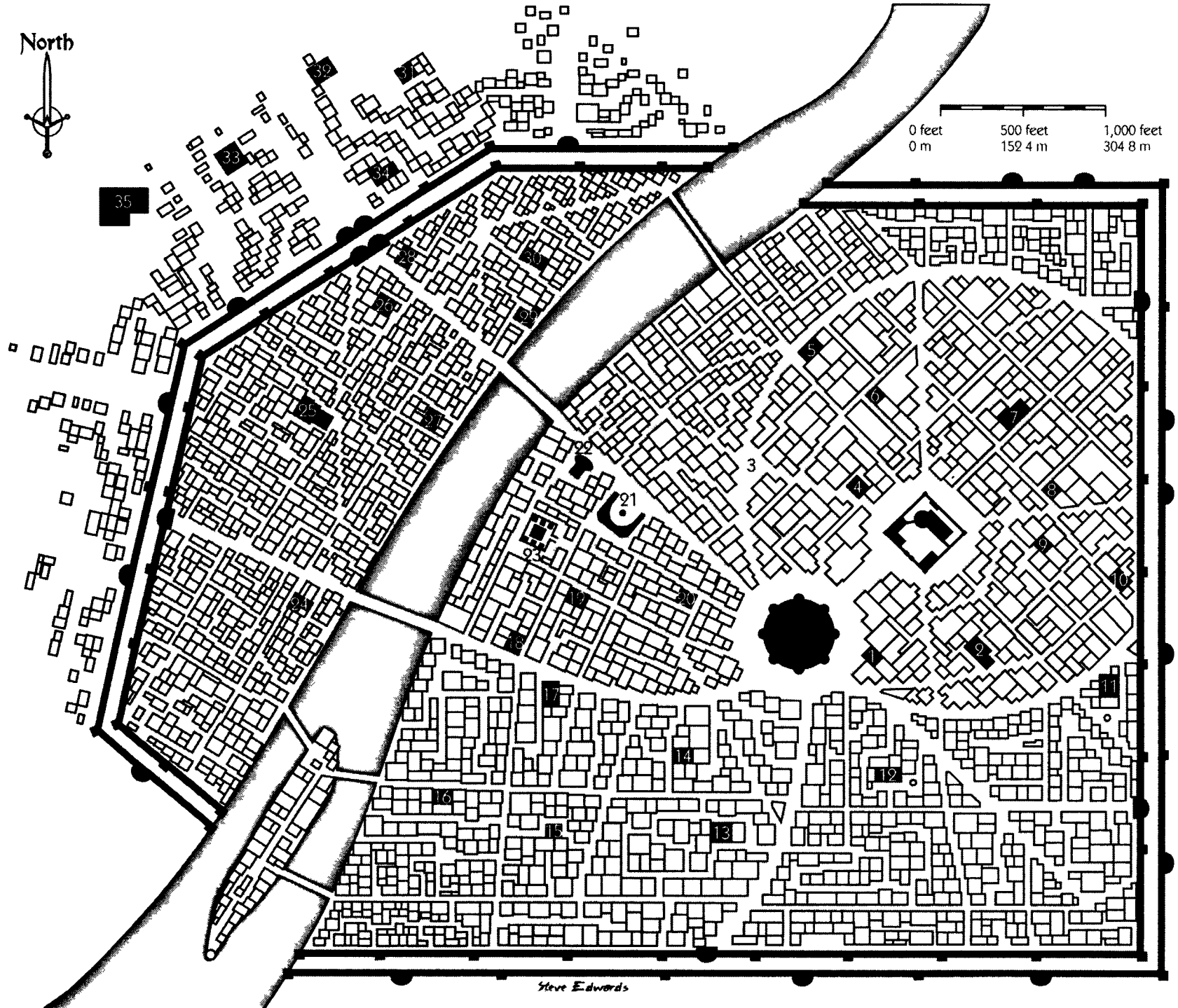
30. Herbalist. Phineas Phors is Shinkasa's most reputable herbalist. He has at least one sample of every known major drug and herbal concoction, as well as a couple of special substances he's made on his own. His prices are about 20% higher than list price, but their quality is assured. His special brews vary considerably in price and effect. Repeat customers all say they're worth it. Typical prices for those run up to 3,000 gold.

Outertown

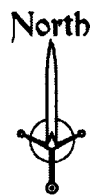
This is the last stop for anybody living in Shinkasa. City defenders and city ballistas are positioned at strategic points, but that's of little comfort to the poor souls who are caught out here whenever marauders attack the city. Mostly slaves are kept here, but really poor humans also live here. There are few legitimate businesses, with most buildings being ramshackle homes, taverns, drug dens, brothels, and other unsavory places.



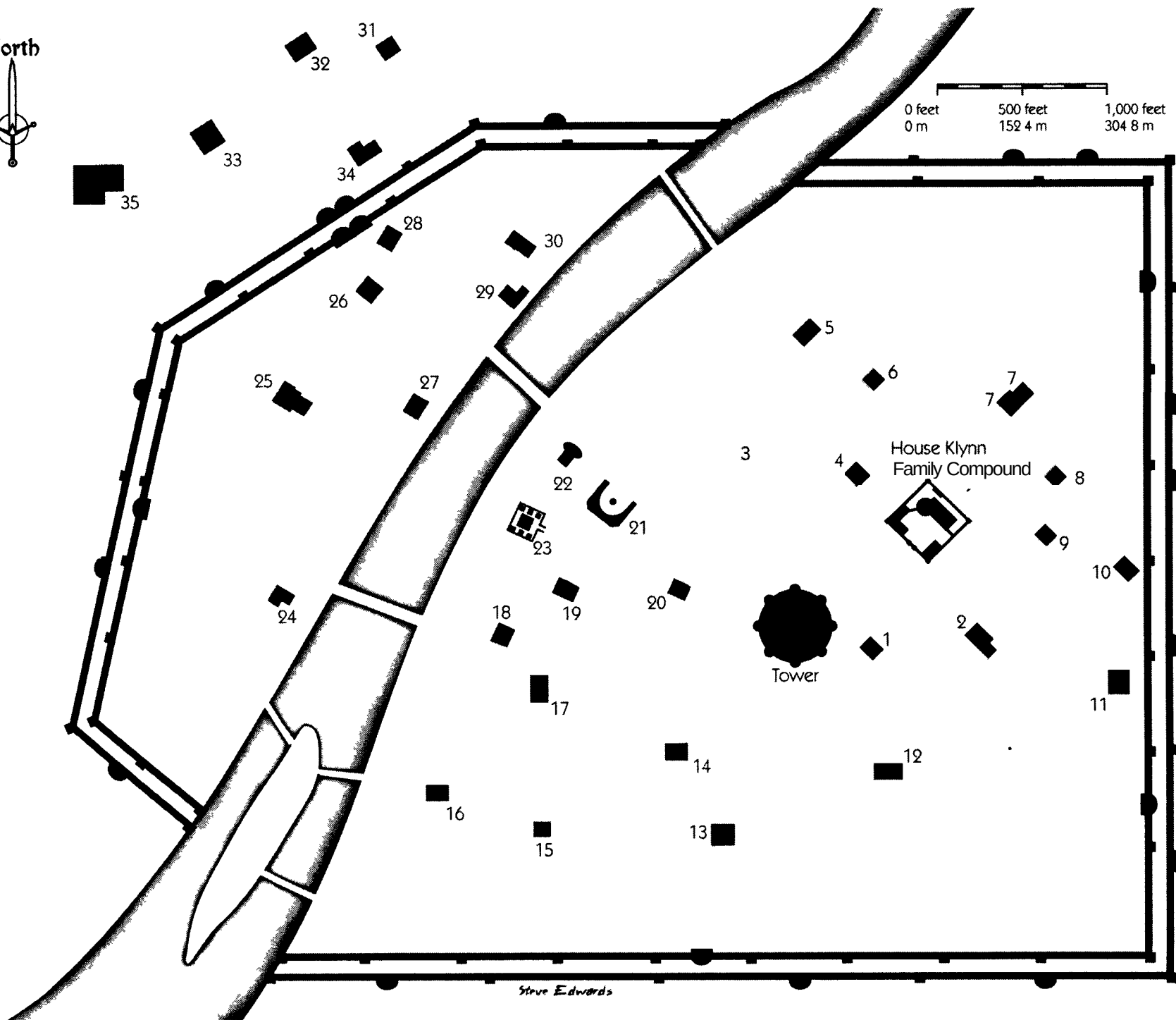
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Steve Edwards



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Steve Edwards

31. Primitive Brands. This "branding shop" is an ore-style tattoo parlor. Designs are cut and burned into one's flesh, leaving an intricate scar pattern. The human running the place is very skilled and creates designs that are grimly beautiful. Cost: 50-100 gold depending on the design. The scarring process hurts like hell.

32. Magillicuddy's Swordshop. Magillicuddy is a 9th-level human soldier who served for 20 years in the Imperial Army before retiring and opening up his own weapons shop. His prices and quality are standard, but he cuts soldiers, knights and mercenaries a generous discount of 20%-40% depending on the item and how much he likes the individual.

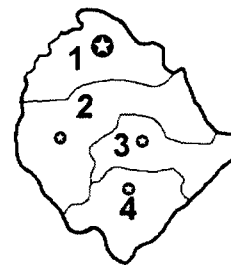
33. Elite Escorts. An "escort agency" that sends its girls to prearranged meeting places to pick up their clients. Typical clients include rich merchants and military types. The girls never travel without a bodyguard, who tends to be a beefy human, **orc** or ogre mercenary 3rd to 5th level.

34. Pawnshop. The owner is also a local drug and slave connection.

35. Slave Market. A disgusting slave yard and auction house. Truly a vile place to be for any length of time. Trained **Orc** slaves typically go for 600-1,200 gold each, with untrained **orcs** going for 200-400. Goblins cost half that, and ogres cost double. Free nonhumans who get run in by the local militia often find themselves up on the auction block the next day!

Notable Residents of Shinkasa

- **Gruulok**, an **orc** slave who, with his **orc** and ogre friends, plots to assassinate the leaders of House **Clynn** and burn their manor to the ground.
- **Winchell Sleer**, a wandering swordsman (anarchist, 4th level soldier, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword, W.P. Shield, W.P. Throwing, and Boxing). He's come to town to sell his skills to the highest bidder.
- **Captain A'kolt**, a bold, 9th level mercenary commander who routinely sorties into the Old Kingdom with 25 other meres he regularly works with (4th to 6th level). Typical jobs include finding and exterminating inhuman bandits, finding and capturing nonhumans for sale at the local slave market, finding and returning runaway slaves, finding lost or kidnapped children, and escorting noble lords and ladies, and merchant caravans. There is a 25,000 gold piece bounty on his head in the Old Kingdom. Several nonhumans living in **Outertown** are considering trying to collect it themselves. This guy lives in a well-defended mansion in the city's Inner District and possesses major psionics, including impervious to fire, impervious to poison, summon inner strength, telekinetic leap, **levitation**, resist fatigue and mind block; 89 I.S.P. (M.E. 19).
- **Lord Kamerin Oslof**, a distant relative of House **Oslof** who's come here in search of adventure; 3rd level knight.
- **Nickie Firebrand**, a fire dragon masquerading as a human; miscreant, 5th level wizard. She is trying to gauge the situation here to see what her best options are. This hatchling is a little mentally unbalanced, with delusions of power she doesn't really possess and megalomaniacal dreams. She can be cunning and murderous in the extreme to get what she wants. She has a respectable treasure **trove** worth 50,000 gold hidden away a few miles out of town.



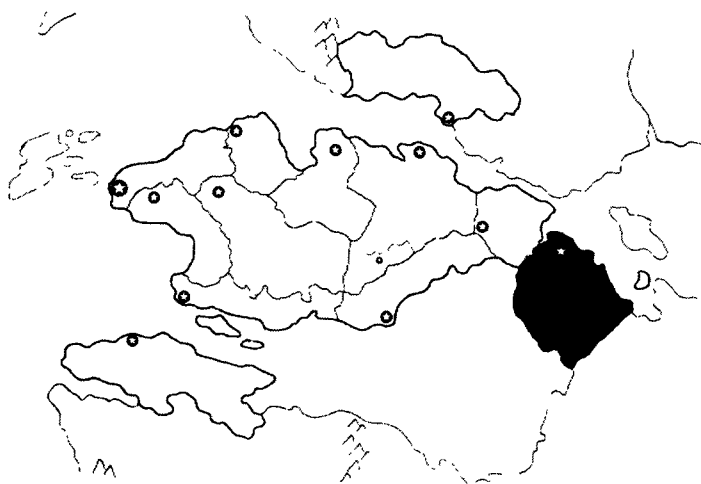
Provincial Overview of the Old Kingdom Frontier

1. Regional Province. Provincial Capital: Shinkasa. Ruling Noble Family: House Clynn.
2. Barbadic Province. Provincial Capital: Grimecross. Ruling Noble Family: House Barbadic.
3. Kohugan Province. Provincial Capital: East Orluuk. Ruling Noble Family: House Kohugan.
4. Grishop Province. Provincial Capital: Caer Kighfalon. Ruling Noble Family: House Grishop.

Note All ruling noble families reside in their provincial capitals.

Provincial Breakdown of the Old Kingdom Frontier

Most of the other provinces in this region are similar to Province Clynn — underdeveloped, threatened by **nonhuman** raiders, and brimming over with racial tension. The only place of note in the region that breaks this mold is the fortified temple-city of Shandala.



Provincial Overview: Barbadic Province

Right on the edge of the Old Kingdom, this province has the worst problems with barbarian monster raiders. Nearly every colonist here lives within the capital for safety. Those who don't, generally seek shelter in Shandala whenever danger threatens.

House Barbadic: These feckless idiots (cousins to the **Clynns**) squander their money on frivolous projects like astronomical observatories and music halls. As a result, the province has no paved roads, the capital has no sewer system, and the Provincial Army is a joke. Only the presence of Shandala keeps the province from falling apart.

Provincial Capital: Grimecross (12,000 people). A sad place on the verge of collapse. There is little business here, although thanks to House Barbadic's spending sprees, there is a respectable cultural center in town. The next wave of **orc** marauders will probably breach the defensive walls and destroy the city. The volunteer militia, organized by concerned citizens and 2,000 strong, is better equipped and skilled than the provincial army of 4,000. Average level of a militia man is 2nd to 4th.

Shandala is a city that has grown around the High Temple of **Shandala**, a massive, **ziggurat-style** temple to the Pantheon of Light. The builders and the age of the temple are unknown, but it clearly predates the **Elf-Dwarf** Wars. Despite all that has plagued this region throughout the ages, it has stood strong, like a rock amid a turbulent ocean. Now, the temple provides a much-needed fortress along the Old Kingdom **frontier**. The non-human raiders of the area know that they can't possibly take this temple, so they give it a wide berth. The nearby city-states and provinces are thankful for that.

The High Temple is the center of the town, with buildings and houses forming a ring around it. This is a hardworking, industrious, multi-racial community brought together by their interdependence from living on the border of a dangerous territory and by their common religious faith. Shandala is not a major economic power — just a city of craftsmen, builders, trappers, huntsmen, and farmers protected by their holy warriors, priests and gods. Unless Itomas wages a sustained campaign against the High Temple, it is likely to remain strong and vibrant for decades, if not centuries. Even the invading hordes are likely to ignore it out of deference to its large, nonhuman population and powerful priests (besides the superstitious invaders believe it is best not to offend the gods at the outset of a military invasion).

The High Temple itself is a major training citadel for warrior monks and combat-oriented priests of Light. Together, these fighters are an awesome fighting force. There are about 1,000 warrior monks (levels 3-9) and 250 warrior priests (levels 2-8), but they could easily take on an army four times their size and win. Given the remarkable fortifications of the High Temple, its reserve supplies of food and equipment, the magical powers of its priests, and the incredible ability of its fighters, Emperor Itomas or any attacker would have to spend at least a year to successfully lay siege to this holy place using no less than two field armies. The High Temple is also a training place for a variety of **non-martially** oriented O.C.C.s, such as simple travelling priests, monks, healers and scholars.

The **Shandalan** monks and priests openly proclaim the power of their gods is of a higher order than the law of any nation, the Western Empire included. As a result, they pay no taxes and do not respond to troop conscription. However, they do help keep the peace in the region and provide services to the Empire's colonies. Still, the defiant nature of Shandala irks Emperor Itomas, who fears this rebellious spirit could become infectious and turn the entire Frontier zone into a defiant stretch of rebel lands.

Provincial Overview: Kohugan Province

The province is south of Provinces **Clynn** and **Barbadic**. Non-human raiders are common here, too, but House Kohugan has brokered a lasting peace with many of the local war tribes, buying the province a reprieve from any attacks from them. The people are therefore taking advantage of this time to build and fortify as much as they can.

House Kohugan: A house of get-rich-quick artists and con men. They accepted their promotion to this position thinking the Frontier would be an easy place to set up some colonies and then sit back and collect the tax money. Of course, House Kohugan has learned the hard way that running a Frontier colony is a lot of hard work. Half gave up and returned to West Kighfalton. Those nobles who have stayed have become an interesting mix of risk-takers and hardened frontiersmen. This is also the only Noble House in the region that has successfully negotiated a peace with the nonhumans living along their border. Not that it will save the community if the large-scale invasion force comes their way. However, the members of House Kohugan and at least 25% of the people, should be able to make it out alive due to their long-standing agreements and ties with the local **orc** and ogre tribes who like and respect them. Elder Lord Kohugan is considering freeing all of his slaves and hiring them back as wage workers as a sign of goodwill to the Old Kingdom nonhumans, but he fears what the other provincial houses would think.

Provincial Capital: East Orluuk (15,800 people). If House Kohugan keeps the **orc** raiders away for a few years, this city can really take root and prosper. After that, it will be too strong to be seriously threatened by ordinary raiders, who will move on to easier targets. There is also a 01-55% chance the invading hordes will ignore them if they don't take any action against them.

Provincial Overview: Grishop Province

Taking up the southern tip of the region, Grishop Province settled its raider problems long ago by exterminating all nonhuman tribes within their territory. After a few years, the warlords of the Old Kingdom got the idea and stayed away — or so they believe. Ever since, the province has grown steadily and surely, but chafes under the oppressive taxes and troop conscriptions laid down by House Clynn.

House Grishop. Elder Lord Grishop is an ex-janissary who retired after 25 years of exemplary service. A very distant relative of a city-state Noble House, Grishop was named the heir of the House when nearly all of its members were purged by Leopold I. Since then, the house has been renamed and was promoted to provincial status when it answered the call for nobles to help settle the Old Kingdom frontier. Lord Grishop himself is over 100, but is still a sharp and cagey fellow. He lets his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren handle the nitty-gritty work of running the province. He handles important administrative policies and military decisions. Most Grishop nobles are pragmatic, insightful and honorable, except when it comes to dealing with the monster races. Overall, House Grishop disapproves of how House Clynn is running the Frontier region.

Provincial Capital: Caer Kighfalton (25,000 people). Named out of a fit of patriotism for the Empire's first emperor. This well-fortified city has large food and weapons surpluses, as well as an impressive infrastructure and commercial center. It is the most well equipped and defended of all the Old Kingdom Frontier cities.



Regional Overview #12:

Ophid's Grasslands Colony

Racial demographics for the Ophid's Frontier:

76% Human
5% Elf
2% Dwarf
1% Gnome
9% Orc
7% Other

Note: The percentages above apply only to the colonists and do not take into consideration the indigenous people of the region. The slave population is equal to roughly 18% of the overall population of the colony. Racial tensions are low since everyone's so dependent on one another.

The Ophid's Grasslands Colony marks the first of Emperor Itomas great colonization efforts. Unlike the past attempts to claim this region, which were halfhearted excuses to deport undesirable citizens out of the country, Itomas program is very serious and well funded. The Emperor has poured millions into this venture, sending large detachments of troops and Imperial Janissaries to the Grasslands to keep the peace and defend against nonhuman marauders and monsters. Vast shipments of supplies have been sent as well, making sure that the colonists will have everything they need to survive the harsh winters and dry summers. And Emperor Itomas has made special provisions to purchase the colony's products in order to subsidize its fledgling economy.

So far, it looks like this colony has a promising future. There has already been a second major port city built in the grasslands in addition to Ophidia, the regional capitol. Shiploads of new colonists head to the land every few months, and there have been no serious incidents of famine, pestilence, disease or warfare. The main problems have come from raids, mischief and murder at the hand of Bug Bears and plains goblins, as well as occasional attacks from **Peryton** and other monsters of the region. The Wolfen, who dominate the northeastern half of the Great Northern Wilderness, have thus far left the colony alone, although there have been a few raids by Coyles and some trouble with pirates.

The big question is, what will happen when the Imperial House cuts off its support? Will the colony dry up like those in the past? Probably not. The Emperor's outline for colonization was a good one and he's gotten the full support of the other nobles. The initial colony ships were staffed with legitimate explorers, adventurers, and people committed to making the operation work. Since then, the colonization effort has only grown.

Of course, there is more to Emperor **Itomas'** agenda than meets the eye. Sure, he wants to expand the Western Empire, but he also wants to collect information on the dimensional rift reported to be in the northern part of the Grasslands. If he could somehow harness the power of that rift, who knows what might be accomplished. To this end, he has secretly dispatched a team



of practitioners of magic to locate, study and assess the power to this dimensional anomaly. Whether or not this study will uncover any great mystery or come upon some great insight remains to be seen. Nobody knows for sure what might come through the dimensional portal or where it might lead, if indeed there even is one.

Of more immediate concern to the Grasslands are reports of large bands of hostile human, **orc**, Bug Bear and **Coyle** nomads who virtually rule the interior of the Grasslands region. Tribes of Faerie Folk are also known to inhabit the flower-filled grasslands, especially in the foothills near the mountains. So far, the colony, located along the southern coast, hasn't had too much contact with people in the interior, but one of three expeditionary forces (30 men) has failed to return, and the increasing number of minor incursions and raids is evidence that the Western interlopers have finally caught the attention of the inhabitants of the Grasslands. One question on everybody's mind is whether or not the powerful Wolfen Empire will take exception to the growth of the colony and take action against it.

Despite large influxes of settlers, the Ophid's Grasslands Colony is sparsely populated in comparison to most other Imperial regions. A total of 90,000 colonists are currently nestled along the southern coastline.

Regional House: House Belopo

House Belopo, like House **Clynn**, was promoted by the Emperor from a lesser Noble House to Regional status in order to govern a newly established colony. Being chosen by the Emperor to conquer a wild, untamed land in the name of the Western Empire would be both an honor and a privilege to most, but not for House Belopo. Being so far from the rest of the Empire, the Belopo nobles must do without the finery and luxuries of "civilized" life, like silks, spices, perfumes and drugs — "You mean we have to eat hunted game? Ugh! And did I hear you say that my silk clothing still hasn't gotten here? I just don't know how we'll survive in this pitiful mansion we're building. Only sixty **rooms**!? We might as well sleep outside in the mud! And just look at these floors! Not a sign of gold inlay anywhere. What will the other nobles think?" Thus, many of the Belopo nobles look upon this "honor" as a punishment. In fact, some have actually asked aloud what they could have done to garner the Emperor's disdain to deserve this cruel punishment.

There are, however, a few nobles in the family to whom the Grasslands provide a wide opportunity of adventure and a chance for them to get back to their warrior traditions. To them, they are truly kings in their own realm, free from the gossip and intrigues of the courts back home. They welcome the chance to forge a new domain and to tame an exotic land. The alien people, fierce monsters, and even rumors of a demon city beyond the mountains are all tantalizing for them. What more could a noble ask for? And that's exactly why Emperor Itomas chose this noble family to head operations in the Ophid's colony.

These two very different attitudes among the Belopo nobles is causing friction in the Noble House as those who have stepped up to the challenge have made great strides and won the

approval of the Emperor himself, while those who would have nothing to do with this putrid land of "weeds and savages," are envious of their success and increased stature at the Imperial Court. The house's elder lord, his children, and other key family members are firmly committed to turning the Ophid's Grasslands into the Western Empire's new jewel. A third have grudgingly joined the colony for political reasons, but more than half of the Noble House has refused to set foot in the grasslands, preferring to stay in Upper Kighfalcon, where they are snickered at and accused of being pampered sissies and cowards.

In the meantime, the Ophid Belopo nobles have their hands full. Most of their time is spent building new infrastructure for the colony and gathering enough provisions to ride out the next hard winter. So far, the colony has been more successful than anybody (except the Emperor) had imagined. Due in large part to the hard work and diligence of House Belopo of the Grasslands (a distinction from the House Belopo of Upper Kighfalcon, and another burr in the hair of those who stayed back home). It also helps that Belopo nobles don't display a human supremacist attitude which makes the nonhuman colonists and slaves feel much more motivated to cooperate.

Noteworthy members of House Belopo

Overlord Troj Belopo: House elder and Regional Overlord. He used to be your typical arrogant, jaded nobleman until moving to the Grasslands. At first he hated it, but he's warmed up to it and doesn't want to leave. He sees great potential in the colony and a chance to bring tremendous fame and honor to his family name. Overlord Troj is a plain-looking man who tries to hide his ordinariness with lots of fine clothes and jewelry. This insecurity over his appearance is a curse of vanity, for he is a fair and reasonable man, as well as a strong, decisive leader, with a head for organization and logistics. The perfect candidate to organize the building of a new arm of the mighty Empire. He is glad to see that his children love it here, but he's on the verge of strangling his sister-in-law and her family. The Overlord keeps it secret that he has found gold nuggets in the plains 60 miles (96.5 km) north of Ophidia. He sees this as a tremendous resource and is considering starting a secret prospecting operation with trusted members of the family. This is not done out of greed, but because he wants the colony and Ophidia firmly established before the insanity that comes with gold fever. He knows that sooner or later, the lure of an easy fortune in mining gold will fill the province with backstabbing opportunists, scoundrels and clamoring civilization. He'd like to enjoy the ruggedly beautiful and peaceful virgin grasslands as long as he can and see if he can build a strong, moral community that can withstand the onslaught of avarice and greed when it comes.

Quick Stats for Troj Belopo: 11th level knight & nobleman. Alignment: Scrupulous. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 15, M.A. 17, P.S. 15, P.P. 12, P.E. 18, P.B. 8, Spd. 10; age 50.

Lady Rousimme Belopo: Troj's wife. She wants to go home but sticks by her husband, who wishes to stay. Rousimme is the archetypical product of Western noble courts — raised from birth to be a nobleman's wife, she is schooled in all the courtly graces, how to behave in public, and so on. Otherwise, she lacks initiative and imagination. She accepts her fate, whatever it may be, with grace and dignity. She abdicated all of her motherly duties to midwives and nannies and is practically a stranger to her

own children. Her sister, **Ashaya Skons**, constantly tries to get Rousimme to convince the Overlord to let the entire Noble House return to Upper Kighfalton. So far, Rousimme has resisted her sister, because it is not her place to question his judgement, and truth be told, she has come to appreciate the serenity and harsh majesty of the grasslands. **Quick Stats for Rousimme Belopo:** 9th level Noblewoman. Alignment: Unprincipled. Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 10, M.A. 14, P.S. 9, P.P. 9, P.E. 11, P.B. 12, Spd. 9; age 43.



Lord Troj Belopo II: Troj II is 3 years younger than his sister, but he is cut from the same cloth. He too loves it here and is an able Ranger, horseman and hunter. He is especially fond of organizing Tusker and wild pig hunts. So far, he has bagged seven Tuskers himself, and managed to single-handedly save a farmer from an assault by five goblins. He longs to see the colony become a great kingdom and does his best to help his father in every way possible. At the same time, he is growing bored and seeks greater adventure. He bears a nasty scar on his face from where he fell from his horse during a Tusker hunt, and was

bitten by one of the beasts. The lad is quickly becoming a hero and is as beloved by the people as his sister. **Quick Stats for Troj Belopo II:** Roughly equal to a 3rd level Ranger. Alignment: Scrupulous. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 12, M.A. 19, P.S. 18, P.P. 15, P.E. 13, P.B. 13, Spd. 16; age 19.

Lord Kingston Belopo, "The Young Lord": This is Troj II's kid brother, a rambunctious and likable 13 year old who follows everything his brother and sister say and do. He too is liked by the common people and loves the colony. **Quick Stats for Kingston Belopo II:** Roughly equal to a 2nd level squire and

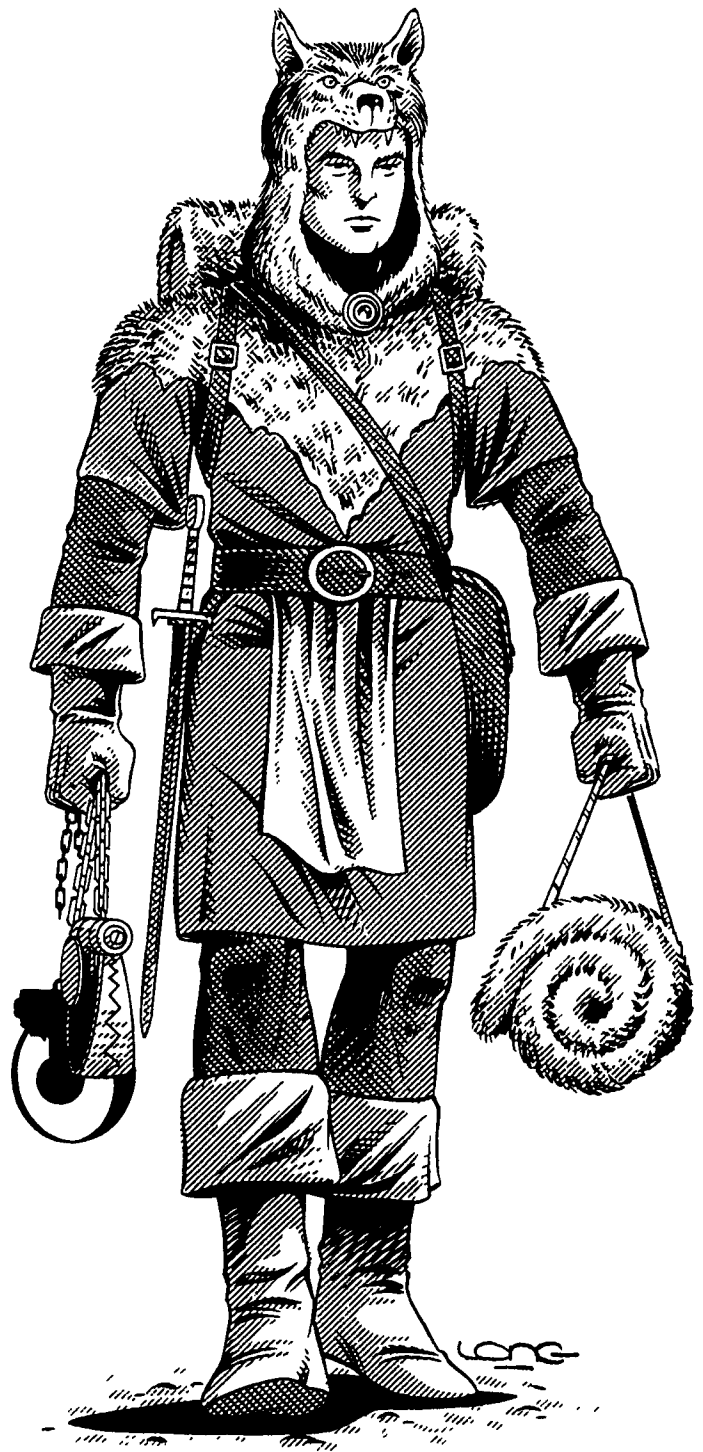
noble. Alignment: Unprincipled. Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 10, M.A. 11, P.S. 8, P.P. 10, P.E. 11, P.B. 12, Spd. 9, but each of these attributes of the kid will increase 1D6points by age 19.

Lady Rousimme Belopo II: The elder daughter, who is a vibrant, strong-minded and independent woman. She grew up away from the courtly life, so she speaks and acts from her heart without regard to the social consequences. She's managed to create quite a stir every time she shows up at the Regional Court, but she doesn't care. Her home is on horseback, riding the plains. Even at 22 years old she is a tomboy who has become an expert rider (equal to Knight), hunter and archer (especially from horseback). If the Noble House ever returned home, she would stay. The common folk love her because she treats them with kindness and genuine compassion. Much to her father's chagrin, "Rosie" has even accompanies adventurers on brief trips into the interior. **Quick Stats for Rousimme Belopo II:** Roughly equal to a 3rd level Knight. Alignment: Scrupulous. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 20, P.S. 12, P.P. 23, P.E. 11, P.B. 15, Spd. 10; age 22.

Lady Ashaya Skons: Elder aunt, sister of Rousimme. A spoiled, pampered, jaded, arrogant noblewoman who, to her credit, could not bear to see her sister thrown to the savages in the north and accompanied her to this gods forsaken frozen wasteland. She really, really, really wants to get the hell out of here and constantly focuses and gripes about all the hardships and negative things. She also has the audacity to browbeat the Overlord about accepting this post, what horrible effect it will have on his family (his children have already become wild, undignified hooligans), and that the whole effort is doomed to failure. Overlord Belopo would love to send her home (or better yet strangle the harpy) but quietly tolerates her for the sake of his wife. **Quick Stats for Ashaya Skons:** 6th level Noblewoman. Alignment: Unprincipled. Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 7, M.A. 6, P.S. 9, P.P. 8, P.E. 9, P.B. 11, Spd. 7; age 39.

Lord Cyrell Skons: He is Ashaya's husband, and is just as bad as she is. He doesn't get along with Troj Belopo, is arrogant, lazy, and spiteful. He is also pro-Middle Kingdoms and visits there occasionally, to the disapproval of the rest of the Noble House. Lord Skons' greatest skills are criticizing others and spending money. **Quick Stats for Cyrell Skons:** 7th level Nobleman. Alignment: Anarchist. Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 11, M.A. 5, P.S. 10, P.P. 9, P.E. 10, P.B. 10, Spd. 8; age 40.

Laederius Skons: Son of Ashaya and Cyrell. He is a young summoner who has become fast friends with many of the other summoners hanging out at the regional court. Like them, he is intensely interested with investigating the rumors about a demon city and dimensional portal, so he sees being here as an opportunity, although it is worse than he imagined. As a summoner, he holds great promise, he is savage, ruthless, and tough. He has a reputation for physically abusing the palace's servant girls and treats those beneath his station with cool disdain and indifference. He does not get along with the Belopo family and finds the young nobles' intimacy with commoners to be inappropriate and distasteful. He's trouble with a capital "T." **Quick Stats for Laederius Skons:** 3rd level Summoner and noble. Alignment: Miscreant. Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 17, M.A. 9, P.S. 10, P.P. 12, P.E. 15, P.B. 11, Spd. 12; age 21.



Regional Capital: Ophidia

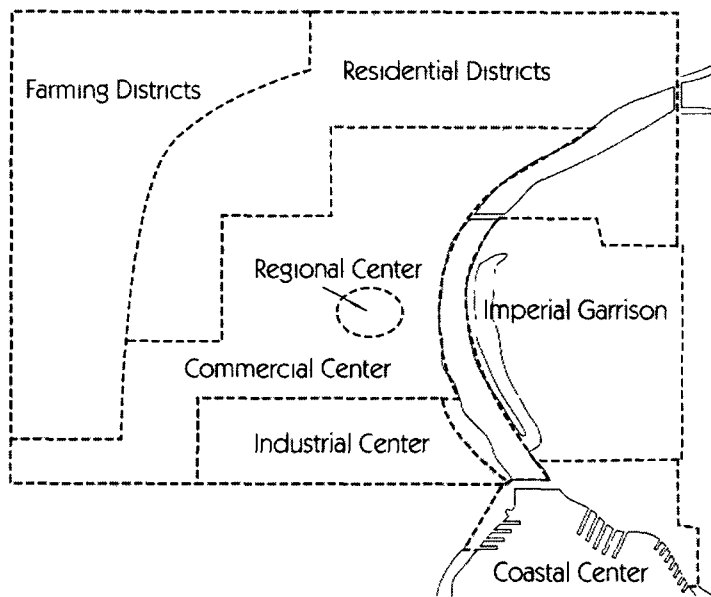
Population: 70,000; predominantly human.

Ophidia is the dream city of Western engineers. Here is a major military, commercial, industrial and residential center that has sprung up in only a few years and has to accommodate at least 100% growth over the next decade. To have done this, Ophidia had to be extensively planned and laid out from the get-go. The city design is clean and orderly, the sewers match the street design and are made for easy entry and maintenance. The aqueducts also follow the city's grid layout, allowing for

easy distribution of water throughout the settlement. What's more, this orderly setup makes expanding the city that much easier. With a nearly endless expanse of flat, coastal land in three directions, **Ophidia** can grow exponentially for generations and never run into serious design **conflicts**.

The city was initially fortified, but as the Imperial troops showed up, building roads and waterways took precedence over constricting walls and towers. Besides, the city has never been attacked.

Ophidia has a bit of everything, from a well-developed port section (resupply ships arrive monthly) to the booming commercial and industrial districts. The farming zones and cattle grazing lands outside of town have produced respectable results — not enough to feed the entire colony yet, but it's getting there. Given time, Ophidia should grow into a major Imperial presence in this part of the world. And perhaps a foothold from which a new era of Imperial expansion will spring.



Ophidia Description & Code Key

1. Regional Center. A simple and unassuming Imperial Court, royal housing, staff housing, stables, and guests' quarters. There are facilities for a large detachment of Regional soldiers, but the colony is too new and only has a small volunteer militia in addition to the division of Imperial Troops (approx. 5700 men) stationed here.

2. Imperial Garrison. In addition to the troop division, there are three warships and approximately 1,200 Navy personnel assigned to the city in rotating shifts that change every three months. Despite their presence, there have been some pirate raids up and down the coast, as well as in the shipping lanes; two supply ships have fallen victim to these scalawags. From the nearby dockyards, Imperial troops can arrive by ship, off-load and be combat-ready within a day. Most of the troops assigned to Ophidia reside in one of the many huge barracks built on the east side of the complex. To keep the soldiers occupied, patrols routinely police the city and the regional borders, as well as scout far to the north. Also, large wargames are staged in the wild lands to keep the forces in fighting shape.

3. Municipal Center. Another large, stately building. This is where all public matters, such as the announcement of new

laws, criminal and civil court, and other official business is conducted. All audiences with city officials and members of the noble houses are done here as well.

Coastal Center

The city harbor, dockworks, marinas and shipyard. Non-military traffic is required to dock here and pay a city slip tax of 25 gold per ship, per day.

4. Harbor Master's Residence. The harbor master is a 7th level sailor who works in conjunction with a team of 3rd level Water Warlocks to make sure that all ship traffic obeys harbor rules and regulations.

5. Dockworks. Visiting ships can port up for the night. Costs 25 gold per ship per night. That's in addition to the city's slip tax. House Belopo keeps saying they'll repeal the slip tax once the city gets on its feet but nobody believes it.

6. Marinas. These docks and piers are for smaller sea vessels, luxury boats and fishing boats. Large merchant or colony ships are required to pull into the Dockworks (#5). Cost per slip at the Marina is 10 gold per boat, per night; half for locals.

7. Shipyard. A small operation that currently performs repairs more than actual shipbuilding. It turns out about one ship a year, and costs 20% more than usual because all materials have to be imported.

Industrial Center

An orderly set of manufacturing buildings set off in rows. House Belopo encourages colonists to start manufacturing ventures by offering a one-time 1,000 gold start-up incentive. To prevent people from taking the money and running, they are required to build a business site and occupy it for at least a year, regardless if the venture turns a profit or not.

8. Carpenter and Lumber. A small lumberyard and carpenter operation. With time, the owners want to establish logging camps and a couple of mills in the forests to the east. A family of humans and nearly 50 goblin apprentices run this operation.

9. Beds-a-Plenty. A Wolfen and human, friends from their traveling days in the Northern Wilderness, have given up the adventuring business and now make beds. They're not very good at their trade, but the vast fortune they built up as adventurers keeps the venture afloat.

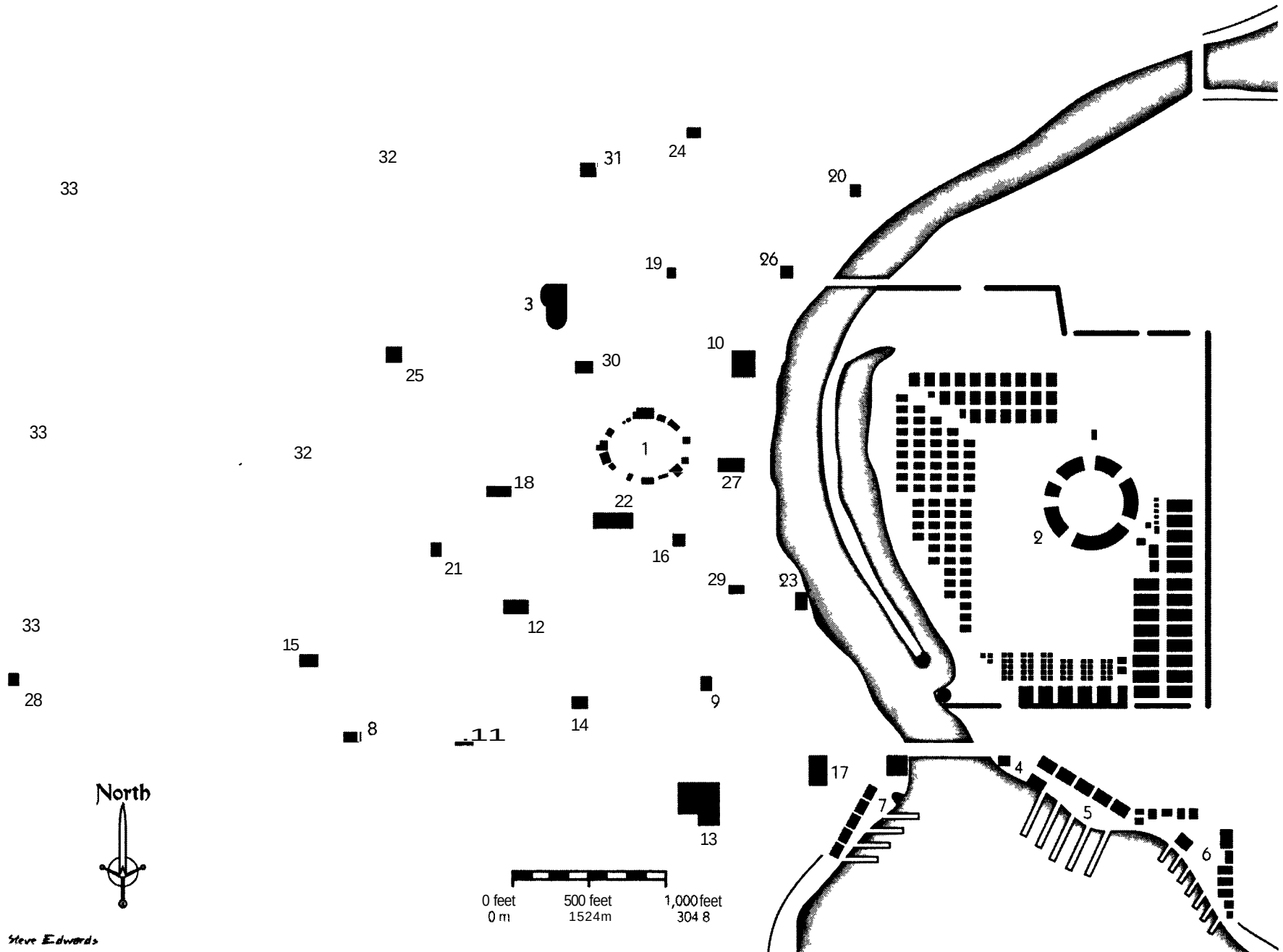
10. Wheelwright. Repairs broken wheels and wagons.

11. Box and Chest Maker. Wooden and metal boxes and chests of all sizes. A large selection of large and small chests, perfect for the soon-to-be travelling adventurer to carry all of his newfound loot in. Can take special orders for magically weightless boxes (as per the magical armor attribute).

12. Black Smith. A dwarven run operation producing high quality metal items, horseshoes, tools and metal works.

13. Weaver's Mill. A large factory facility that produces wool and bulk textile products for export.

14. Algothian's Apiaries. Algothian is an easy-going, middle-aged human who sells flavored syrups, honey and jams. The exportation of flavored syrups to the Western Empire is quickly becoming a new, hot commodity, one of **Ophidia's** first. Maple syrup was an unknown quantity until this operation (taught to **Al** by a Brownie he befriended).



15. Stone Mason. A heavily muscled dwarf owns this place and makes a great deal of money selling specially chiseled stones to wealthy nobility. A popular item are the small obelisks he produces with phrases carved into them. His apprentices make more mundane wares, and hand half of their profits over to their employer.

16. Ball of Wax. Makes and sells all varieties of candles made from bees wax. Good quality, low prices (half of normal).

17. Foundry. A large, sooty operation that produces all sorts of raw iron and steel products, including metal sheets, bars, beams and wire.

Commercial Center

Most of the colonists are so happy that there are actually stores to buy things now that they frequent the businesses even if they don't need what's being sold.

18. Bakery. Fine breads, rolls, and sweet pastries.

19. Thaddeua Skozlok, Accountant. Thaddeua is a rather astute-looking dwarf, who wears spectacles and a smart-looking suit. If only people would stop laughing at him so much. Despite his skill, people just can't get over the thought of a **dwarven** accountant. Thaddeua is at his wit's end and anybody who so much as snickers at him while in his office will be promptly thrown out. He was a 6th level knight before entering the numbers business. Incidentally, he is most skilled at finding tax loopholes, and has squirreled away over one million gold in savings!

20. Stables and Livery.

21. Calligrapher. Extremely fast and accurate. She definitely justifies the prices she charges. Also offers a nice selection of poem books and sheet music.

22. The Healing House. A for-profit hospital that requests at least half payment of all bills after treatment. Known nobles or other prominent figures in town are given a tab and can pay them back at their convenience. Prices are reasonable, and the poor are given a substantial discount.

23. The Blue Whale. A renowned restaurant and tavern that specializes in local seafood, stout ales, and fine Western wines. 4-10 gold covers the cost of most meals; 1-3 gold per drink.

24. Master Tonga's Store. This empty building has had an "Opening Soon" sign on it for a year now.

25. The Write Stuff. Sells fine papers, inks and writing utensils. The owner is on a one-man crusade to boost the lost art of letter-writing. Nobles sometimes hire him out to pen and deliver special notes, notices and public announcements. He also has a connection with a local Diabolist back in Upper Kighfalton to sell "rune paper" with silver Permanence runes stamped on them to make them indestructible. These are very expensive and available only through special order.

26. Weaver and Tailor. Skilled clothes makers at reasonable prices.

27. The Skull Street Hotel. A seven-story hotel that caters to the well-to-do travellers/visitors. Gladly accepts adventurers, provided they check their weapons in a safe while on the premises. The security here is excellent, and the proprietors make every effort to accommodate any race that would stay here. Rooms run 75-100 gold per night, depending on availability (there are almost always rooms). Free dinner is included.

28. Wertrew of Many Lands is a freelance sage whose specialty is history, lore and foreign cultures. He charges 100 gold per consultation.

29. Dante Phillips' World of Music and Sound. A big hangout for minstrels who've come to love the place, especially since the owner is prone to giving stuff away to regulars.

30. Furniture Store. An expensive place with snooty salespeople. It specializes in upscale furniture made of exotic hardwoods and Western silk. Also sells pillows and pillow cases. Any nonhuman entering the place will be treated most rudely, and salespeople will demand that they show their money before bothering them.

31. Alchemy Shop. This is a small place with few magic items (only a 01-25% chance of finding even common magic items). The alchemist is willing to commission just about anything, and requires only a 15% deposit. He claims to be able to fill small orders in a week and large orders within a month and a half. Prices are 20% higher than book.

32. Residential Center. There really aren't various sections of this part of town since it's all so new. Most folks build their house according to city specs, making for a very homogenous collection of buildings.

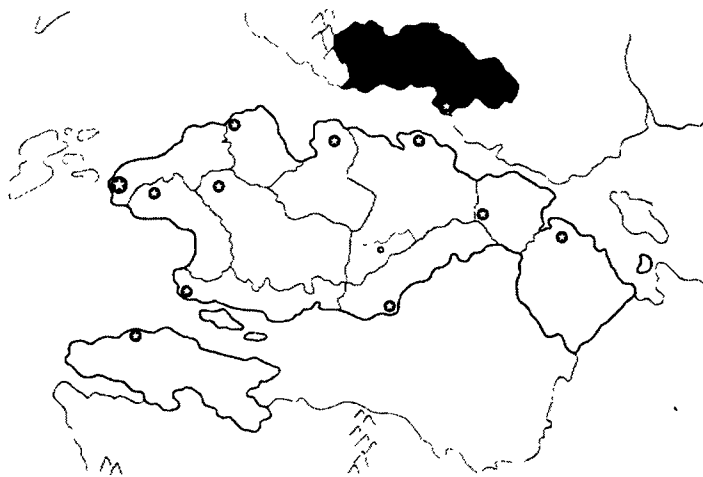
Notable residents include:

- **Malaki Tern**, a young explorer bent on discovering the secret of the Devil's Mark. He's saved 10,000 gold to finance an expedition and will gladly hire out any adventurers who will help him.
- **Kim Swerl**, a black-hearted cultist of Set obsessed with some evil plot his deity is hatching.
- **Frrlmo**, a changeling with complete amnesia who has forgotten his true nature. This poor guy really thinks he's a slave orc. One day, he'll realize and have to find a new identity.
- **Wilmson Branto**, a famed, 10th level Diabolist who came up here to get away from the bustle of the city. He works on an experimental form of ward tattoos that will confer magical spell abilities onto the wearer. So far, they don't work, but he knows such magic existed during the Age of a Thousand Magicks and is determined to unravel the mystery. He is a good tattoo artist and a brilliant scholar. He sometimes joins groups for adventures and places defensive wards on public buildings and property at one third his usual fee.

33. Farming Districts. These simple farmlands are used to grow crops of wheat, corn and tobacco. Some of these yards have been converted for raising livestock, and milling or stockpiling grain. Out in the plains are larger farms and cattle ranches.

Provincial Breakdown of the Ophid's Grasslands Colony

The colony is only a few years old and barely developed so there is only one other provincial designation, Province Miagina, answerable to Belopo as Regional Overlord. Since the region is still in its fledgling years, Houses Miagina and Belopo are too busy working together to cultivate any reasons for infighting or other tiresome intrigues.



Provincial Overview: Miagina Province

This area covers the western stretch of coastline and an expanse of interior land that extends, without clear borders, northward. Nothing here is even close to as well developed as in Belopo Province. There is no city, just towns and villages scattered throughout the region. Infrastructure is just being developed.

House Miagina: This house is the only other provincial power in the Grasslands. The nobles of House Miagina are rather excited about coming to Ophid's Grasslands and tackle their duties enthusiastically. For now, House Miagina oversees most of the colonial expansion to the north, while House Belopo deals with further development and strengthening of the southern colonies. This means the Miagina colonies are most likely to meet hostile resistance from indigenous inhabitants.

Provincial Capitol: Nos Kaddag (9,200 people). A fortress town that is too young to have developed much character yet. Right now, there are too many colonists and supply shipments coming in for the community to be settled, so the place still has the feel of a new house on "moving day."

The Devils' Mark, to the north, is reputed to be a dimensional nexus to hell. Some say a magnificent city is up there, a kind of interdimensional crossroads for plane-hopping travelers. Others say it is a vile breeding ground for devils and demons alike. Still others say it is the site of a swirling maelstrom of destructive magic energy set in motion eons ago, that is now finally tearing the very fabric of reality apart. The truth is unlikely to be known for a very long time, unless some bold adventurers make it there and back.



Provincial Capital of the Ophid's Grasslands Colonies

1. Regional Province. Provincial Capital: Ophidia.
Ruling Noble Family: House Belopo.
2. Miagina Province. Provincial Capital: Nos Kaddag.
Ruling Noble Family: House Miagina.

Note: All ruling noble families reside in their provincial capitals.

Regional Overview #13: The Yin-Sloth Periphery

Racial demographics of the Periphery:

50% Human

6% Elf

5% Dwarf

12% Orc

10% Ogre/Dogre

2% Goblin

15% Other, including giants and some jungle races.

Note: This does not include the huge slave population (equal to 60% of the free population), transient pirates and sailors (2D4 x 1000 present at any given time), or the serious Ratling problem that plagues the colony (equal to 40% of the free population). Ratlings are considered vermin to be exterminated.

The Yin-Sloth Jungles are a steaming, untamed wilderness, as dangerous as it is beautiful. The Western Empire has held territory in this part of the world for thousands of years. Initially, the Yin-Sloth settlements were just convenient dumping grounds for criminals, the insane and other exiles. They were never intended to be serious colonies. But during the last round of civil wars, about 130 years ago, a provincial power, House Glaverius, found itself on the short end of the stick after a particularly devastating battle in Lower **Barraduk**. Facing certain doom, the family fled to the Yin-Sloth Jungles, taking what was left of its fabulous fortune with it.

Once there, House Glaverius decided to build up the pitiful little jungle colonies and establish a little empire of its own. A place where it could rule without Imperial intrusion or trouble from rival Noble Houses. This move to the Yin-Sloth colonies worked surprisingly well for House Glaverius. Its presence gave the colonies a certain level of validity and the nobles' influence brought order to the old settlements. Farms were expanded and sugar cane plantations produced bumper crops for export to the Western Empire and other parts of the world. The noble family spearheaded the rebuilding and expansion of ancient Tezcat ruins into impressive, jungle strongholds. Before long, they caught the attention of other noble families in exile who joined House Glaverius. With little support (at the time) from the Empire, the nobles also cut deals with pirates, who, in exchange for safe harbor in the jungle ports (including the creation of some concealed, secret ports), and supplies of fruits, food, and other trade goods, agreed to help defend and protect the colonies, adding to the region's power and ability to further develop the jungle frontier.

Due to the supremacist views of the human settlers and the savage measures they and House Glaverius have used to tame the region, racial strife is at least as bad as in the Old Kingdom

Frontier. Consequently, a large Regional Army, supplemented with support from pirates and slavers, has kept the peace. They deal harshly with rebellious slaves and aggression from jungle tribes. Like the Old Kingdom Frontier, **this** means horrible injustices and atrocities have been done to the indigenous people of the Yin-Sloth Jungles.

This region's biggest exports are sugar cane, exotic hardwood trees, teak wood, bamboo, exotic nonhuman slaves and jungle animals, and rare herbs, poisons and drugs. The hardwoods are equal in quality to anything exported from the **Vequerrel** Woodlands, except with no Faerie War to impede Yin-Sloth loggers. The lumberyards can export much larger quantities of product at discount prices. The only hitch is that the transportation costs still make importing this stuff pretty expensive and time consuming. That, and lots of noble powers refuse to do business with the Yin-Sloth noble families, which all have reputations for being **vile** and depraved even by Western standards!

The slave trade is the biggest money-making business for the region. Military and freelance slaver companies routinely venture into the jungles to capture native Tezcats, **Grimbor**, Lizard Men, **Dogres**, Ogres, **Orcs**, and anybody else they can net or shackle. In fact, troublemakers and criminals are routinely sold into slavery, mainly to kingdoms and pirates outside the Western Empire. Tightly packed boatloads of miserable **humanoid** captives ship out of this region every week, selling their living cargo to arenas, slave markets, and individual plantations or households looking for cheap labor. Slavery is so common, and has been so profitable, that an increasing number of independent mercenaries and pirates go to the Yin-Sloth Jungles looking to get in on the slave trade. Not only has **this** depleted the local population of natives, requiring slavers to go deeper **into** the rain forest, it has also sparked fierce hostilities with those natives toward the Yin-Sloth colonists and all foreigners, particularly humans, elves and dwarves. Jungle attacks and raids on the colonies have increased ten-fold, as have acts of vandalism, sabotage, robbery, magical maladies, efforts to free slaves, and random (retaliatory) murders. Unfortunately, since they see all foreigners as the enemy, most do not discern between slavers, pirates and soldiers, and innocent farmers, townsfolk and visitors getting caught in the middle. All must die. The biggest threat comes from the heavily armed and vengeful Tezcats, Dogres **and/or** Orc soldiers from the nearby **Orcish** Empire. By all accounts, this looks like the beginning of what will be a long, bloody and destructive conflict between the Yin-Sloth settlers, who see conquest of the entire jungle as their destiny, and the native people who will resist the Western advances into their homeland with all their might.

The Yin-Sloth drug trade **is** perhaps the most insidious business. Herbologists and alchemists gladly pay for herbs, plants and poisonous snakes and insects from deep within the jungles. The venom **is** extracted and the rare plants processed to make exotic new drugs and deadly poisons. Much of this stuff gets sold to pirates and used in the drug parlors in the Western Empire and Land of the South Winds. Many of the villains plying this trade are untrustworthy brigands who would just as soon stab you as deal with you. The average life expectancy of a Yin-Sloth drug merchant is only **5-10** years, so clearly, this isn't a very good business to get **into**. However, the lure of "easy



money" and a hungry market, combined with the callous nature of the Western settlers, assures that there will always be folks in this region who will keep the drug trade alive, regardless of who it may hurt.

Note: See **Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition and The Yin-Sloth Jungles** (currently still in the 1st Edition, but easily adapted) for data on the various races and more information and adventure in this land.

Moving on Up

The Imperial House on the mainland does not approve of House Glaverius' tactics and considers them little more than barbaric kingpins who rule by the sword and through intimidation. However, the Yin-Sloth Periphery under their leadership has become too valuable a resource to lose. Thus, the Imperial House has publicly given recognition to the settlers' herculean efforts to colonize the jungles in the name of the Western Empire, and has made House Glaverius the official Regional House for its "heroic" accomplishments in the face of adversity. This has led to the reestablishment of strong political and trade ties with the Western Empire, and the declaration that the Periphery is a great addition to the Western Empire. Imperial troops, advisors and diplomats have been assigned to the region as both a sign of support and to secure the region for the Empire. The Imperial House fears that left unchecked, House Glaverius might begin to contemplate declaring the Periphery an independent kingdom.

Even with the Imperial presence, House Glaverius maintains several secret pirate bases that accommodate pirates and privateers *not* sanctioned by the Western Empire; i.e. pirates who prey on Western merchant ships from the north, as well as foreign ships. The Glaverius family's ties to pirates remains as strong, and lucrative, as ever.

Despite its amazing success with the Yin-Sloth Periphery, House Glaverius never really had any intention of declaring itself an independent kingdom. Better to let the Imperial House supplement them with financial aid, advisors and military troops than have to deal with all the **unpleasantries** of government and defense single-handedly. Being **redesignated** as an official province of the Western Empire gave them immediate protection in name alone, for any foreign attack on the Yin-Sloth Periphery would now be considered an act of war against the Western Empire. Likewise, now that the Noble House's actions have stirred up "the natives," the nobles are glad to hand over the bulk of the territory's defense to the Imperial Army. The **formalization** of a government and the presence of Imperial advisors and troops to handle many of the matters of government and potential problems is welcomed, because it gives House Glaverius the luxury of staying focused on its pirate and many other legal and illegal operations — House Glaverius is a 50% owner in all plantations, logging, slaving and export operations, and controls the illegal drug and thieves' and pirates' guilds in the region. As noted earlier, they have strong alliances with several notorious pirates and have established secret pirate **bases/hide-outs** for them. A full 75% of these particular pirates' stolen booty is fenced and sold through House Glaverius and its legal holdings in the Periphery. Fifty percent of the House's illegal drug trade is handled through these same pirates. Meanwhile, the Western

Empire has no idea of what's going on, and House Glaverius enjoys hero status and political notoriety for their accomplishments in the jungles. The House doesn't mind paying Imperial taxes because it sees such payments as "protection" money well worth the expense.

Regional House: House Glaverius

These guys are twisted, cruel human supremacists bent on "humanizing" the savage Yin-Sloth Jungles. They came here about one hundred years ago after having lost position and land during the early days of the last great civil war period that rocked the Empire. Legal and social outcasts, they fled to the Yin-Sloth Jungles colonies. Back then, there were just a few small-time slave camps and some pitiful settlements inhabited by exiled criminals and undesirables. There were no Imperial troops nor legitimate operations to colonize the territories. The few surviving members of the Glaverius House helped first to reorganize the slaving business and established profitable alliances with pirates who sold their slaves throughout the world. Without having to rely on the war-torn Western Empire for trade, their slave operation boomed. Before too long, House Glaverius was rich again. They put what money they had into building basic fortifications and helping to build better living facilities for their fellow exiles. This earned the refugees' loyalty. With the nobles' help, the communities were reorganized, rebuilt and turned into something of a real colony. At first a slave yard and pirate port, their connection with the pirates brought other outcasts, rogues and settlers to the colony; many Westerners trying to flee from the strife of the civil war. The bigger the "Glaverius Colony" became, the more they expanded into other areas. It would be sixty years before the Imperial House, having brought much of the civil unrest to an end, would notice "its" colony in the jungle. The Imperial House realized that House Glaverius had turned the worthless camps into a valuable, growing community with surprising economic resources and potential that earlier administrations had failed to recognize. Realizing it was missing out on taxes and tremendous opportunities, it declared the area an Imperial Region and appointed the Glaverius House as Regional House and Overlord. Many nobles back at home opposed this idea because they did not want House Glaverius back on the political scene. However, the Emperor disregarded these outcries, regionalized the jungles, and re-established House Glaverius as a noble power. It also supplied Imperial support, renewed trade and Imperial troops, and sponsored additional settlements.

Always more of a criminal cartel than a Noble House, since then, House Glaverius has become drunk with power and more brazen, dangerous and decadent than ever before. Most of these diabolic nobles are insidious criminals and madmen. A good deal of the House's success comes from the fact that they love their work, are totally ruthless, and regularly deal with criminals and enemies of the Empire. Their reliance on powers outside the Western Empire is a source of strength, power, wealth and independence, but it is a dangerous game that could someday again make the noble families pariahs in the Empire. Even now, many noble families and respectable businesses will have nothing to do with them.

The Glaverius palace is a grandiose mix of Western and native jungle architectures. Huge, arching rooms covered in Blood

Marble and Western granite frame exquisite windows of western glass, but the whole place is supported by totem pole-type columns carved by captured headhunters. In fact, jungle carvings and ancient artifacts adorn nearly every filigree in the palace. Glaverius nobles have personally adopted many jungle fashions as well, wearing elaborate feathered headdresses and capes made from the pelts of leopards and other animals, and adorned with the hair from slain **orcs** and ogres. Many also sport intricate scar-pattern tattoos on their flesh, and wear all manner of **headhunter-type** body piercings (This trend has only increased since House Glaverius signed several treaties with nearby headhunter tribes and encouraged those jungle warriors to visit the regional court). Every time Glaverius nobles visit the Imperial Court, they manage to offend and horrify nobles with their savage appearance and arrogant manner. Favorite pastimes of the Glaverius nobles include drunkenness, drug use, orgies, **bloodsports** and hunting Tezcat and Dogres.

Notable members of House Glaverius:

Overlord Ostuk Glaverius XIX: Ostuk is 44 years old, and at the rate he's going, he'll be lucky to make 45. As a young man, he was a dashing warrior, noble and brilliant crimelord, but in the last 10 years, he has become grossly obese (favorite food: frogs and crocodile eggs) and has contracted a number of unsavory jungle diseases, including a fungal ailment that has caused his hair to fall out and his gums to rot. Ostuk is completely addicted to no fewer than three different drugs, including Hungerblood, Utopium and Gafaha (described in the herb section of this book). Ostuk also has grown fairly insane, and is a megalomaniac of the first order. He is deathly afraid of the dark, and has ordered every room in his palace to be kept well-lit at all times. Ostuk also is a notorious leech, and no woman is safe around him. Although Ostuk loathes **orcs**, he keeps a large harem of them, along with humans. **Quick Stats for Ostuk Glaverius:** 9th level nobleman. Alignment: Miscreant. Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 9, M.A. 14, P.S. 10, P.P. 9, P.E. 8, P.B. 6, Spd. 10 (all were 2-5 points higher only a few years ago before being ravaged by drugs, disease and insanity); age: 44.

Lady Aiji Glaverius: Ostuk XIX's wife is an attractive woman who, despite her decadent lifestyle, has managed to keep most of her good looks. She has grown estranged from Ostuk XIX since he went off the deep end, and she now finds him physically repulsive (Who **wouldn't?**). She has a large number of consorts, mostly nobles from the few provincial houses in the region. She sees nobility, **honor**, and attributes in Hadrian that she has long missed in those around her and has become very foud of the young man, even motherly to him. A fact that annoys her last living real son. **Quick Stats for Lady Glaverius:** 7th level noblewoman. Alignment: Miscreant. Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 10, M.A. 13, P.S. 9, P.P. 10, P.E. 8, P.B. 13, Spd. 6; age: 42.

Lord Ostuk Glaverius XX: The oldest "legitimate" son of Ostuk XIX, and the one running the house's slave exportation business. He already fancies himself the ruler of the Yin-Sloth Periphery, and even maintains his own little court filled with young merchants, noble sons from the **Periphery's** Provincial and Local houses, and noble wannabees. Being surrounded by this group of brown-nosers has inflated Ostuk XX's ego to incredible proportions. Despite his father's every assurance that he

will inherit the family throne, Ostuk XX feels threatened by his "half-brother" Hadrian (he's already eliminated three younger brothers and five illegitimate half-brothers). The two don't get along at all, and young Ostuk has plans to kill Hadrian. The only snag is that Ostuk XX's mother seems fond of Hadrian and would insist on an investigation if he were murdered. In his spare time, Ostuk XX thinks about how to kill Hadrian and make it look like an accident. To help him with this, he has sent messages to the local assassins' guilds to send their finest killers to him. **Quick Stats for Ostuk Glaverius XX:** 5th level Noble. Alignment: Diabolic. Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 12, M.A. 9, P.S. 15, P.P. 14, P.E. 10, P.B. 15, Spd. 12; age: 23.

Kbulu Mbriki: A powerful witch from one of the human headhunter tribes that have allied themselves with House Glaverius. Kbulu is an ancient crone (over 100 years old!) and many believe the only thing keeping her alive are the dark **magicks** granted her by her demon lord. Ostuk XIX has brought Kbulu to his court as an advisor. Kbulu foretells the future for the patriarch and performs insidious magical rites to destroy his enemies or satisfy one of his disgusting appetites. All of this makes Ostuk XIX think he has Kbulu under his control, but he couldn't be more wrong.

Kbulu is the leader of a cabal of Summoners, Witches and Necromancers who plan to take over the region and are merely softening up House Glaverius for the kill. The only thing keeping Kbulu and her minions from executing their plans is that they think Ostuk knows where a magical artifact of great importance is hidden. So far, she has been unable to learn from Ostuk if these rumors are true, and if so, where the item is located. The artifact is the mythical *Idol of Lazared Skrae*, an ancient totem of alien magical power. It is said whoever owns this object can draw upon the magical energies of other planes and dimensions to rule the world. If Kbulu ever verifies that Ostuk does indeed know this thing's location, she will order her **Alu** demon familiar (which stays invisible most of the time) to torture the fat noble until he gives up its location. If such an item exists, and if Kbulu gets her gnarled hands on it ...

Capt. Hadrian Glaverius: He is Ostuk's oldest son, just returned from years of adventuring on the high seas. He is a bastard child from one of Ostuk's many affairs and mistresses, and is therefore ineligible to inherit the family throne. He's still of Glaverius blood, however, and technically is welcome to live at the family court. Hadrian left the jungles for adventure abroad and has returned with experience and a wealth of gold, gems and magic items. His travels have made Hadrian forget just how depraved his family is, so he was rather surprised at what was going on when he first returned. Hadrian's views toward **nonhumans** have also softened considerably (especially after a prolonged love affair with a Changeling priestess some years back) and he isn't sure he can condone the family's brutality toward them. He also finds the slave trade distasteful, although accepts that it is a common practice throughout the world.

Hadrian trusts nobody in his family anymore (since his mother died while he was away, he has no relations he considers his own), and he has kept the location of his wealth and magic item arsenal a secret. Word has it that he keeps his most important possessions, including a major rune weapon, stored in a magic bag that can hold ten times the amount it appears capable



of holding. Supporting this theory is the fact that Hadrian always wears a large belt satchel that he lets no one touch. He is constantly accompanied by a pair of tribal women who have an air of defiance and royalty about them. One is a 6th level **Shaman**, the other, a 5th level **Necromancer**, both are sisters, aberrant, and secretly Hadrian's wives. **Quick Stats for Hadrian Glaverius:** 8th level pirate. Alignment: Aberrant, which makes him a saint compared to the miscreant and diabolic creeps in the rest of the family. Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 11, P.S. 20, P.P. 15, P.E. 13, P.B. 9, Spd. 11; age: 28.

Regional Capital: Caer Glaverius

Population: 144,000

Human: 50,400

Elf: 7,200

Dwarf: 7,200

Orc: 34,800

Ogres & Dogres: 30,000

Other (Tezcat, **Dogre**, Lizard Men, etc.): 14,400; plus 81,000 slaves.

This city was built from the ruins of what appears to be an ancient Tezcat city abandoned long ago and left to crumble, until House Glaverius rebuilt, fortified and expanded it. The core of Caer Glaverius is a huge **ziggurat** (a terraced pyramid) that now stands as the main citadel of the city. Parts of the inner city are made from rebuilt ruins, the rest is new. The newest section of town is a sprawling mix of residential areas, farmlands, and trading outposts. There is also a formidable port and dry dock facility.

As home to House **Glaverius**, perhaps the most depraved and murderous noble family in the entire Empire, laws and moral standards are relaxed to the point of near-anarchy. "Might makes right," is something everybody lives by here, especially the city militia. The Glaverius soldiers enforcing the law do so through intimidation and random abuse of power. Nobody dares to break the law as long as Glaverius Regional troops are in the area, but once they leave, the chaos ensues.

Oddly enough, most people here prefer it this way here. Yin-Sloth colonists are tough as nails and are used to doing whatever's necessary to survive, so living under the constant threat of theft or random violence is nothing new to them. The way things are now, at least everybody can do whatever they like to protect themselves, a freedom they wouldn't have if House Glaverius enforced a "no weapons, no fighting" law, as was considered a few years ago.

Nonhumans are definitely considered second-class citizens by House Glaverius, their private Regional Army, Imperial soldiers, and citizenry. However, the human colonists make some exceptions for **nonhumans** living in the cities. If you're a **nonhuman** living in the "civilized lands," then you're okay. If you're a **nonhuman** living outside of the colony, then you're a mindless savage and fair game for the slavers, abuse and slaughter.

Caer Glaverius has an extensive infrastructure set up, with constant expansions and improvements being made as the city's slave, drug and hardwood export trades continue to flourish. Eventually, however, the excesses of House Glaverius — their

legendary debauchery, drug addictions, and crimes — will catch up with them someday. When this happens, the city's progress will grind to a halt, and the systems and structures House Glaverius has worked so hard to build and keep up will fall apart. A new Noble House or Imperial agents could keep the city and region going, but there will be a lot of change. For one, several underworld factions will fight to grab control of old Glaverius operations and truces with pirates will be lost.



Caer Glaverius Description & Code Key

Overlord District

1. Central Citadel.
2. House Glaverius Ziggurat.
3. Temple to Utu, Lord of the Dead.
4. Regional Pantheon.
5. Arena.
6. **Regional Military Compound:** Currently, 8,000 loyal troops, not counting pirates, thieves and other "associates" and allies of the noble family.
7. Glaverius Dockworks.
8. **Imperial Garrison:** Currently, 12,000 troops with other, smaller outposts scattered throughout the region.
9. College of Wizardry.
10. Caer Glaverius Slave Exchange.
11. Central Herbology Depot.
12. Hardwood Exportation Bureau.

Commercial District

This section, also known as "Old Town," takes up the rest of the inner city. The buildings occupy ancient stone structures that have been reconditioned for habitation. There is an ancient feeling here that predates the human colonization efforts. Some say the spirits of old shamans wander here during the twilight hours, saddened by the greed and decadence that seeps through every inch of the city.

13. Sail & Rigging Shop. Sells all manner of sails and rope works for ships.

14. Barber. A free **orc** runs this place and caters only to other free **orcs**, kobolds and goblins. He'll be arrested someday just on general principle.

15. Ram Bottom's Used Carts. There's nothing quite like a used cart and wagon salesman, especially if he's the one and only Ram Bottom. Armed with a dangerously high M.A. of 25 (a 90% to **charm/impress!**), Ram is the king of the pushy sale. He won't leave you alone until you buy something of his. Most of his prices start high, but he can be talked down quite a bit

(50%). The shop also sells wheelbarrows, spare wheels, **kegs**, barrels, and crates. He is a long-time agent of the **Galverius** family and will report anybody talking badly about them or plotting against the House.

16. Scribe for Hire. A sweat-shop of nonhumans trained in the arts of math, writing, calligraphy, and forgery. Charges 15 gold per page, and claims to work under the strictest of confidentiality.

17. The Cloth Spine. A book binding shop. 60% of all business here is done for a single noble who lives in town and has a large, personal staff of scribes who are constantly copying works on loan from other nobles.

18. Cooper. This barrel-maker does a good business. Fair prices.

19. Dairy Market. Open on weekends. Sells milk, cream and cheese made on farms outside of town.

20. Dog Kennels. Raises and sells attack dogs. Top prices. Animals bought here have maximum hit points and do an extra +1 to damage. They are extremely obedient and can be called off instantly even in the midst of attacking. These animals also gain +1 to save when trying to resist the effects of a Control the Beasts spell. The owner keeps a pair with him at all times for protection.

21. Remnant Warehouse. An old warehouse that is mostly unused. A small portion of it is a shop selling all kinds of carpets, rugs and remnants. Also sells lots of hand-made baskets, very cheap.

22. Industry Row:

22a. Sugar Cane processing factory.

22b. Foundry and Blacksmithy.

22c. Sawmill.

22d. Slave yard, pens and stables.

22e. Spice Grinding and Processing.

22f. Winery and Brewery: Rum is a major export.

23. Nuts and Bolts. The name says it all. One half of the store sells all kinds of nuts — walnuts, chestnuts, pistachio nuts, you name it. The other half of the place is a cloth shop specializing in bulk sales. An entire bolt of low-grade cloth costs 25 gold, medium quality costs 75 gold, and good quality costs 150 gold.

24. Furrier. This prestigious outfit sells very expensive fur clothes, pelts and rugs made from jungle animals to the nobility and wealthiest merchants. It also has a huge export business. It has been targeted recently by a band of **Beastmasters**, who have vandalized the shop and destroyed about 100,000 gold worth of fur coats. The shop owner is calling in favors from all of his powerful and high-placed clientele to have these zealots brought to justice.

25. Basemod Kasaac's Magic Shop. An alchemist who makes all sorts of items, but insists on making them all green. No armor, few weapons, but sells everything else, including rings, charms, fumes, powders, potions, poisons and live poisonous insects and animals. Most prices are 10-30% higher than book price.

26. Edge Weapons. Owned and operated by a mysterious human (said to be a retired pirate) who offers all manner of blade weapons made by kobold **weaponsmiths**. He sells his

weapons for 10% less than the normal book price, which has angered his competition. There is also a 01-15% chance that he has 1D6 magic blade weapons (never rune items) in stock at 50% higher than book price.

27. Things Remembered. An antique shop with all sorts of little **knickknacks**, statuary, jungle relics, animal skulls, feathered headdresses, and used items purchased from family estates or sold to the shopowner by pirates and **down-on-their-luck** visitors. These items sell for 10% to 30% below book prices. There is also a 01-20% chance that the shop has 2D4 magic items, usually small, unimpressive things like a ring of protection, a potion of healing, a dagger that does extra damage, and similar. Magic items sell at book prices.

28. Brews-A-Plenty. This place sells a hundred different kinds of alcohol, from ales and beers to a variety of rums, whiskey, brandy and imported wine. Book prices.

29. Old Town Rum Shop. Local made rum and moonshine at half the usual price.

30. Jareenna's. A high-priced brothel that's had a long and illustrious history. Lately, though, the girls from here are being stalked and murdered by a human serial killer. The only thing anybody knows about him is that he's got blue skin from a magical experiment gone awry. The city guard isn't doing anything about this because brothels rank low on their list of priorities.

31. The Stateroom. High-priced place with a very refined stable of young courtesans. Caters to diplomats, nobles and other elite clients. Very exclusive, very expensive.

New Town District

This is the largest and most rapidly growing section of town. The roads from the central city extend far outside the main walls for miles in every direction, past residences, businesses and farms. The outermost edge of this district butts against uncleared jungle, where settlers try to police against intrusions by hostile natives and raiding parties. Every month, new parcels of jungle are cleared out to add to this district, where new homes and trading outposts are sure to follow.

32. The Boys' Club. An "exclusive" club and tavern for men only. It is a front for a back-room brothel.

33. Shallen Baedella's Inn. Shallen is a charming elf who dresses all in black and brings a theatrical flair to her work. This large inn is very popular among sailors and adventurers. Food and drink are of good quality at fair prices, the rooms are clean and comfortable.

34. Temple of Algor, The Northern Sea God. Popular among sailors, fishermen, and many of the overseas traders based in town.

35. Taxi Service. Rickshaws pulled by **orcs**, to **horsedrawn** carts, wagons and carriages for all occasions. Six gold per hour or 60 for the day; double and triple for the fancy stuff.

36. The Smokehouse. This store sells snuff and fine tobacco products. It also has a smoking lounge for customers to sample their purchases. Lately, it has become a hang-out for newly rich merchants and young nobles.

37. The Jolly Blackburn Inn & Tavern. A large place with 150 rooms. The manager is **Kyn Dayvazar**, a wily and frugal elf who pinches every penny and keeps an eye on the customers. Jolly is a cheerful, round human who loves to talk and entertain.

The place is always packed (fair prices for no-frill accommodations) and the tavern is a rowdy, fun place to unwind.

38. **Sage.** This one is an expert on Western nobility. He has become an extremely reliable source of gossip and intelligence on the goings-on of Embassy Row. How this hasn't gotten him embroiled in some major plot or intrigue is a wonder to all.

39. **Temple to the Gods of Darkness.** Shrines to Set, Anubis, Apepi, Amon, Anhur, Ammit and Bes.

40. **Kaylee's Masquerade Hall.** A house of ill repute where everybody — clients and pros alike, wear ornate masquerade masks to hide their identities. As a result, it is a favorite haunt for high-profile people who don't want their naughty escapades made public. Security is very tight here, run by a deadly serious madam and her head of security — a 7th level human mercenary (who's also her lover). Thieves are always trying to figure out how to tap the incredible blackmail potential here. Drugs of every variety are also available at this place at half cost to regulars, double for strangers.

41. **Cuts and Coiffures.** This prestigious hair salon and wig shop is patronized by the wealthiest and most influential people in town. Just getting a trim costs 100 gold, and a custom hairpiece can cost over 2,500 gold. A humans-only clientele. Anybody making an appearance here will quickly become a topic of conversation among the gossip circles of Caer Glaverius's elite.

42. **Flowers by Vadrusian.** Vadrusian is a lithe elf who is a walking encyclopedia of plant lore. He sells ordinary flowers for 3-6 gold a bunch, but also can obtain exotic blooms from the deep jungle for 15-30 gold a bunch. Vadrusian has a large greenhouse in the back where he grows his inventory. A local thieves' guild is **pressuring** him to grow various addictive drugs for them, but Vadrusian is holding out as best he can.

43. **Temple of Aco & The Juggernaut.** A small but growing temple.

44. **Temple to the Gods of Dragonwright.** Sect-driven violence has plagued this magnificent place lately.

45. **Tencoin Cemetary.** Surrounded by a high iron gate and patrolled at night by large war dogs. A **cemetary** where nobles and the wealthy middle-class are buried.

46. **Caer Glaverius Hotel.** The best accommodations in town. A basic room starts at 100 gold, a suite 600. Has 200 quality rooms.

47. **Caer Glaverius Hospital.** A large medical center staffed with a variety of doctors, shamans and healers. Typical rates are 10 gold per hit point recovered, plus an additional 500 gold for healing a major disease or injury, such as a broken bone or hurt internal organ. The staff here cannot remove curses, nor can they raise the dead. All payments are to be in cash, up front.

48. **Weapons for Giants.** A shop that specializes in giant-sized weapons and armor. It is run by a solemn Cyclops, so he also offers a selection of Lightning weapons at 50% higher than book prices. Several **dwarven** specialists are on hand to add **dwarven** special properties onto giant-sized weapons, but charge an extra 25% on top of the extra costs for dwarven weapons (as laid out in the **RPG** rule book).

49. **The Dreamtime.** Caer Glaverius's most notorious drug den and house of iniquity.

Provincial Breakdown of the Yin-Sloth Jungles Colony

Without question, the Glaverius Province is what most people consider when they think of the Yin-Sloth Periphery. It is the most developed and modern of the current three Provinces in this region. In addition to the city, Caer Glaverius, there are dozens of plantations, small towns, fishing villages, small ports, and farms spanning a radius of about 100 miles (160 km) around the central city. This does not include the many trading posts, trappers' lodges, and secret, hidden pirate bases. There are easily **185,000** people (roughly two thirds in or around Caer Glaverius) in this province, ten times bigger than its next largest competitor. And this does not include the thousands of sailors, pirates and adventurers who stop briefly on ship, or the tens of thousands of slaves.

The other two provinces of the Yin-Sloth Periphery are new expansions instigated by the *Imperial House* to "further develop this valuable region." They are rough and tumble settlements, forts and out posts, but without the crime and vice. One is the **Durning Province** with a half dozen small towns, a logging camp, sugar plantation, fishing and small trade port. It has a total of **13,000** settlers and a garrison of 6000 Imperial troops. The other is **Longacre**, a new province that doesn't have its main industries up and running yet, but is trying to establish plantations and a slave market. It has a total of 21,000 settlers and a garrison of 10,000 Imperial troops. There is an especially strong military presence throughout the province, deployed to hold the regional border against incursions from the Orcish Empire.

The hinterlands of this region are full of ancient ruins, temples and pyramids. There are also substantial settlements of tezcats, **grimbor** and other jungle folk. See the **Yin-Sloth Jungles** sourcebook for details.

Other Places of Note

Finally, aside from the known territories of the Western Empire, there are a handful of minor settlements that are technically part of the Empire, but don't figure prominently into its day-to-day affairs. The exact data (i.e., town information, population) keeps shifting, so nothing about these transitory settlements is set in stone.

Half-Moon Island: This C-shaped spot of land lies just off the coast where the Western Empire and Old Kingdom currently meet. The island lies just south of Phi, and has been an uninhabited wilderness for centuries. Since Emperor Itomas has **kickstarted** the Imperial colonization program, he has sent a flotilla of colony ships and an Imperial garrison detachment to clear the island and settle it. The colony is only three years old, but is flourishing because of the massive resources dedicated to ensuring its success. All that exists right now is a harbor, some farms, a small town named Crescent City, home to about 2,500 colonists, and a disturbingly large military base (8,000 Army, 12,000 Navy).

Phi and Lopan have voiced strong concerns regarding the settling of Half-Moon Island, but Emperor Itomas doesn't care, and they have to admit that nobody else had ever laid claim to it, so it was fair game. He intends to use the island as a merchant's way-station and as a base from which the Western Navy can crack down against pirates in the Inland Sea and a means to lend support to the Ophid's and Old Kingdom Colonies when they need it (he also hopes this maneuver will help him to keep the shipping lanes from being blockaded if and when the Middle Kingdoms wage their revolt). Eventually, he may use this island as a staging ground to invade Phi and Lopan, so both Island Kingdoms have reason to be concerned, but such a development is at least 20 years away, and may never come to pass.

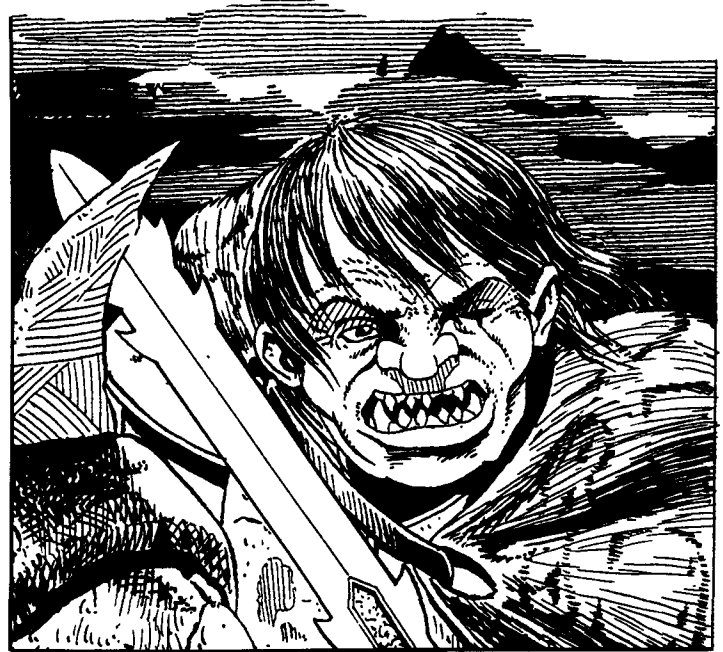
Gruzzia Islands: The last territorial holding of the Western Empire is this tiny island chain, so far to the west of the Isle of the Cyclops that they don't appear on most maps. A Western Navy ship was blown off course several years ago and found this place. Each of the island chain's four major islands have ancient temples on them, similar to those found in the **Floenry** Isles. Emperor Itomas has since sent a garrison detachment to the islands and a small number of colonists (under 200 per island) to explore the islands, establish self-sufficient outposts and try to learn all they can about the mysterious ruins. This mission is top-secret, and anything of importance that is found is to be **teleported** back to Emperor Itomas immediately. The island chain is named after Captain **Zurul Gruzzia** who accidentally discovered them.

The Northern Wilderness Colonies: There are two settlements on the coast of the inland sea, North Port and Falton Crest. Both are sad places with fewer than 2,000 people each, and are little more than wilderness outposts surrounded by large **shantytowns**. None of the streets are paved, and the colonies get absolutely no financial support from back home. This means they must support themselves by farming, hunting and fishing the best they can. These colonies seem doomed to die either this winter or the next, or at the hands of the Wolfen or other hostile forces. Rumor has it that one of the settlements resorted to cannibalism during the last winter and are now **half-crazed** Death Cult worshipers of some kind who stalk other humanoids and pray to some dark god or demon lord.

Northern humans consider these places cursed and vile. They do not respect these ill-prepared foreigners who obviously have no understanding of nature or respect for the Northern lands. Since they were not authorized by the Western Empire, and most left because they were rebels or dissidents unhappy back home, their pleas for help fall upon deaf ears in the West. Those who want to go home, back to the Empire, must find their own way to do so.

Baalgor Wasteland Colonies: There are currently five or six of these pitiful outpost settlements. None are officially sanctioned or supported by the Western Empire and they are half-baked operations. Most of these so-called "colonists" are criminals or political outcasts who must leave the Empire but are afraid to travel to the Northern Wilderness, Old Kingdom, or Yin-Sloth Jungles. Moreover, they don't have the means to travel to Phi, Lopan, the Eastern Territory, or lands farther south or east, so they try to make a go at it in the Wastelands. These tiny settlements (typically under 500 people) form pathetic militias to defend themselves, but they usually fall apart

during any serious fighting, even if the settlers outnumber their foes three to one. The average life span of these colonies is about 3-5 years. In that time, these towns usually get destroyed by bad weather, famine, disease, or attacks from hostile monsters. Survivors usually band together or go to a different settlement to try to regroup and rebuild there. Large bands of Gromeks, ogres and giants have been a particularly bad problem in recent years.



News has circulated back to **Caer Itom** that one of these colonies has made an archeological find of incredible significance, that perhaps a section of the famed city of **Baalgor** has been found totally preserved and unhurt from the cataclysm of the Elf-Dwarf Wars. Such a find would yield incredible magical knowledge, treasure, and historical secrets. Unfortunately, nobody knows if these reports are true or not. Wild stories are always circulating about the badlands beyond the Empire, and 90% of the time they are false. The Imperial House is debating whether or not the Empire should investigate the story (G.M. Note: The story is false).

The Dread Colony: Nobody back home knows it even exists. Fifty years ago, a merchant fleet out of Upper Kighfalton was blown off course and shipwrecked on one of the tiny islands of the Sea of Dread's southern archipelago. Fighting starvation, monsters, wild animals and the elements, the hundred or so sailors and crew members have managed to stay alive and build a little shipwreck community for themselves. They have become totally isolated and somewhat backward. They no longer remember the ways and customs of the West, and have become a hard-bitten, unique culture unto themselves. These hardy folk are adept at hunting, fishing and swimming. They have no desire to leave their island home and make no effort to do so (if they tried, their tiny boats wouldn't survive the rough seas, flocks of **Peryton**, and schools of sea monsters in the region). The current inhabitants of these islands have never seen outsiders, except for the rare survivor or two of other shipwrecks, and they consider their Western land of origin to be a myth. They are led by a pair of spooky old mystics named **Boleal** (a 6th level Shaman) and **Gira** (5th level Druid). The community has only 312 people.

New Magic Items

Magic Items & the Western Empire

While the Palladium world is steeped in magic, most inhabitants *never* own a single magic item. The main reason is that they are way too expensive, and often impractical for everyday life. Many magic items are designed for combat and adventuring, so the average farmer, laborer, shop clerk and most common folk have no need for them. Furthermore, they don't have the inclination or ability to go adventuring. Indeed, it is the freewheeling adventurers who live by the sword and their wits who need, desire and collect magic items. Wealthy nobles, priests and kings may also possess magic items. Yet these elite fighters, the wealthy and even practitioners of magic, may find certain items difficult to come by.

There is no place in the known world where magic is more varied, widespread and plentiful than the Western Empire. Wealth, decadence, a lust for power and a brazen disregard for the danger that magic represents all play a role in the popularity and availability of magic in the West. Here it seems that everyone, from the highest nobles and priests of darkness to the lowliest adventurer and curious citizen, has an interest in magic. Westerners are fascinated by magic and lust for its powers. Un-

like most nations of the known world, the political powers of the Western Empire have not outlawed any form of magic and actively search for arcane secrets forsaken by the elder races because they were too corrupting and dangerous.

Much of this is in a mad bid for power. As usual, the people of the Western Empire are willing to risk everything and flirt with destruction to get what they want — and what they want is world domination. They ignore the warnings of elves and dwarves who point to the destruction the misuse of magic brought to their once grand empires. The elder races plead the Empire with to not search out the forbidden magicks of the by-gone era and put a stop to the demon worship, practice of Summoning, the enslavement of supernatural beings, and the widespread experimentation in the pursuit of new forms of magic. **Frighteningly**, the people of the Empire laugh as they tread down the same path, insisting that they will not make the same mistakes as the elves and dwarves. It is an Empire of people who flagrantly disregard history, embrace magic without fear, and dare to consort with demons and dark forces they cannot comprehend and have little chance to control.





It is this arrogance, conquering spirit and dedication to rediscover or invent new, powerful and dangerous magicks that worries the rest of the world powers and gives people their greatest reason to fear the Western Empire. This is also a big reason the West is considered corrupt, depraved and beset by insanity, for what madman would try to enslave demons and summon forces that could engulf the world in a bid for power?

The Demon Black Ships are perhaps the most infamous example of the Western Empire's use of ancient and forbidden magic. How these demon ships are created is a closely guarded secret. The Empire's apparent allegiance and open association with the Cyclops is another example of their decadence and willingness to associate with the monstrous to attain power. Nowhere other than the Isle of the Cyclops are the magical lightning rods more commonplace, owned primarily by the Imperial Army and high nobility, but also sold on the black market throughout most coastal cities in the realm. And there is worse. The magic guilds, alchemists and cults are encouraged to tap dark forces and develop new forms of magic. Meanwhile, adventurers (bandits, pirates, and grave robbers too) are encouraged to find, and bring to the *Imperial House*, ancient artifacts, tablets, scrolls, books and magic items that might help to unravel the secrets of ancient magic. The **Imperial Examiner of Artifacts and Treasure** (located in the capital city, with a few smaller branches in other cities, including Caer **Itom** and most provincial capitals) will gladly inspect such items and pay good prices for the ones wanted for its archives. Depending on the individual facility and how busy it is, such an examination can be made in a matter of minutes or require 24 to 72 hours. Rumor has it that truly rare and valuable items, particularly rune weapons and those dating to The Time of a Thousand Magicks or older, are never returned. Supposedly, a fair (not always full) market price will be paid, but item, will not be returned. Those adventurers who protest too loudly, or violently, are dealt with by Imperial sorcerers **and/or** soldiers assigned to protect and defend Imperial interests. Moreover, it is said that adventurers, especially foreigners and nonhumans, in possession of rare (often priceless) artifacts and magic items, who refuse to sell to the *Imperial Examiner* (or other Imperial institution) inevitably fall to trouble: robbed, attacked and robbed, disappear, or run afoul of Imperial Troops. Criminals and troublemakers (charges may be false) may see their possessions seized (or the item in question vanish, with the authorities claiming ignorance to its very existence, or accepted as a bribe for freedom). The least fortunate get arrested for a serious charge and are sentenced to the gladiatorial arena, imprisonment, slavery (often sold and sent to a distant land) or executed — the possessions of the criminals (imprisoned or slain) go to the state. The implication (at least among anti-Western Empire conspiracists) is that if the Imperial House wants something (and to only a slightly lesser degree, one of the Noble Houses), they get it one way or another. On the other hand, it is unwise to flash powerful weapons, magic items, treasure and valuables around anywhere in the Western Empire, especially the big cities. The size, importance and decadence of the Western Empire (it is said a man can buy anything he desires in the Empire, including rare magic and fellow humans) attracts all manner of low life, criminals, and villains, as well as thousands of visitors, nobles, priests, scholars, mages, mercenaries and adventurers.

The *Imperial House* is especially interested in the secrets of summoning and commanding demon armies and the creation of Rune Weapons. For over 5000 years, factions within the Western Empire have plumbed the depths and dangers of the subterranean ruins of the fallen **Dwarven** Empire. For just as long, the greatest mages of the world have been invited to rediscover the secrets of rune magic; the one who is successful wins the position of Imperial Wizard and receives an incredible fortune (a life of luxury, position, power and millions in gold). Thankfully, thousands have tried without success, but the quest continues.

Comparatively speaking, the rich, powerful and decadent cities of the West have the larger collections of magic items because there are so many alchemists there to produce them, and nobility, wealthy people, warriors, adventurers, and visiting foreigners to buy them. The most unscrupulous magic dealers (and there are many) will sell to anybody, including known outlaws, fugitives, assassins, the monster races, forbidden cultists, foreign aristocrats, and other dangerous people. Of course, such risky business usually requires a slight markup, 2-5 times higher than the usual book price, with prices varying depending on the desperateness of the situation, the purchaser, the possibility of return business (gets a better price) and the size of his purse.

Magic items of any kind are often considered hard to find or exotic elsewhere, but are relatively cheap (suggested book price to **10%-20%** below; magic components, 20% to 40% below) and readily available. Likewise, spices, tobacco, alcohol, herbs, poisons, fumes, and magic components are plentiful, at **10%** below list price, particularly at large and coastal cities, as well as many smaller communities, cities deep in the interior of the Empire and even border towns. Magic scrolls, potions and lesser magic items are also fairly common. Holy weapons and powerful magic weapons, armor and items are rare and expensive even in the West, and rune weapons, religious and magical artifacts over 3000 years old, exotic/unusual magic items, and the Cyclops Lightning Shafts (javelins and especially arrows) are rare and highly prized.

For adventurers with cash to burn and a shopping list of magic items, the Western Empire truly is the place to be. If they look hard enough and in the right places, just about every kind of magic item is available for the right price. Items that would never be sold elsewhere, can be bought or bartered for. However, when making deals in the "Empire of Sin," customers should remember that often the price can be something other than money. "Services" such as kidnapping, blackmail, robbery (and nothing insignificant or easy), spying, protection, and murder are all marketable commodities in the West.



Notable Magic and Magic Items Unique to the Western Empire

With so many practitioners of magic, cultists, **Alchemists**, alchemical experimenters and such a long history (some might say obsession) with magic, the Western Empire is a great place to find rare, odd, and even experimental magic items in addition to the, comparatively, standard fare you'd find elsewhere. Here is a sampling:

Magical Weapon Attributes

Keep in mind that a magic weapon can have no more than a total of three magic attributes. Moreover, the same attribute cannot be placed on a particular weapon more than once.

Sound Effect: The weapon will create a single sound effect whenever it is drawn and swung in attack. The sound can be no louder than the thunderclap typically heard from Thunder Hammers and usually considerably quieter, although most are loud. Commonly available sounds include a (louder than usual and somewhat intimidating) swish, the sound of rushing wind, buzzing, "singing" (a sweet ringing), a lion's roar, and a low bass hum. No funny animal sounds or the sounds of various bodily functions can be purchased.

Surefingers: Weapons with this attribute cannot be accidentally dropped or knocked out of their wielders' hand (impervious to disarm attacks). Cost: 15,000 gold.

Foebane (3x daily): Enables the user to identify the strongest life force (**level/hit points/S.D.C./brute strength**) among the enemies before him. Cost: 10,000 gold.

Venomblade (3x daily): When this power is activated, the next time the weapon pierces an opponent's flesh, the victim must save versus poison or suffer the effects of one of the various poisons. The cost of this feature depends on the type of poison (the poisons are described in the *Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Ed.*, page 265).

Wart Callo: 12,000 gold.

Scorpion's Blood: 15,000 gold.

Gutwrench: 25,000 gold.

Witchbane: 20,000 gold.

Basilisk's Eye: 25,000 gold.

Dragon's Breath: 30,000 gold.

Super-Sharpness: +4 to damage, but more importantly it lowers the required roll for a *critical strike* by two points. For example: If a character requires a Natural 20 for a critical strike, that number is reduced to "18" when this weapon is used. For example, a 6th level Mercenary who needs to roll a natural 18, 19 or 20 for a critical strike would only have to roll a natural 16-20 for a critical strike with this blade weapon. Cost: 40,000 gold.

Double Damage to Good: Weapon does 2x damage to any Scrupulous or Principled target. Normal damage to targets of any other alignment. Cost: 10,000 gold.

Double Damage to Evil: Weapon does 2x damage to any Miscreant, Aberrant or Diabolic alignment. Normal damage to targets of any other alignment. Cost: 15,000 gold.

Numbing Cold (3x daily): When this power is activated, the next time the weapon hits, the victim must save versus magic or lose half of his attacks, reduce speed by half, and suffer -2 on all rolls to strike, parry, dodge, roll with punch, and initiative for 1D6 melees. Cost: 40,000 gold.

Physical Transferral: Any Hit Point or S.D.C. damage caused by this weapon is temporarily transferred to the wielder of the magic weapon! The Hit Point/S.D.C. transfer lasts for as many minutes as the wielder's P.E. (i.e. 9 P.E. = 9 minutes, etc.). Any damage the weapon wielder takes is removed from his "stolen" Hit Points and S.D.C. first. Cost: 500,000+ gold, but often much more than that, when available at all; very rare.

Infectious Wounds: All wounds caused by this weapon will not heal naturally. Failure to close these wounds by magical or psionic means will result in life-threatening infection to inflame the wound. This means the wound does not heal (no S.D.C./H.P. recovery) and the victim takes two additional points of damage for every wound inflicted, every 24 hours. Failure to heal these wounds completely with extraordinary means (magic or psionics) within three days results in a fever (reduce all combat bonuses by half and speed and skill performance by 20%) and +2D6 damage each subsequent 24 hours. Note: Only evil characters are likely to commission an Alchemist to add this feature to a weapon. Western assassin guilds are notorious for endowing weapons with this **and/or** the poison feature. Cost: 100,000 gold.

Armor Piercing: Weapons with this feature will bypass the A.R. of their targets. If used against targets wearing body armor, the armor will not be harmed by this weapon, as it will automatically seek out gaps and chinks in the armor through which to



strike. When used against creatures with a high natural A.R., this weapon simply goes through the natural defenses. Cost: 350,000+ gold; very rare.

Teleports to Wielder: This feature allows the wielder of the weapon to "summon" the weapon to his or her hand, up to 500 miles (800 km) away. Assassins are especially fond of this feature, since they use it to bring weapons into supposedly safe places at a moment's notice (**teleport** counts as one melee action). The **teleported** weapon can also be used to recover the magic weapon when thrown, but the act of causing the weapon to teleport back counts as one melee action. If this magic weapon is placed in a circle or container with the *Mystic Energy Drain ward*, the weapon is trapped and cannot teleport until it is removed from that ward's effects. Note: The weapon cannot be made to teleport *into* an enemy or anywhere but in its owner's hand. The magic bonds with one particular person/owner/wielder after it has tasted his blood (needs to prick finger and run his blood along the length of the blade) and been in his possession for at least 72 hours. Thus, it will be inert for 72 hours after the death or loss of its current owner. Cost: 400,000+ gold; very rare.

Magical Armor Attributes

Like magical weapons, magical armor can only have three magic attributes built into it. Moreover, the same magical attribute cannot be placed on a particular armor more than once.

Chameleon (3x daily): Same as the Earth Warlock spell; duration 30 minutes. Can be turned on and off at will. Cost: 25,000 gold.

Burst into Flame (3x daily): Fundamentally the same as the Fire Warlock spell, only it is the enchanted armor that bursts into flame. Thus, the magical flame provides the armor (temporarily) with an extra 100 S.D.C. (all attacks come off this first), increases the armor's A.R. by two points, and punches, kicks, and any built-in weapon (like the retractable magic blade) inflicts an extra 3D6 damage. Likewise, any punch, touch or grabbing of the blazing armor does 3D6 damage to the fool touching it. There is also the danger of setting combustibles on fire (01-50% chance). Meanwhile, the character inside the armor can see clearly and is unaffected by his own magic flames. Cost: 50,000 gold.

Fright Mask/Face-Plate: This enchantment is placed on the face-plate of a helmet or suit of armor (note that not all armor has a protective face cover/plate). It is similar to a Fright Wig, in made to scare and intimidate the hell out of an opponent. In most instances, the face-plate/metal mask is shaped to resemble a monstrous or inhuman face. During combat, the wearer can mentally activate the enchantment to make the face-plate move, snarl, frown, make biting snaps, smile, mouth words and make faces, plus horns, feathers, or strands of hair may move around with a life of their own. Many Western based mercenaries, assassins and fighters like to use this magical feature to gain a psychological edge in combat. It is also sometimes used in the gladiatorial arena. Special Bonuses: 1-80% likelihood to intimidate all who behold the wearer or Horror Factor 15 when angry or trying to deliberately **frighten** someone. Always has the initiative in **combat/first** attack and people will usually back down from a challenge (80% to intimidate). **Note:** Conversely, oppo-

nents are likely to view this character as the most dangerous and therefore, he is the most likely to be attacked first or by greater numbers. A psionic see aura will not note any significant impression. Cost: 35,000 to 50,000 gold.

Spell Abilities (3x daily): Western Alchemists are fond of adding spell magic to suits of armor. Such abilities can typically be used only three times daily and are utilitarian spells that serve to augment the armor. Popular "armor spells" include Resist Fire, Impervious to Fire, Impervious to Energy, Energy Field, Multiple Image, Eyes of Thoth, Breathe Without Air, Fleet Feet, Superhuman Speed, Superhuman Strength, Swim as a Fish (Superior), Climb, Float in Air, and Fly as the Eagle. This option is especially attractive to warriors who either don't care for weenie little rings and things, or who can't read magical scrolls. Cost: Each spell ability costs the same as if a scroll of the spell were being manufactured, plus 50%. In general, Alchemists will not add to armor any spell abilities other than those listed above.

Regenerating Armor (S.D.C.): A very expensive and rare magical attribute, since few Alchemists can add this feature to armor. Damage done to the armor is magically **restored/regenerated** at a rate of 10 S.D.C. per hour. If the armor is destroyed, reduced to zero S.D.C., the enchantment is broken and the armor is worthless scrap metal. Note: Applicable only to metal armor from chain to plate. Cost: 200,000 gold; rare.



Retractable Gauntlet Claws: Essentially, these are Gryphon Claws built into the armor's gauntlets and appear as curved claws or three knife-like blades that extend beyond the knuckles. The dagger-sized blades do 2D6 per swipe. Cost: 50,000 gold, per **gauntlet/hand**. It can be built into one hand of a full suit of armor or just a single gauntlet with metal plating.

Retractable Forearm Blades: Similar to a Gryphon Claw or Gauntlet, this magic is cast into the metal vambrace or armored

plating that covers the forearm. The exact appearance of the blade can vary stylistically to match the temperament of its purchaser, but most are fundamentally a long blade, sharp on both sides, roughly equivalent to a short sword or broadsword, except the magic blade does 2D6+2 or 3D6+2 respectively. **Note:** It can only be placed into a full or half suit of plate armor or plate and chain, or scale or splint mail with metal plates/vambraces protecting the arms. Cost: 40,000 gold for a short sword or 60,000 gold for a large sword, per each individual arm.

Electrical Discharge (3x daily): The wearer of the armor can release a built-up electrical charge for additional damage. If the wearer chooses to discharge the energy by touching the target or by channeling it through a metal weapon, the damage is 6D6. If the user chooses to cast the energy as a crude lightning bolt, the range is only 20 feet, and the bolt does 3D6. Cost: 35,000 gold.

Potions

As most places elsewhere in the known world, Western Alchemists sell potions in single doses. The typical potion lasts for 10 minutes unless otherwise stated. Remember, those slipped a potion against their will get to save vs nonlethal poison (16 or higher). Prices noted are the suggested book price as used around the world, but in the Western Empire, they may be 10-30% less.

Change Aura: By drinking the potion, the user's aura is changed to appear 1D4+1 levels weaker or higher/more powerful than it really is (user's choice, made by concentrating on the desired effect). Cost: 750 gold.

Death Trance: Causes the user to go into a death-like state for 12 hours. Versions of this potion are available with different durations. 8, 6, 3 and 1 hour versions are most common, as well as a 15 minute version. Cost: 550 gold.



Dragon's Breath: Drinking this potion allows the user to breathe fire (3D6 damage, 01-25% chance of igniting combustibles) once per melee round for five minutes. Cost: 1200gold.

Gullet of Iron: This potion makes the user invulnerable to the effects of alcohol, drugs, spoiled food, contaminated water and other non-magical substances for one hour. It also makes any food eaten during this time taste especially good. Cost: 600 gold.

Mystic Nourishment: Drinking this potion not only negates the user's need to eat for three days, but magically provides the nourishment and vitamins equal to three days of food. Popular as a survival device among explorers, adventurers and warriors. Cost: 750 gold.

Mystic Water: Drinking this one vial of potion negates the user's need to drink water and magically keeps him from dehydrating for 24 hours (it as if he's had plenty to drink regardless of the level of exertion). Cost: 1000 gold.

Potent Belching: One melee round after drinking this potion, the character can belch forth an incredibly powerful blast of noxious air. Range: 20 foot (6 m) straight line or a six foot (1.8 m) radius. The stink is so bad that it makes eyes water and nose hairs bristle. Everybody affected is distracted and annoyed; -2 on initiative, -1 to strike and -5% on skill performance. In addition, the belch is quite loud and repulsive to "civilized" folk. Each magically enhanced belch counts as one melee action/attack, and can be used to increase the size of the stink zone, or to keep the smell going (it fades after one minute). However, the penalties are not increased by multiple burps. The magic belching ability only lasts four minutes per potion. **Note:** The belches from Orcs, Ogres, and Trolls are worse than any other races; double the penalties and duration of the stench. According to rumor, this potion was inspired by or based on a rare Faerie Food. Cost: 1,000 gold.

Speaking in Tongues: Identical to a weird spell created by a Wizard's Guild in Caer Itom, this potion robs the user of his ability to speak clearly. For the next 10 minutes, the user's every spoken word will come out as unintelligible gibberish. What's worse, the user will only hear himself speaking clearly and succinctly, and will have a difficult time realizing why nobody can understand what he's saying. Spell casting, performance of spoken rituals, mass and singing are impossible. Cost: 800 gold.

Shout: Brought to you by the same Wizard's Guild who created the Speaking in Tongues potion, this elixir elevates the user's speaking volume to the level of shouting and bellowing. Even whispering will be as loud as a yell, and screaming as loud as one can will produce a roar that, if done outside, can be heard up to one mile (1.6 km) away. Indoors, this bellow will produce a Horror Factor of 10. This potion is frequently used by nobility, performers, and speakers when addressing large gatherings outdoors. Cost: 900 gold.

Superior Resistance: Confers a +4 bonus to save versus magic illusions and psionic or supernatural possession. Cost: 900 gold.

Sweetsong: Used by mediocre minstrels and nobles everywhere. The potion instills the user with an absolutely incredible singing voice for 30 minutes. Cost: 300-500 gold, but sometimes higher if there are a lot of second-rate singers in town.

Rings, Charms & Talismans

Attribute Booster: These rings will increase one of the wearer's eight basic attributes (I.Q., M.E., M.A., P.S., P.P., P.E., P.B., Spd.); mental and most physical attributes are boosted by

three points. Only P.S. and Speed can be increase by more than three, up to a maximum of 10 points, but increase the cost of the ring by 5000 gold per each point above three. Each attribute booster ring is built to boost only one particular attribute, so a ring designed to boost Physical Beauty will only boost P.B. These rings cannot be used to bypass the attribute requirements of a particular O.C.C. Cost: 30,000 gold.

Fleshvenom Ring: Wearing this ring makes one's flesh and blood venomous. Any creature biting the wearer must save versus poison or suffer 4D6 damage per biting attack. Cost: 40,000 gold.

Ironhide Ring: Confers a natural A.R. upon the wearer. Any strikes that don't beat this magical A.R. bounce off harmlessly. Cost: Varies depending on the A.R. conferred. A.R. 10: 40,000 gold. A.R. 12: 70,000 gold. A.R. 14: 125,000 gold. A.R. 16: 250,000 gold.

Ring of Deflection: Adds +2 to parry. Cost: 25,000 gold.

Ring of the Dwarven Lords: This ring gives the wearer several dwarf-like attributes, including (90 feet) **nightvision** (27 m), +25% to Identify Precious Metals/Stones, +25% to Recognize Weapon Quality, and +25% Locate/Find Secret Compartments. If the wearer already has these skills, the 25% is added to their success ratio. If the wearer does not have these skills, they can be performed at a flat 25% (plus I.Q. bonuses, of course). A curious side effect from wearing these enchanted rings for three months is the wearer will begin to dislike elves and become slightly agoraphobic (in this case, a strong dislike of open spaces and a fear of the public/large crowds of people/gatherings above ground; feels at home underground, even in large crowds). Elves abstain from using rings of the Dwarven Lords out of general principle. Cost: 25,000 gold.

Rune Rings of the Dwarven Lords: These are legendary magic items that, in addition to the abilities noted above, instill the wearer with +2 to I.Q., +6 to P.S., +2 to P.E., +20 to S.D.C., and the ability to speak and understand all languages at 88%. The Rune Rings possess the eight abilities common to all Rune Weapons (damage is 4D6 from a punch or strike with a hand-held weapon) and one set of greater abilities. The intelligence of the ring is never less than nine, and the alignment is typically selfish or evil (33% are aberrant). The side effects noted previously also occur, but the user also begins to develop a huskier build and shrinks in size at a rate of six inches (0.15 m) every six months until about five feet (1.5 m) tall (no shrinking effect on dwarves, but they have dreams and nightmares concerning the collapse of the Dwarven Kingdom). At least one thousand of these rings are said to have once existed, but only 19 are accounted for in the Western Empire. Cost: 2-10 million gold and up, even though they are considered "cursed."

Rings of Tandem Telepathy: These rings only work in pairs or sets of three, and only when each is worn by a different person. The people wearing these rings can maintain telepathic contact with each other, up to 100 miles (160 km) away. While "connected," the wearers of these rings can communicate telepathically at will and sense when the other is **sick**, injured or slain. The only drawback to these rings is that their mental connection is so great that if one of the wearers suffers an acute psychological trauma or insanity, the other will, too! Cost: 80,000 gold.

Ring of Tongues: Gives the wearer the ability to understand and speak any language at 98%. Cost: 15,000gold.

Ring of Truesight: The wearer of this ring sees through magical and psionic illusions, and drug induced hallucinations (half the usual penalties). In addition, the wearer is not hindered by magical or non-magical darkness, and can see the invisible. This ring does not allow the wearer to see through non-magical disguises, nor will the wearer be able to detect Changelings, other shapechangers (like werebeasts and dragons), or otherwise metamorphosed individuals or creatures. Cost: 40,000 gold.

Ring of Vigor: Makes the wearer immune to all diseases, magical and non-magical. Also gives the wearer +10% to save versus coma and death. Cost: 30,000 gold.



Shadow Beast Amulet: This impressive piece of neck jewelry has a large, attractive gemstone as its centerpiece. The gemstone is actually a magical holding cell that contains an imprisoned Shadow Beast, as per the Wizard spell. The Shadow Beast can be called out 3x per day (ideally at night) to do the owner's **bidding**, but each time the creature is drawn forth, there is a 01-20% chance that it can refuse its master and return to the gemstone without doing as told. There is also a 01-03% chance it can break the mystical hold over it. When this happens, the Shadow Beast will either flee to its home dimension or attack the amulet's owner. The latter may depend on how well the amulet owner treated it. Once the Shadow Beast breaks free or is killed, the item becomes useless. Cost: 60,000+ gold; rare.

Talisman of the Lunar Lords: This charm appears to be a large **wolf's** tooth on a silver chain. Anyone wearing it receives the following bonuses:

- Sight: 10 foot (3 m) nightvision, 50% to see the invisible.
- Hearing: Detect noise within a 20 foot (6 m) radius 90%, +1 on initiative, and virtually impossible to be caught off guard or from behind (only 01-10% chance).
- Taste: Identify food, spices and plants by taste 50%.

- **Touch:** Sensitive to even minor temperature changes 60%, +5% to all tactile skills, such as pick locks, pick pockets and locate/find secret compartments and doors.
- **Tracking:** Fresh trail (up to 3 hours old) 80%, less than one day old 55%, more than one day old 20% (+10% at night).
- **Sense of direction** 90%.
- **The curse!** After 2D4+4 months of possessing this talisman, the user contracts lycanthropy and becomes a werewolf! The user will not be aware of the affliction at first — his or her nightly exploits will only be recalled as fleeting dreams — but three months after the lycanthropy sets in, the owner of the talisman becomes aware of his or her affliction. A successful remove curse will break the spell, provided the character gets rid of the talisman. Most Alchemists neglect to point out this nasty side effect. Cost: 30,000-50,000 gold; rare.

Totem Ring. This ring allows the user to **metamorphosize** into an animal as per the old Druid Metamorphosis ability. These rings are fixed to a particular totem (hooved, avian, rodent, canine, feline), and will only allow the wearer to change into animals of that specific totem. The ring can be used at will, but every time the user activates this power, there is a 01-15% chance that the user will revert to animal intelligence and remain locked in animal form for 24 hours. Only a Remove Curse will break the effect sooner. Cost: 80,000 gold; rare.

Anti-Venom Charm: Whenever the owner of this bauble fails a normal save vs **poison/toxin**, the poison is automatically negated by the magic of this item. Unfortunately, charms of this type tend to have 1D6+10 charges/saves, after which they will crumble to dust. An extremely popular item among wealthy merchants and noblemen. Cost: 10,000 gold.

Keremond's Spellshield: An ornate pendant that nullifies the effect of any spell, good or bad, cast on the wearer. The spellshield can absorb only 100 P.P.E. worth of magic energy before it overloads and explodes. The blast does 1D4x10 damage, but is concentrated on the person wearing it (roughly a 3 ft/0.9 m diameter). As the Spellshield absorbs more energy, it grows brighter and hotter; within 15 P.P.E. of overloading, the pendant hums. The Spellshield can only be drained of its P.P.E. by an Alchemist, who needs to hold the pendant for 24 hours, but charges only 200 gold (namely because he can use the trapped mystic energy in his own magic via a secret ritual). Cost: 40,000 gold for the initial Spellshield pendant.

Other Western Magic Items

Bottomless Quiver: The name is something of a misnomer, as there is a finite number of arrows. However, this ordinary-looking quiver that is treasured by archers, for it has a larger space on the inside than on the outside. Up to 128 arrows may be placed in one of these quivers, although only 20 show, plus the weight is only that of 20 arrows. The quiver looks like a normal container for arrows, except the number of arrows never seems to diminish (until the arrow supply gets to 20 or less). The only drawback to the bottomless quiver is that if a user has different kinds of arrows in one of these, finding the right arrow is difficult and takes one full melee round. Note: The Bottomless Quiver was originally invented for the Imperial Army and is rumored to be an ancient **Elven** magick. The secrets of its cre-

ation were stolen two centuries ago and a handful of Alchemists illegally make and sell them on the open market. This item is rare even in the Western Empire, because anybody caught selling it is executed. Cost: 150,000 gold (two to four times more outside the Western Empire).

Gauntlets of Quick Hands: Magical gloves in the form of gauntlets that give the wearer plus one attack per melee round, and +1 to initiative and skills requiring manual dexterity, which can be performed 10% faster, without error. The gauntlets are susceptible to damage just as normal clothing is, and have an A.R. of 10, are impervious to fire (no damage), and have 25 S.D.C. each. *Both* gloves must be worn for them to work, and destroying one ruins the pair. However, for an enemy to target the gloves, he must make a "Called Shot" and is -4 to strike. Damaged Gauntlets of Quick Hands can be repaired by an Alchemist at the cost of 500 gold per each S.D.C. point restored (25 maximum). Cost: 40,000 gold.



Silver Rune Key: A large, ornate key cast from pure silver and inscribed with a variety of Runes. Silver Rune Keys are ancient treasures coveted by thieves, spies, assassins, governments, and collectors of magic from ancient civilizations. They are the bane of civilized kingdoms because they magically reshape to fit into and open *any* lock! Most Silver Rune Keys can only be used six times daily, but some can use this power 12 times per 24 hours. All are incredibly rare and expensive. Note: The Imperial House inherits two such keys and the Houses of **Inindri**, **Kaze** and **Glaverius** are each rumored to possess one as well. These items (and all rune magic) are high priced and keep adventurers going back to ancient **elven** and **dwarven** ruins in the Old Kingdom. Cost: Six times daily: 1-3 million gold. 12x daily: 5-10 million gold.

Sleep Gas: A vial of fluid (can be mistaken for a potion) that when shattered, forms a misty cloud identical to a conjured *Cloud of Slumber* spell. The strength of the potion's effects are as if a 2nd level Wizard cast the spell. Cost: 1,600 gold.

Herbs & Drugs of the Western Empire

Dragonsoldiers: The secret of manufacturing these odd items is said to be known to only five Alchemists throughout the entire world; three in the Western Empire, one on the Isle of the Cyclops and one in the Timiro Kingdom. Close examination of these intricately carved teeth reveal all manner of tiny magic symbols and artwork reminiscent of Scrimshaw (carvings on the teeth and bones of whales). To activate one of these items, the user must place it on the ground, *expend 50 P.P.E.* (which often limits its use to practitioners of magic and priests) and utter a command word, usually inscribed in **Elven** on the surface of the tooth.

Once activated, a **Dragontooth** will burrow into the ground like a drill bit and seemingly disappear. Exactly one melee round later, the tooth will have transformed into a magical, armor clad, sword wielding humanoid warrior, or dragon or animal that fights with tooth and claw — whatever image is etched into the tooth. The warrior will burst up from the floor, regardless of what it is made out of, and begin attacking the first person it sees. Once that target is taken care of, it moves on to the next nearest target. These mystical soldiers will continue this routine for eight melee rounds (two minutes), or until they are destroyed. The only people they will not attack are other Dragonsoldiers, dragons, the person who summoned them and those that person physically shields with his own body.

These mindless, magical automatons fight as 7th level Soldiers, have 80 Hit Points and a natural A.R. of 13. Their P.S., P.P., and P.E. are all **21**. Whether sword, claw, or punch, the magical construct inflicts 3D6+6 damage. When the fighting is done, the tooth reappears at the edge of the hole (unless destroyed), but cannot be used again for 24 hours. Regardless of the **Dragonsoldier's** physical appearance, all have the same stats. Cost: 65,000 per tooth (double outside the Western Empire).

Idrantine Circlet: These ordinary-looking, often tarnished metal headbands appear to be simple pieces of jewelry. Any psychic who puts one on, however, instantly becomes aware that these circlets are storehouses of **I.S.P.** This **I.S.P.** can be tapped by the wearer at any time as needed, until the **I.S.P.** runs out. Idrantine circlets typically hold 100 **I.S.P.** Most (85%) Idrantine circlets are **non-replenishable**; that is, once they're out of **I.S.P.**, they become **burnt-out** and useless. Some (15%) can be recharged by channeling one's own **I.S.P.** into the device — i.e., a psychic expends 20 of his **I.S.P.** into the circlet, thereby recharging the circlet by 20 **I.S.P.** Cost: Non-replenishable: 30,000 gold. **Replenishable/Rechargeable:** 100,000 gold and up.

Note: Idrantine circlets get their name from the famous Elven Alchemist and Mind Mage who invented the device long before the start of the Great Elf-Dwarf War. Idrantine and his followers were all killed during the early days of the War, but by that time, a reportedly sizable number of these circlets had been manufactured and distributed throughout the Kingdom (at least 1000, and perhaps as many as 10,000). Furthermore, some of the ancient, Rune versions (approx. 33%) could hold 200, 300, and 400 **I.S.P.** and all could be replenished with new **I.S.P.** While these more powerful circlets have *never* been found, they would command a very high price if they ever turned up. It is rumored that only one Alchemist associated with a secret **Psionics** Guild in the Western Empire has learned how to build the simple version of this device (as noted above) and only a tiny number are allowed to be sold on the open market.

One of the Western Empire's more disturbing cultural oddities is its comparatively high rate of drug use. Drug dens fill the Western cities. Places where patrons can find a wide variety of herbal mixtures, recreational chemicals, hallucinogens, stimulants, downers/sedatives, and other concoctions particular to the "Empire of Sin." Although excessive drug use is considered synonymous with the Western Empire, scholars point out that very few of the Palladium world's drugs are actually manufactured by the "Empire of Sin," and that the Western Empire leads only in their consumption. Many of the West's drug dens receive their supplies from overseas shipments; lucrative and dangerous cargoes that have made many Western merchants rich, and many others, the unfortunate prey of pirates and other criminals. Most of the world's drugs come from the Timiro Kingdom, Land of the South Winds, and the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Moreover, the Western Empire's drug use wasn't always what it is today. For thousands of years, Western drug use was mostly restricted to medicinal use and substances that induced visions, but when the Empire began sliding into depravity, and its nobles grew decadent, drug use became an epidemic.

Far and away, nobles and the wealthy are the largest consumers of drugs in Western society, mostly because they are the ones most able to afford these expensive substances. Alas, that is not so for the many middle- and lower-class addicts who cannot afford these drugs yet must feed their insatiable cravings for them anyway. Much of the crime in Western cities is perpetrated by desperate individuals trying to scratch together enough money to satisfy their particular drug habit. To make matters worse, drug abuse and addiction has begun to rise in the oldest and proudest cities, mostly among the poor and homeless for whom the intoxicating drugs provide a brief but intense escape from their miserable lives — poverty, disease, pain and violence have plagued the poor for generations. Folks like these most often become the most hardcore drug addicts and turn to crime and treachery to feed their habit.

So far, the Western Empire hasn't outlawed any drugs, despite their debilitating effect on Western society. The most vexing part of the problem, at least to Emperor Itomas, is drug use among the Noble Houses for whom recreational chemicals have become an integral part of their social life. The same can be said of many religious institutions, particularly among the thousands of cults scattered throughout the kingdom. As much as Itomas would like to reduce drug use on the streets of his cities, he can hardly persecute commoners when his very nobles are using the same substances. Like the old days, when the nobility first slid into depravity and **overindulgence**, many Western nobles now spend days in non-stop drug stupors. It is not uncommon for nobles to hold wild feasts in which entire crowds of courtiers and visitors intoxicate themselves on a dazzling array of drugs, in-



eluding fine **wines**, brandy, Faerie Foods and magical elixirs. It is only a matter of time, Itomas and many others feel, before overindulging in such vulgar appetites will cause a considerable portion of the nobility to rot from within and become ineffective leaders. The situation both **frustrates** and disgusts Itomas, who uses such substances very rarely (and always in private — he doesn't like making a spectacle of himself in public. More importantly, he worries about his psychic powers running amok if he were to get intoxicated).

Despite Emperor **Itomas's** efforts to reduce drug use and street crime throughout the Empire, it continues to rise. To stem the tide, the Emperor has made several public addresses, not openly denouncing drugs, but inviting all people of the Empire, high and low, to "join him" in building their minds and bodies free of drugs. That they, the people, are the foundation of the greatest civilization on the planet and to achieve their true greatness they must do so with a clear head and sound body. In surprisingly wild support, the majority of the Imperial Army have followed the Emperor's lead (87%), as have an impressive percentage of the general population (about 55% among the common people, but only 21% among the nobility). Many people, however, feel that even if the Emperor is serious about getting Western society to kick its collective drug dependencies, such a task is impossible. Drug use has been such an integral part of Western culture for thousands of years, that getting people to give it up would be like expecting Wolfen to forego their military traditions. For better or worse, it's just part of the national character. Of course, to Emperor Itomas and a growing number within the military and other administrative arms of the Empire, this is one part of the national character the nation can do without.

The Western Herblore Industry

In the Western Empire, drugs, special herbs and other chemical products are completely unregulated. That means that the most addictive, dangerous or unpredictable substance is just as legal to use, distribute or manufacture as is wine, food, or any other consumable. That doesn't mean however, that the drug trade is a respectable way to make a living. One of the many ironies of Western life is that while many Westerners use drugs on a routine basis, drug makers and sellers often are looked down upon and considered lowly, scum-ridden fiends. Why this is, nobody can really explain. Some think it might be the increasingly pervasive effect of the Church of Light and Dark's teachings through out the empire. Others think it stems from some old prejudice against herbalists from the glory days of the empire, when alchemists' magical concoctions were far more commonplace.

Whatever the cause, public disapproval of the Western drug trade has forced many segments of this industry to operate from the shadows of the empire. Drug merchants often build their manufacturing and distribution centers in the seedier parts of towns and cities, where lawlessness and poverty often overshadow any stigma associated with this dark industry. (That, and since the poor are becoming the most serious drug users in the empire, it makes sense to build your operation near your customers.) As a result, most Western herbalists (drug makers) and distributors operate from the criminal districts of town, making contacting these persons a risky endeavor.



To many, the Western herbalist is like an evil reflection of an alchemist. Like alchemists, herbalists have their many secrets from years of study and experimentation. But unlike alchemists, who are renowned in the West for making powerful magicks, all herbalists are often credited for is contributing to the mass addiction of Western society. In some regard, this is correct, but herbalists have also been responsible for every major medical advance for the last century and a half. On the flip side, many herbalists looking to make names for themselves, craft a new drug, only to find it has horrible and often fatal side effects. To a large extent, Western herbalists have accepted that society will shun them, so they revel in their notoriety (or simply don't care that they are reviled), and crank out batches of dangerous and addictive substances. There are, however, a precious few who use their skills to make beneficial substances and act more like a back-room pharmacist than a street-corner **drugmaker**. In fact, herbalists like these often experience a reverse of the bad rap other herbalists get. "Good" herbalists frequently are an urban version of the local medicine man, both revered and respected by locals for whom this person is a provider of life and a defender against disease and other bodily ailments. In most neighborhoods where a "good" herbalist operates, the locals living nearby often would lay down their lives to protect their beloved "medicine man."

But the herbalists are only part of the picture. Once these drugs are made, using secret recipes that most herbalists have had to pay handsomely for, they must be sold somehow. That's where distributors come in. In the Western Empire, either drugs arrive pre-made on merchant ships, or they are manufactured in a herbalist's laboratory. In either case, batches of product **typi-**

cally are sold to middlemen who warehouse the stuff and then sell it to "retailers" who then sell the stuff to those who will actually use it. In every step of these operations, thieves' guilds are involved, taking a cut of the profit every time the product changes hands. In return, the thieves' guilds offer a modicum of security — nobody dares to ever knock over a drug warehouse, for they know that the thieves' guild that is skimming profits from it will exact a horrible vengeance on whoever did the deed. Likewise, many herbalists and drug sellers, while they are reviled by most Westerners, are pretty much safe from serious persecution for the same reason. The thieves' guilds make a hell of a lot of money off the Western drug trade, and they'll gladly cross swords with anyone who would disrupt their profit-sharing. But the thieves' guilds aren't benevolent protectors, either. For many in the drug trade, entering this line of business is a one-way venture. Thieves' guilds often don't allow drug makers or sellers to quit their business, and more than one seller or herbalist has watched their friends or family undergo gruesome torture as a reminder.

The Western Drug trade is concentrated among several key cities, shared by a number of powerful thieves' guilds (The Brotherhood of Bronze and the Dark Street Irregulars, most notably). Most drug traffic enters the empire through Lower **Barraduk**, the merchant region that accepts 90% of all incoming ocean vessels. The remaining 10% dribbles in through a variety of ports, mostly via smugglers and pirates making shipment drops in secret coves.

Notable Drugs

Note: Also see the drugs, poisons, herbs and magic potions presented in **The Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition**.

Fugue (Distance, Marionette) — Super-Rare: This rare substance is found only in a 50 mile (80 km) radius around Mount **Nimro** in the Old Kingdom. Oddly enough, the drug produced by this flower has no effect on true giants, but is an extremely potent perception-altering drug for most other humanoid races.

Fugue is distilled from the nectar of a tiny, white flower that grows in ground-hugging carpets similar to pachysandra. Each flower bud, perhaps an inch across, yields a tiny drop of sticky nectar. To accumulate enough nectar for a single dose of Fugue, one must pick over **1500** flower buds, clearly a time-consuming and labor-intensive undertaking. The fact that such cultivation must be done in such a hostile, giant and **nonhuman** dominated land makes this substance extremely expensive and incredibly scarce.

The honey-like drop of Fugue is ingested orally, often by mixing it with a drink. The effects **kick in**, in about half an hour, and then last for a full day. As its name implies, Fugue gives the user a feeling of distance from **him** or herself, almost as if he is sleepwalking and simply along for the ride in his or her own body. As a result, the user is incapable of feeling fear (impervious to Horror Factor), revulsion, shock, or physical illness (including magic or **psionic** induced illness).

Fugue is only mildly addictive and does not have any serious **side** effects. However, while in the fugue-state, the user is likely to take life-threatening chances and do foolish things. And, because the sensation is like that of watching somebody else, the user's reactions are slowed. -2 on all combat bonuses and

moves, -1 attack per melee round, and -20% on speed. Furthermore, the events during the fugue period are only dimly remembered.

Duration: 1D4+20 hours (does not work on true giants and lasts only **1D4+12** hours on giant-sized beings such as Wolfen, Trolls, Gromek and Ogres).

Cost: 6,000 to 10,000 gold per dose.



Fyreskye (Colorspray, Vapors) — Common: Fyreskye comes from a rare twig-like plant that grows only in the middle of the Old Kingdom. There are reports of a huge, sequoia-like **fyreskye** tree there, but most people discount them. Fyreskye is harvested in small pots of 8 doses each, as per age-old packaging customs. This drug is not addictive nor does it have any serious, lasting **side** effects.

Fyreskye users feel peaceful, idyllic, and see everything that moves **with** a trail of rainbow colors. This often reduces Fyreskye users to sitting in a chair during their trip and either watching their wiggling hands, or the trails of those who pass by. Casting spells and using **psionic** powers is impossible while under the influence of **this** substance. Also, those trying to fight while under the influence of Fyreskye will be at -5 to strike, parry and dodge, their eyesight being extremely hindered by all the moving vapor trails and the peaceful feeling. It is often used by nobility, practitioners of magic, and warriors to relax. Doctors also give the drug to certain patients suffering from anxiety and shock.

Duration: 6D6+30 minutes.

Cost: 40-70 gold per dose; common.

Gafaha (Urchin, Edge) — Uncommon: Another powerful stimulant, this drug is extracted from the bark of a tree that grows in the heart of the northern Yin-Sloth Jungles, in an area accessible both to Western humans and **Orc** settlers. It doubles the user's P.E. for three hours, then returns it to normal. Once the user's P.E. returns to normal, the user will be unable to sleep or eat for another **10+1D4** hours and feels nauseous (-1 on all combat bonuses, -10% on skill performance, and -10% on one's speed). During this time, the user begins to look haggard and worn. The average Urchin user will shed close to five pounds per trip. While this makes the substance popular among Western noblewomen looking to shed weight before a big social **occasion**, it often leaves them as addicts trying to eat enough to keep their body alive while supporting their habit at the same time. Urchin addicts are easy to spot, since they tend to be very gaunt.

Urchin is fairly addictive, hooking users often within 2D4 uses. Urchin addicts are hyperactive, short-tempered, and experience extreme swings of emotion. When they're happy, they're ecstatic and everything is wonderful, but when they're sad, the world is a horrible place, the slightest problem seems overwhelming and big problems send them on the verge of suicide. When angry the Urchin addict is usually cruel, vindictive and often, homicidal.

Duration: Doubled P.E. for 3 hours; **10+1D4** hours as an appetite suppressant (works one third as long on giants and giant-sized **humanoids**).

Cost: **120-150** gold per dose; a favorite among nobility and warriors.



Goshelti (Sleeper, Dreamtime) — Uncommon: Another popular party drug, **Sleeper** is a relatively harmless drug similar to the drug **Wharifin** (Downer, Dreamnice; *Palladium RPG*, page 266). It comes from a leafy weed common to the Land of the South Winds. The leaves are ground up and smoked. South Winds custom often has **Sleeper** mixed with fine tobaccos, a trend that is catching on in Western circles.

After smoking **Sleeper**, the user feels incredibly drowsy and will fall asleep within **1D4** minutes. Often, **partiers** will smoke this drug at the end of a long night, when passing out seems inevitable, as a way to get one last buzz before retiring for the evening.

Under the effects of this drug, the user will sleep for **8+1D6** hours straight, during which time, he or she will experience extremely pleasant, vivid dreams that are easily remembered. Only addicts and first time users report having terrible, prolonged nightmares. Most of the time, **sleeper** users enjoy their ride, a nine to fourteen hour fantasy centering around fulfilling the user's most hidden desires, or conquering the user's deepest, darkest fears. The problem comes in that the dreams are so pleasurable and vivid that the user may not want to wake up. Addicts will sleep away the days, waking only long enough to eat and bathe, often soiling themselves while in the prolonged sleep.

Duration: **1D6+8** hours (25% shorter for giants).

Cost: **200-300** gold per dose; a favorite among nobility.

Kayja (Howler, Frenzy) — Uncommon: **Kayja** is an herbal extract derived from boiling the leaves of a rare weed found in **Ophid's** Grasslands, and then mashing those boiled leaves into a paste and eating the paste. **Kayja** tastes awful, and often is mixed in with sweet foods (honey, jam, candy, etc.) to make ingesting it more palatable. Drunken people eating **Kayja**-spiked food are unlikely to notice the presence of the drug.

Kayja basically makes the user feel highly energized and physically strong. For this reason it is a favorite among athletes and warriors. Immediately after taking it, **Kayja** adds +3 to initiative, +6 to speed, +10 to P.S. (add applicable P.S. damage bonus), and allows the user to continue fighting or competing until they are physically spent — in combat the character can fight unimpaired until at five Hit Points below zero, at which time the user falls to the ground in a coma (roll to save vs **coma/death** at -10%).

The downside of **Kayja** (besides the obvious) is that the user is made hyper ("needs" physical action, challenge, and exertion ... gotta do **something!**), the heart-rate and adrenaline increases and the user is bold and confident to the point of reckless insanity. During intense competition and combat, there is a 01-90% likelihood that the user will fly into a full-fledged **Mindless Aggression**, turning him into an uncontrollable fighting machine who does not fully comprehend his strength or actions. Many become merciless, homicidal maniacs for the duration of the dosage, killing anybody who gets in their way. Users typically fight to the point of exhaustion or death (-5 Hit Points; -10 to save vs coma).

After the high, **Kayja** users are exhausted and weak; reduce all combat bonuses, speed, P.S. and attacks per round by half for **1D4** hours.

Kayja users typically exhibit reddened eyes, **hyperactivity**, extreme aggression, foaming at the mouth, snarling, guttural growls and howling. It is nearly impossible to reason with **Kayja** users while high.

This drug is most often used by soldiers and assassins as a "suicide solution" in situations where certain death is faced. **Warning:** **Kayja** becomes highly toxic when taken in conjunction with the drug **Gorvon**, and will cause **1D6x10** damage direct to Hit Points, plus there's a 01-35% chance of permanent full-body paralysis if a saving throw versus non-lethal poison is

not successful. Even if the saving throw is good, the effects of **Gorvon** will not work while a user is on Kayja. Likewise, taking Kayja with Nikaad Berry or any drug that works as a sedative will induce convulsions (5D6 damage) and unconsciousness for 6D6 minutes.

Duration: Kayja lasts for one hour per dose (half on giants).

Cost: 600-750 gold per dose.

Kayja-ja-kay (Snapper) — Fairly Common: This is an herbal mix that includes a small percentage of Kayja. It is intended for use as a sort of *smelling salt* used to quickly wake individuals under a daze, including those suffering from a hangover, **trance**, or recovering from a drug haze or head injury/concussion. The substance is inhaled via the steam from a tea, or snorted or blown up the nose as a powder. **01-90%** of individuals are instantly jolted awake, alert and ready to go — the effects of the hangover, drug haze or head injury are reduced by 60% (no "high" or bonuses). The 10% who are unaffected will be awake but still sluggish and ill.

Snorting "Snapper" when healthy offers a momentary high (lasts 3D4 minutes; +1 to initiative, +3% to skill performance), but the initial jolt causes the user to stagger, blurs his vision and causes him to blink violently for one minute. Frequent use (more than four hits in an hour or more than eight uses in 24 hours) will cause nose bleeds, vomiting and brain damage (-1 I.Q., M.A. or M.E. point from the character, player's choice).

Duration: Instant on dazed individuals, 3D4 minutes on healthy users (half on giant-sized creatures).

Cost: 20-50 gold per dose (uncommon outside the Empire).

Kyukumea (Brainlock) — Very Rare: Brainlock's formula is a rare compound from the Yin-Sloth jungles, is a closely guarded secret known only to the Tezcat and herbologists in the Land of the South Winds. It is acquired by sailors, who sometimes buy very limited quantities from black-hearted natives or unscrupulous merchants in the Land of the South Winds (who have also established Smugglers' Coves along the southern Yin-Sloth coast). Rumor has it Brainlock was given to a Tezcat Shaman by an ancient Jungle God to keep his thoughts and secrets safe from the magic of his enemies.

Brainlock is taken in the form of a crystallized green powder with the consistency of sugar. It can be ground into a powder and snorted, or **liquified** with heat and drunken as an elixir or tea. Both types of use cause large amounts of mucus to run from the user's nose for **1D4** minutes, a truly gross sight when used by Ogres, Trolls and Wolfen.

This drug makes the user absolutely impervious to mental probes, telepathic and empathic communication, and psionic attacks, as well as providing a +2 to save vs magical mind control and illusions. The immunity to mental probes stops all extrasensory contact, friendly or not. Users who possess psionic abilities cannot use any of their psychic sensitive powers or forms of mental communication while high, but the drug does not foul any other psionic abilities, merely those used to establish a psionic rapport or connection.

While Kyukumea is not very addictive, it is a dangerous substance. Non-psychics will often (**01-60%** chance) suffer from pounding headaches that will last 1D4 days after a single dose (-1 on initiative and -5% on skill performance).

Psychics flirt with real disaster. First, there is a 01-33% chance that the character will remain "blocked," unable to use psychic sensitive **powers**, for 1D4 hours after the drug wears off. Each time a psychic takes this drug, there is a 5% cumulative chance that he or she will permanently lose **1D6 I.S.P.** Once initial **I.S.P.** damage occurs, every time the drug is used, the psychic will lose an additional 2D6 **I.S.P.**! Psychics who take the substance more than three times a month (and non-psychics who use it more than nine times a month) will also suffer the following permanent damage/penalties: -1 to save vs psionic attack and magical mind control, -5% to all skills (impaired memory) and -1 from the M.E. attribute.

Note: The drug has no effect on characters with an M.E. of 5 or less. Psychics tend to avoid the use of this drug.

Duration: 6D6+30 minutes (half on giants).

Cost: **2,500-4,000** gold per dose; very rare and sometimes cost's 6,000 to 9,000 gold. Sellers other than those at Smuggler Coves or secret manufacturers in the Land of the South Winds rarely have more than **1D4** doses on hand.

La-Shalla (Hero, Invincible) — Uncommon: La-Shalla mushrooms are generally found in the southern reaches of the Great Northern Wilderness and Ophid's Grasslands, and as such, can be difficult to find. The spores from this mushroom, when placed on the **tongue**, induce an effect not unlike the "Superman syndrome" found under the Random Psychosis table of the **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game, 2nd Edition**.

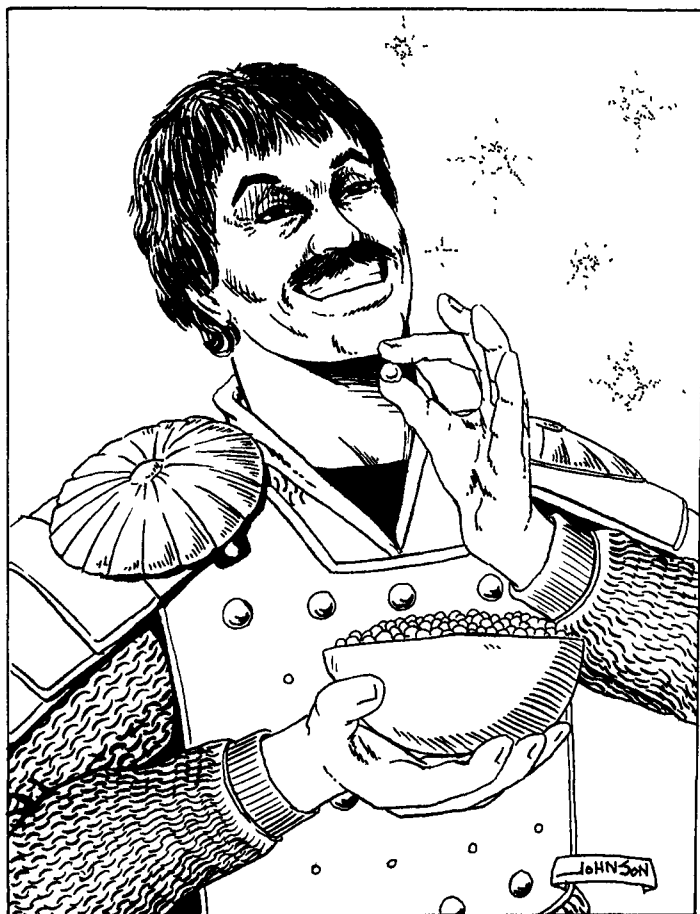
While under the drug's **effects**, the user thinks he is stronger, faster, smarter, better-looking, and overall superior to anyone else. And he won't be afraid to tell people that, either. The user only respects brute strength and **ruthlessness** during the drug's two hour effect. While tripping on La-Shalla, the user is likely to undertake foolhardy challenges, disregard danger, and underestimate every challenge or opponent placed before him. All of which is as much a problem as it is a benefit.

La-Shalla is mildly addictive, but it is an addiction that is fairly easy to break. La-Shalla addicts who cannot get their drug become withdrawn and pessimistic, convinced that fate conspires against them and their efforts to get the drug. After three days of withdrawal, the addict will hit rock bottom, thinking he is the most anti-heroic person around (no initiative, no combat bonuses, and reduce skills and attacks per melee by half). In this state, the addict will be almost impossible to convince to leave the house, let alone go on an adventure or battle.

Duration: 5D6+90 minutes per dose.

Cost: 400-600 gold per dose. Uncommon to the general populace, but is comparatively common among gladiators and soldiers, as well as nobles gearing up for a duel or competition.

Nikaad (Glowbug, Zowie) — Common: Nikaad berries grow in the southern Old Kingdom and the mountains bordering the Timiro Kingdom. Picking these berries begins a chemical reaction that ends in 7-10 days, imparting the berry's, narcotic effects. Nikaad berries retain their potency only for another week or so. After that, they completely spoil and become poisonous. Anyone who eats a spoiled Nikaad berry must save versus non-lethal poison or suffer sweats, nausea and severe stomach cramping; **1D6** damage every hour, and the following penalties for the entire duration: no initiative, -6 to strike, parry and



dodge; speed and attacks per melee are reduced by half for 24 hours. During that time, each hour, the victim must roll percentile dice against a 01-50% chance of vomiting.

Ingesting potent Nikaad berries will make the user feel warm and happy in a dull, sleepy sort of way. The user is also dazzled by a periodic display of softly glowing, swirling and dancing lights. Nikaad is a **sedating/calming** narcotic often taken with fine food and wine. It is also rumored to be a mild aphrodisiac — ironically this is not true, because the drug sedates and calms its users, but it does make the world and everyone in it pleasant and nice, which may lower inhibitions and make somebody seem more appealing than usual (everyone the user sees will *seem* to have a P.B. six points higher than usual).

Users under the influence of this drug are happy and friendly (they feel all warm and fuzzy), but are also slow and sluggish.

Penalties: No initiative, reduce attacks per round and speed by half, and skill performance by 30%. When the lights appear, the character will want to stop and watch them and often reaches out to try to touch them. During these periods, the penalties are no initiative, reduce attacks per round to *one*, speed by 80% and skill performance by 90% — the character is incapable of complex actions such as spell casting, skill performance or fighting; the lights last for 1D4 minutes.

Duration: The effects of eating one berry will last for roughly three hours; taking two berries at once will increase the effects only marginally (increase duration 3D6%), and taking three or more berries at once will cause the user to overdose and suffer acute vertigo-like sensations and nausea. This drug is not addictive.

Cost: 50-100 gold per dose.

Oclor (Spirit Sight) — Rare: This is another drug reputed to have originated in the Land of the South Winds. It is actually a combination of herbs and secret magic component(s); some say powdered faerie wings or faerie bones. The drug makes the user feel as if he is himself ethereal and floating slowly, a few inches above the ground. **This** makes his arm movements slow and as if swimming through the **air**, while leg movements look as if he's pretending to run in slow motion. All combat bonuses, speed and skill performance are reduced by half while high and reduced by one quarter for 2D6 minutes afterwards.

The benefit is that the user can see the invisible, including ghosts, entities, Astral Travelers, demons, dragons, and those made magically invisible. He **will** also see a (no pun intended) ghost image superimposed over creatures who are possessed.

Duration: 1D6+6 minutes (same effect on giants).

Cost: 2,000-4,000 gold per dose; rare.

Rashad (Oracle) — Extremely Common: This is a hallucinogen reputed to expand the **mind** and allow glimpses **into** the future. These glimpses are typically accomplished by interpreting the images one sees and experiences while under the influence of the drug. **This is** very subjective and rarely has any genuine meaning. Users do often experience epiphanies of one sort or another, and end up talking about these flashes of insight and omens amongst their friends and advisors. Of course, parts of the vision seem inexplicable or mysterious and no matter how desperately they try to understand and fully explain the vision, they always come up short (ignoring the fact that the experience is a drug trip and may not have any meaning). This aura of mystery and the idea that there is some additional great insight or message if only one could figure it out, only seems to add to the allure of this extremely popular recreational drug.

In fact, the use of Rashad is so common among all levels of Western society that it has created an entire cottage industry of "Vision Readers" or "Rashad Oracles" — alleged experts in determining the meaning of Rashad "visions," as well as dreams, omens and palm reading. Ninety percent of these fortune-tellers are complete frauds, because the Rashad induced images don't usually have any real meaning, although they sometimes reveal subconscious fears, concerns and desires. However, the Vision Readers sound very convincing, only charge 10-30 gold, and can be very entertaining. Interpretations and "readings" are usually very broad things like, "it means you are a bold and adventurous soul who has grown tired of the routines of your work (affairs of the court, *etc.*)," or "... good fortune will come to you. Exactly how great will depend on how quickly you seize the opportunity ..." and so on. These charlatans keep up on all the current gossip so they can better tailor the visions of nobles and other notable citizens to events that directly involve them, the affairs of court, political intrigue, love or business/commerce; i.e. "I see men plotting against you. They envy your power and position and hope to ..." you get the idea. Those who cater to the nobles and rich are the best of these street oracles and fortune-tellers (and charge 75-150 gold per session). A surprising number of the aristocracy and the common man (50%) put "some" stock into what the street oracles have to say, but don't necessarily follow their advice or change their lives based on their interpretations and warnings. However, about 18% believe completely and follow their spiritual advisors' advice religiously.

Ten percent of the Rashad Oracles possess Minor or Major psionics (typically including Clairvoyance, Telepathy and Object Read). They use **their** powers to help to "read" the individual and give more convincing and potentially accurate readings. For example, telepathy is secretly used to actually "see" what that person saw as well as to pick up surface thoughts, hopes and fears, to make a better interpretation. Using Clairvoyance for a real glimpse of that client's possible future costs double; these oracles get top dollar. These psychics have a 01-33% chance of being reasonably accurate in their interpretations of the visions and things unfolding in the individual's life; add 20% if clairvoyance is used.

Psychics who use Rashad have a **01-40%** chance of having a genuine clairvoyant experience, even if they don't normally possess that psionic power (+10% if the psychic is naturally clairvoyant). Furthermore, this vision will leave the character with a strong feeling of what it means.

Note: The drug is mildly addictive, and in addition to the hallucinations, gives the user a slight feeling of euphoria. While high, the user has difficulty discerning reality from fantasy, and his senses are dulled. Penalties include: -4 on initiative, all combat bonuses, attacks per melee round, skills and speed are reduced by half. Cultists, Shamans, and Priests sometimes use this drag to enhance their abilities to see the future and commune with their gods.

Duration: 3D6+12 minutes (half on giants).

Cost: **8-12** gold per dose; very common.



Strelus (Dreamland, Zombie): This drug places the user in a stupor in which he is completely (or nearly so) oblivious to anything around him. While in this "zombie" state, the user feels completely relaxed, has pleasant dreams and is said to become one with the universe. The drag is reputed to expand one's mind and help the user to remember things he's forgotten **and/or** come to an awareness or decision about matters he may not even have known he was consciously concerned about. Indeed, the dreamlike state does sometimes bring to surface forgotten memories, and if the user is intensely focused or worried about something, he may dream about and remember to resolve the **situation/problem**.

The real dangers of this drag are that it is addictive and while under its influence the user is helpless (reduce skill performance and speed by -90%, no initiative, one action per melee round, no

combat bonuses apply, plus the character is -10 on all combat actions). Far worse is the fact that the user is completely open (no *saving throw*!) to the following psychic influences: *Telepathy*, *Hypnotic Suggestion*, *Induce Nightmares* (double duration), *Insert Memory*, *Mental Illusion*, *Mind Bond*, *Mind Wipe*, and *Mentally Possess Others* (in this last case, the possessing mind is unaffected but the dragged out body he possesses is sluggish and difficult to control; -30% on skill performance and speed, -2 attacks/actions per melee round, no combat bonuses).

Duration: 4D6+30 minutes (half on giants).

Cost: 300-500 gold per dose; a favorite among nobles.

Vetch (Hungerblood) — Rare: The bush from which this drug comes is found most often along the **riverbanks** of the Eastern Territory. It produces a strawberry-sized fruit that has a strong, sweet aroma. The drag's effect comes from eating one bite of the fruit (eating more than one bite causes nausea and vomiting), or drinking a juice or tea made from it. While very tasty, it is dangerous. Many herbologist dry the fruit and grind it into powder. The powder can then be added to water, wine or tea and drunken (it has a nice, sweet flavor), sprinkled on food, or snorted. Note that snorting the drag will roughly quadruple its potency and dangers.

Users feel supercharged for two hours. All sensations of fatigue are gone and they are absolutely fearless (impervious to Horror Factor and magical and psionic fear). They will not sleep or rest during this period and are highly motivated (let's go adventuring, it's time to confront so and so, let's dance the night away, let's build that whatever, etc.). They tend to be aggressive and easily goaded into arguments, brawls, duels and fights.

Note: After the high wears off, the user will feel mildly depressed and exhausted (-4 on initiative, -2 to all other combat bonuses, -1 one attack per melee round, and reduce speed by 20%), and needs to sleep. A minute after the character stops and rests he will fall into a deep slumber that will last 2D4+6 hours. He can only be awakened by a sharp jab that inflicts physical damage (at least two points), but suffers the penalties noted above until he gets a large amount of sleep.

Duration: Two hours (one third less for giants).

Cost: 200-400 gold per dose; a favorite among nobles.

Vermil (Vampire) — Common: A thick elixir, with the consistency of honey, that can be mixed with red wine or eaten straight (using one's fingers to scoop the thick goo). It gives the user a sense of power, increases his endurance and is a genuine aphrodisiac.

A darker effect of Vermil is that it makes the user aggressive, prone to violence and instills a craving for raw meat and blood of any sort. This craving is powerful in addicts, and an addict is anybody who uses it more than once a week. The worst addicts use it once or twice a day and typically become human vampires **and/or** cannibals. Those who retain some measure of control will cut and drink some (usually nonlethal) portion of blood from their lovers and those they best in combat, and may eat the flesh of opponents they kill.

Addicts completely lost to the drag become savage, cannibalistic animals who prey upon other humanoids and feed upon their flesh and blood. In this state, the addict reverts to a feral mind-set with only brief (**1D6x10** minutes) moments of lucidity periodically throughout the day (**1D6** times).

Characters who are forced to break this addiction (they'll never do it of their own free will) go through agonizing withdrawal and must roll to save vs insanity (needs to roll 15 or higher). A failed save requires a roll on the following table:

01-10 Obsessed with the Undead and wants to learn everything he can about them. May fight them but respects and envies them nonetheless, or may want to become one if the opportunity becomes available!

11-20 Still loves the taste of raw meat and always eats his meat prepared rare.

21-30 Still loves the taste of blood and likes to drink animal blood (carries a wine skin or bottles filled with blood to **drink**). He may also drink the blood of a slain opponent.

31-40 The sight of blood is exciting and makes the character more aggressive.

41-00 Although free of the drug, the character is permanently a blood drinking cannibal who will drink the blood and eat the flesh of his enemies. Also reduce M.A. by half (no higher than 10 max.), and -1 from M.E.

The use of **Vermil** is common among Western nobility and it is rumored that especially depraved Western nobles hold parties in which human and nonhuman servants are slaughtered to feed the **tripped-out** guests. Vermil Vampirism is also **frighteningly** common among addicted noblemen and ladies (an estimated 12-18%).

Note: Vermil is highly addictive (high lasts 1D4 hours the first use, and half that from that time forward). Those who take it more often than once a month face a 01-33% chance of becoming hooked every time they use it. Ironically, the majority of reports about vampires in Western cities (95%) are in fact, incidents involving Vermil addicts lost to bloodlust **and/or** cannibalism.

Cost: 600-800 gold per dose; a favorite among nobles.

Wiktokii (Neverfight) — **Rare:** Neverfight is said to have originated from ancient **Kobolds** and Dwarves. It is believed to be made from a rare subterranean moss, lichen or fungus. It can be administered as a tea or potion that is drunken by the user. To this day, it is used by Kobolds to control and pacify prisoners, and 98% of all Wiktokii comes from Kobolds (Dwarves have forgotten the secret of its creation).

Neverfight induces an extreme feeling of calm and peace, along with apathy and drowsiness. Users typically find a nice corner to crash in as they watch the world go by with a stupefied smile on their faces. While under its influence, the user will find it impossible to take any sort of decisive action. Even something as simple as picking one item from a choice of several is difficult and takes 4D6 minutes of consideration. Skill performance is also reduced (**-40%**) and takes four times as long. Likewise, casting spells or using psionics is difficult (half the usual number per melee round); there is no motivation.

Most importantly, those under the influence will not contemplate violent action. Even when threatened, pushed or punched, the individual does not strike back, only cringes, covers his head, and moans for his attacker to stop. If possible, he will try to move away and find a safe, warm place where he can zone-out. Likewise, Neverfight users will hide or surrender at the first sign of impending violent confrontation. However, while the drug diminishes the user's capacity to fight or take ac-

tion, it does *not* force him to cooperate or reveal secrets. Many a prisoner dulled by Neverfight has died under torture because he held his tongue.

Note: It is rumored that the Wolfen Empire has outlawed possession of this substance entirely, imposing stiff penalties for anyone caught carrying doses of "instant pacifism."

Wiktokii is mildly addictive and generally requires large doses and frequent use (more than five times a week) for addiction to occur.

Duration: **1D6x10**+20 minutes (half on giants).

Cost: 90-120 gold per dose. Western Nobility uses it to dull their senses and relax.



Xereud (Utopium, Silkskin) — **Rare:** Utopium is a narcotic of growing popularity among the poorer nobility and common folk. It comes from a vine found in the **Vequerrel** Woodlands. While the vines themselves are abundant, they are also in long-held faerie territory, so harvesting the seed pods that produce the drug can be very difficult and even dangerous. If the faeries of the Vequerrel Woodlands were somehow taken out of the picture, production of this drug would be ten times what it currently is, and prices would bottom out at 10 gold per dose.

The pods are about the size of a plum and are slow-roasted over a fire for a period of three to four hours. This chars the outer skin of the seedpod and makes them split open, spilling forth their dry-roasted seeds. A chemical reaction takes place between the pod and its seed when placed under slow, even heat. To remove the seeds and roast them separately renders them impotent and worthless. Once the seeds are properly prepared, they can be kept in a dry place for years without losing their potency.

Users eat two to four seeds to feel blissful and to enjoy a strange and wonderful tactile sensation. During the intense, half-hour high, the user's sense of touch becomes incredibly sensitive. Moreover, every tactile sensation while under the influence of this drug feels incredibly pleasurable, even extreme pain. It is said that certain nobles who partake of Utopium subject themselves to torture and self-mutilation **to** enjoy the ecstasy of pain. It is a practice (along with Vermil) all too common to the city of Caer **Itom**, where city guards frequently find mutilated bodies.

Given the highly addictive nature of this drug (10% cumulative chance for each use after the first) and the brief duration of its effects, Utopium habits can run as high as 7,000-8,000 gold a day. This usually leads to incredibly brief and intense addictions

that leave even the wealthiest users broke and horribly disfigured.

Duration: 30 minutes (10% shorter for giants).

Cost: 600-700 gold per dose; a favorite among nobility.

Medicinal Drugs

Barouan (Reviver, Life's Blood) — Fairly Common:

Barouan is extracted from the root of a plant that resembles ginger. The root grows only in wet, swampy areas and as such, is found only in the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the Land of the South Winds. There are reports of finding huge patches of Barouan on the untamed jungle isles of the **Floenry** Island chain, but like most other **Floenry-related** rumors, this talk is unconfirmed.

Barouan is typically harvested, cleaned, then hung to dry out. Once it has been prepared, users simply eat one of these bite-size roots. Each root restores one S.D.C. point (never H.P.) instantly, and helps the individual to heal at double the normal rate. Eating any more in the space of 24 hours will cause nausea, dizziness and blood poisoning (1D4 damage per hour for 1D6 hours). Barouan can also be ground up and added to healing salves that will heal burns and rashes twice as quickly and heal cuts 50% faster.

Duration: Augments healing for 24 hours per dose.

Cost: 50-100 gold per dose. It is fairly common in the Western Empire, especially among men at arms, adventurers and bandits, but is very common in the Land of the South Winds.

Hertak Tea — Common: Used medicinally to settle stomach upset and stop vomiting and stomach cramps.

Duration: It should settle the stomach within 3D6 minutes and lasts for about 2D4x10 +120 minutes; another cup of Hertak Tea may be required every 2-4 hours.

Cost: Six gold for enough Hertak to make 12 cups.

Purge — Extremely Rare: This drug can only be found in the High Temple of Shandala, on the Old Kingdom Frontier of the Western Empire. Rumor has it that the recipe comes from the Old Kingdom, but the ingredients and manufacturing process of this substance remain a jealously guarded secret of the High Temple.

Purge is a milky blue liquid that smells like chalk dust. It tastes like it, too. Not ten seconds after drinking this stuff, the user will undergo severe vomiting for a few minutes, purging the body system of *all* toxins (including magic potions) and provides +4 to save vs disease (roll after being purged even if previous rolls to save have been unsuccessful); recovers 50% faster than normal. The monks of Shandala use this as a purgative for drug addicts and those suffering from poisoning. Purge is the common first step in getting addicts cleaned out enough so that they can start their lives over again.

Getting a price on Purge is next to impossible, as is buying the stuff outside of the Temple. There has been talk about selling it out of town, but those are probably just rumors. After all, the High Temple reportedly manufactures Purge on an as-needed basis, so nobody can steal kegs of this stuff for alchemical analysis. Several well-equipped, "professional" thieves have tried to steal purge **and/or** the recipe, but all such attempts have failed, most likely because the High Temple of Shandala is more like a fortress populated by scores of fanatical, highly

trained warrior monks and priests. Only the Emperor has a half dozen vials in his safekeeping (he's promised not to analyze it).

Duration: Immediate.

Cost: 5,000 and up when it can be found; super-rare. The monks usually sell the potion to people who come and use it on their premises. Few are allowed to take the medication away from the monastery.

Saala (Soother) — Common: The **Saala** root (pronounced "say lah") grows in large patches along the border of the Eastern Territory and the Old Kingdom. The root, not unlike a small carrot, is typically harvested, finely chopped, then mashed into a paste. While the drug can be taken in the paste form, it is often liquefied in a large press, and rubbed onto the skin as an ointment. The drug takes effect about five minutes after application and lasts for about 4 hours. It completely stops the burning, aching and itching of rashes, burns, insect bites and other injuries. It can also be used in conjunction with the Barouan healing salve.





City Generation Rules

By Bill Coffin with Kevin Siembieda

The following city generation rules were inspired by a recurring problem I had as a Game Master. My players always seemed to want to visit a city, especially after a particularly **grueling** or rewarding adventure or campaign. They wanted some place where their characters could rest, relax, unload some of those extra pieces of treasure and booty they earned, and perhaps get into some new mischief. All of this is understandable and fun, but while I love city adventures, I find it hard to come up with a fully **fleshed-out** urban environment on the fly. Moreover, you can only use the same city layouts from other books so many times before the whole thing gets a little stale. Now, Palladium has books like **Old Ones**, **Adventures on the High Seas** and the upcoming **Old Kingdom** books with lots of cities, towns and places mapped and described, but sometimes you just need something quick or more specific to the group's needs. The city generation rules that follow are intended to help give Game Masters a way to quickly design cities of varying types and character.

Of course, coming up with a cool urban environment is only half the battle. You've got to have a feel for the special nature of city adventuring to really make the best of it. Cities in the Palladium fantasy world tend to be rare, wondrous and often dangerous places. Many will have unique personalities and lots of unusual elements and people (NPCs) to keep even the most tired campaign interesting. To capture some of those defining characteristics that make a place as interesting and memorable as the villains, the G.M. should keep in mind several common elements, issues and aspect concerning these primitive urban environments that should add to the story element and character of cities.

- **Taxes, baby, taxes!** This isn't just true of the Western Empire. Your average Palladium peasant or towns person must endure extreme taxation (in the worst places we may be talk-

ing 50-75% of whatever the people make; tyrants can be so demanding. In others, a more reasonable 20-33%). Visitors, especially merchants, traders and adventurers (who often have booty to pawn, sell or trade), are among those targeted by city officials as a means of revenue. This can translate into import **and/or** export duties, special sales or transaction taxes, as well as fees, permits, fines and, perhaps, bribes.

The issue of "taxes and fees" may not be a problem at wilderness outposts, towns and villages, where such things are either very low (5-15%) or unheard of, but they are a very big concern in most cities, especially in the *Western Empire* and *the Land of the South Winds* (and to a lesser degree, Timiro, Bizantium and other "civilized" communities). The reasons for this are simple: One, there tends to be much more money-making going on in cities, **and**, two, a city has lots of costs involved in overhead. It takes money and labor to maintain streets, bridges, buildings, jails, city services, etc., not to mention lining the pockets of greedy city officials, nobles and kings.

Adventurers are *rolling in dough* — at least compared to normal people (many are loaded down with weapons, armor, travelling gear, and probably a horse, all things people see as elements of wealth. They don't stop to consider that these possessions probably represent everything the character owns). Consequently, adventurers are targeted and hit hard by the city tax collectors, as well as merchants, thieves and cutthroats.

Common tariffs levied on travelers are fees to enter and exit the city; typically with higher fees if you're bringing in booty for resale. Depending on how sophisticated and greedy a city's tax collection bureau is, player characters *might* be required to disclose how much money they have when they enter the city, and to do so again when leave the city. Any surplus made during their stay in the city is taxed. However,

this is an extreme measure and uncommon even in the Western Empire.

- **It all comes down to politics.** Running a city is hard work, and officials, lords, and magistrates typically make their fair share of enemies and allies. Regardless of how well, fair, or tightly run a city may be, there are always going to be some people opposed to **whomever's** in charge. These can be envious rivals, loudmouthed complainers and blowhards, or secret societies and subversive organizations. Exactly how these opposing and competing forces deal with each other will contribute to the level of tension and political intrigue of the community. Rivalry, jealousy, revenge, pettiness, bickering, backstabbing, and deliberate acts to sabotage an opponent's reputation, political position, or business are all aspects of city life. Open dissension — political movements, protests, riots, black markets/underground operations, and open warfare — may all be part of the political undertone of a city. Adventurers are often seen as the perfect dupes, stooges, pawns, mercenaries or allies in political plots and schemes. Political intrigue and skullduggery can make wonderful story/adventure elements and dangerous pitfalls for adventurers who may suddenly find themselves involved in affairs far more complicated (and dangerous) than they first seemed.

Cities ruled by entrenched kings, noble houses or powerful merchant families may be plagued with infighting among themselves and may involve issues and people that have nothing to do with the city government, but everything to do with ego or displays of power.

It's also important to recognize that political intrigue is not limited to the affairs of the court. A city might have opposing merchant or magic guilds, or criminal organizations vying for power, wealth, position, or glory, or looking for retribution for some past injustice, or locked in ruthless competition. Cities where the military is strong may be the scenes of infighting between the military and the nobles or the people, or competing branches within the military. These communities will have a strong military/police presence and tend to resolve problems through threats and violence. The saying, "It's a dog eat dog world," arises from ruthless competition and exploitation on every level of society.

Rivalry, feuds and vendettas between churches and cults are extremely common, especially in the Western Empire and Land of the South Winds. These conflicts can lead to an amazing array of problems that affect everybody from members of the church to innocent visitors. Some of these rivalries can lead not only to intense and annoying campaigns to convert newcomers to that particular church, but to vandalism, violence and the unleashing of demons, magic forces and plagues; often by accident or which slip out of their **summoners'** control. Rivalry between churches can also lead to religious persecution, the desecration of temples and shrines, **threats**, assassinations, murderous purges, death cults, criminal activities (namely illegal, underground religious groups and cults, as well as forbidden practices), etc. In some cases, the followers of one particular pantheon may be considered inferior, second-class citizens, or as dangerous dissidents and treated accordingly. And this is usually in addition to the usual political backbiting, name calling and competition for souls and church revenues.

Criminal organizations can also have a strong political, social **and/or** economic impact on a community. Some crime families, guilds and organizations have ties with the ruling body, religious leaders or merchants, or are independent powers in and of themselves. Some community leaders invite (or at least tolerate) criminals and lawlessness. Remember, many communities follow the example set by their leaders (religious and political), so if they are corrupt, cruel, intolerant, or callous, so will be many (not all) of the people, especially underlings and henchmen.

Rivalry or antagonism between two or more communities can also lead to political and economic turmoil, intrigue and conflict. Again this can range from friendly competition to rivalry in which one side wants to see the other ruined, to border skirmishes, acts of sabotage, bloody feuds and all-out war.

Whatever the political situation is, there is usually some element of instability either affecting the city or waiting to spring up. That's just the nature of things. Even in the sleepest of towns there's probably some kind of problem brewing concerning the local **government/leadership** or local power. Such sticky situations make for wonderful adventuring opportunities. Use them.

- **Religions and cults.** Just as cities and towns draw people from all walks of life, those people all have their various spiritual views. Some communities have very unified and limited or restricted religions (i.e., one or two churches or pantheons) that have driven out all others. Some might have dozens of religions and cults, as is the norm at most cities of the Western Empire. Whatever the case, adventurers will find that a city's religious leanings will help in determining what kind of place it is and what the people may be like. For example, those who worship dark gods are likely to be **dangerous**, while those who worship gentle gods of light may not. One church suggests strong beliefs and religious intolerance (i.e. one can expect to be persecuted if his beliefs are contrary to the townsfolk's), while many different faiths might suggest tolerance or apathy. The stronger the views of the gods, the church and the people, the more likely that conflict will arise between the various factions. Sometimes this results in friendly rivalry, but as noted under politics, it can result in feuds, fierce competition, religious persecution and the involvement of supernatural forces (controlled and uncontrolled). Religion may also vary between the social classes and may have a strong influence on one particular branch of government or strata of society. For example, the nobles may worship one pantheon while the poor may worship another. Slaves, especially among the monster races, will almost certainly worship an entirely different pantheon or sets of gods than their enslavers. This religious affiliation can cause additional tension or serve as a source of unrest, conflict, war and retribution. Frequently, priests and mages serve as the leaders among the monster races, and have tremendous influence on **Orcs**, Goblins and nonhuman people. This "influence" can be used to settle or fuel tempers and instigate trouble. Meanwhile, a full-blown holy war can be among the most brutal and bloody of any.

Game Masters, don't be afraid to play up the importance of a city's religious factions, large and small. The Western Empire is crawling with tiny cults, obscure and new gods,

and weird factions of established churches and religions. It sometimes seems to be a breeding ground for zealots, extremists and weirdos. Remember too, besides possible conflicts and rivalry, also consider how influential and helpful a community's churches and temples can be. Many are places of higher learning, teaching, philosophy and medicine. Many have libraries, arcane knowledge, magic items and sympathetic clergy who may be willing to help adventurers and heroes on a noble quest, or fellow members of the faithful, especially if the adventurers are on church business or support one of the church's causes. What are relations like between the local government and the community's religious factions. Which ones are favored? Which ones are held in contempt? Is the church(s) so powerful that it (or they) is the real power? This happens **frequently**, as people often turn to religious leaders for guidance and answers. What do the citizens think of their religious leaders? Are the powerful churches (most Palladium communities have 4-12 different religious factions/churches) benevolent, indifferent, or evil?

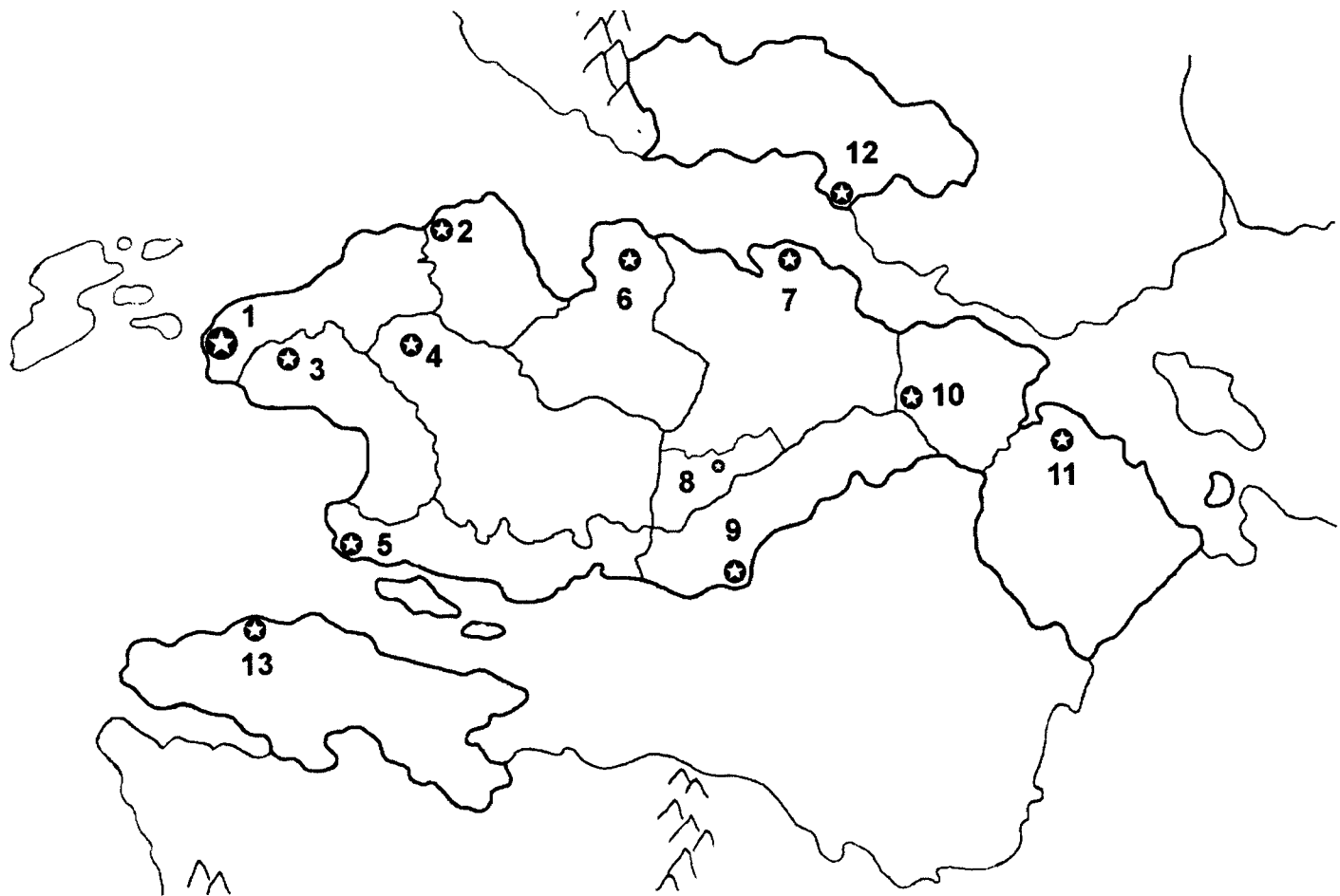
- **Guilds.** Never underestimate the power or influence of a guild. The iron law of the Palladium world is that once a city's economic activity reaches a certain point, local craftsmen form their particular guilds and unions as a way to strengthen and protect their interests. In general, wealthy/economically active cities will have numerous, powerful guilds whereas poor/economically inactive towns will have weak or few guilds; in some cases, none at all. Like the religious and political forces in town, the actual power these groups wield varies, but the guilds of especially large **and/or** wealthy cities tend to have a fair amount of political influence if not direct power. Some communities are virtually owned and run by guilds, and many nobles and kings have ties to powerful guilds. Even those who don't, must consider the economic impact these business people have on the community.
- **Bureaucracy.** Like it or not, every community, from village to big city, has some form of bureaucracy. This **isn't** bad in and of itself, because without some sort of political structure, nothing would get done. Even iron-fisted tyrants need a hierarchy of henchmen, accountants, and pencil pushers to handle the mundane day to day details of running and maintaining a community. The problem comes in that the bigger the community, the bigger the bureaucracy. The bigger the bureaucracy, the more likely it is for corruption, paperwork, sloth and fraternization to set in and gum up the works. The size and efficiency of city bureaucracies vary widely, and sometimes incorporate aspects of the military, religious powers, guilds, sorcerers, and other groups and individuals who might be of service to the government. While city bureaucrats might not figure prominently in many adventures, they are an important part of the community's structure to consider. For example, law enforcement (i.e. police, militia, hero or demon protector, etc.) is one facet of the bureaucratic network, as is the judicial, which may have a bearing on how long a player character may languish in jail before he comes to trial, or the amount of a fine, punishment, racial tolerance, etc.
- **The issue of race.** Racial prejudice plays a huge role in the Palladium World where there are so many diverse intelligent

life forms. Some communities will not accept or service members of a particular race. For example, **Orcs**, Goblins, Hob-Goblins, Ogres, Trolls, Wolfen, and most of the so-called "monster races (beings who don't look human — Elves, Dwarves, Gnomes and Titans are generally considered to be human-looking and the allies of man) are generally regarded as slave stock and at best, second-class citizens. At **worst**, hideous, baby eating monsters to be captured, tortured, and enslaved, or killed whenever encountered. For example, the Wolfen and their canine kin are feared and hated throughout the domain of humankind. Unless they pretend to be slaves or prisoners of their adventuring comrades, they are likely to be killed by terrified and hate-filled mobs or local heroes or authorities, regardless of any good deed, alignment or accomplishments. Most people, especially those in "civilized" lands, see only a fearsome, animalistic monster to be shunned or killed. Even some of the more tolerant human communities who don't automatically kill Wolfen, don't treat them like people either. This means Wolfen (seen by most as dangerous "animals") cannot sleep or eat indoors, and any food or equipment sold to them will be at a **50%-200%** higher price than usual.

Racial prejudice doesn't end with the Wolfen and humans. Many Dwarves and Elves dislike each other due to past racial and political reasons and consider it their duty to treat each other rudely, and cheat one another whenever possible. This translates into name calling, insults, snide remarks, disapproving looks, overcharging for goods and services, providing poor quality goods and services, brawls, and a general dislike and distrust of one another — most are usually quick to assume the worst of one another. Likewise, humans, Elves and Dwarves may get similar treatment from a wilderness or Old Kingdom community that is predominately free **Orcs**, Ogres or other monster races. It's a vicious circle. The bottom-line is that one's race can dictate one's position within that particular community or society. This can lead to unfair advantages and political, social **and/or** economic power for some and a serious, unfair loss of opportunity for others. In some cases, this can be as extreme as slave or noble. Needless to say, this huge disparity results in political unrest, crime, acts of violence, riots and war. Depending on the place and its racial composition (the dominant race or collective races who rule), any race, from **orc** to human can expect similar rude or inhumane treatment to unreasoning hatred to outright murder. **Note:** In the Western Empire, Humans are the dominant race and political power. *Elves*, *Dwarves* and *Gnomes* are generally regarded as equals. **Orcs**, *Goblins*, *Ogres*, **Kobolds**, *Gromek*, *Centaurs*, *giants*, and most other monster-races are seen as shiftless, jealous and dangerous sub-human monsters worthy only as one's servants or slaves. Only 20% of the monster-races found in the Western Empire are freemen and none are considered citizens (they are servants, laborers, and slaves). *Cyclops* hold a special place of honor as foreign dignitaries and merchants by the nobility, but are feared by most human citizens. *Wolfen* are regarded as monstrous, northern barbarians and curiosities. They are frequently captured and made to fight in the gladiatorial arena and are sometimes kept as pets or slaves.

Of course, there are lots of other aspects that one can consider to shade and shape a town or city, but we'll leave these

nuances to the discretion of the individual Game Masters. Remember, communities aren't just open-air dungeons filled with people to beat up and buildings to plunder. They are vibrant, exotic and ever-changing places where the most dangerous enemies aren't monsters and traps, but greed, hate, jealousy, desperation and the old-fashioned villainy of black-hearted people, human and inhuman. Cities always seem to draw more than their fair share of foul souls.



Town & City Generation Tables for the Western Empire

Rolling on each of the following tables should provide a good sketch of what a new town or city is like. To make them truly unique and personalized, G.M.s will need to add, subtract, or modify these tables as they see fit. These quick roll generation tables can be modified to apply just about anywhere, although the Western Empire is unique, and these tables have been designed with it specifically in mind.

1. Location: This is optional, since most G.M.s will know exactly where they want their new community to be. The following table is limited to regions within the *Western Empire*.

- 01%-10%: West Kighfalcon (1)
- 11%-20%: Upper Kighfalcon (2)
- 21%-28%: The Koerdian Mountains (3)
- 29%-37%: Kighfalcon Plains (4)
- 38%-48%: Lower Baradduk (5)
- 49%-55%: **Vequerrel** Woodlands (6)
- 56%-65%: The Middle Kingdoms (7 & 8)

- 66%-74%: The Scarlet Mountains (9)
- 75%-83%: Tarldet Plains (10)
- 84%-90%: The Old Kingdom Frontier (11)
- 91%-95%: The Yin-Sloth Periphery (13)
- 96%-100%: Ophid's Grasslands Colonies (12)

2. Size: These numbers are representative of the extremely **urbanized** and populated Western Empire. They also could apply to Phi, Lopan, and other heavily developed regions. For rolling up cities in less developed areas, such as the Eastern Territory, Land of the South Winds or the Old Kingdom, the G.M. will need to adjust the percentages to represent smaller communities (typically by half). Additionally, in less developed kingdoms, Medium and Large Cities would represent only 15-25%, Metropolises 2-5% and Megalopolises perhaps 1%; Tiny villages to Medium-sized towns would tend to be the norm (about 50-60%).

- 01%-07%: Tiny Village or Farm Community (pop. 30-120)
- 08%-15%: Typical village (pop. 121-400)
- 16%-25%: Small Town (pop. 401-1,200)
- 26%-40%: Medium Town (pop. 1,201-5,000)

41%-55%: Large Town (pop. 5,001-12,000)
 56%-65%: Small City (pop. 12,001-20,000)
 66%-75%: Medium City (pop. 20,001-35,000)
 76%-90%: Large City (pop. 35,001-60,000)
 91%-96%: Metropolis (pop. 60,001-100,000)
 97%-100%: Megalopolis (a population of more than 100,000)

3. The Surrounding Region: This is the terrain around the community. This land, even farm and **grazing** land (cattle, sheep, goats, and similar livestock), will be largely unpopulated.

01-10 Marshlands and swamps broken by patches of forest.

11-20 Flat grasslands/prairies with scattered patches of trees.

21-30 Hilly grasslands/prairies with scattered patches of trees.

31-50 Cultivated lands — farms and grazing land with scattered light to heavy forests and the occasional marsh.

51-70 Light, mostly unpopulated forest.

71-90 Heavy, mostly unpopulated forest.

91-95 Mountains (or tall hills) and mountain forests, meadows and hilly, forested lowlands.

96-00 Parched **earth/rocky** desert with patches of scrub and thin grass and the occasional 1D6 trees.

4. City Defenses: In general, villages and small towns are unlikely to be fortified, although some may have sections that are walled, or a fortified keep or other building where townsfolk can gather and find some refuge. Small towns, villages, farms and outposts are **frequently** located near or around a fort, garrison, or larger community that can provide troops and sanctuary if necessary. Any community the size of a Small City or larger is likely to have a full range of defenses, including fortified walls (enclosing at least part, if not all of the settlement), heavily fortified entrances, guard or watch towers, a fortified jail house, a police force, a large complement of guardsmen **and/or** soldiers, plus a volunteer militia (citizens who band together against a common threat) and local heroes/champions such as one or more knights, resident adventurers and heroes, practitioners of magic, and even inhuman benefactors such as giants, dragons, sphinxes and others. In addition, there is likely to be a castle keep or similar fortification (typically the palace is an elegant fortress, and garrisons are housed in fortified structures with parade grounds that serve as places for open battle and defense). A city may also have siege weaponry, defense towers and a legion of practitioners of magic (10-100) as part of their special defense force. Note: Guild houses, churches and jails are typically fortified to some degree even in small towns and villages. The average level of militia men in villages to cities are generally 1st to 3rd level, and most troops of small cities and towns have minimal combat experience: typically **1-3rd** level, while most officers tend to be 4th to 8th level. Lawmen tend to be a bit more experienced, with the **sheriff/leader** being 3rd-9th level and his officers or deputies being 2nd to 5th level. Churches will have one or two senior priests (5th to **10th** level) and a handful of younger priests typically ranging from **1st** to 4th level.

01%-14%: Un defended. Overrunning this place would be a walk in the park for most invaders. No or few physical defenses, such as walls, moats, **watchtowers** or other defenses. Defensive forces are a joke, consisting mostly of an easily frightened and demoralized citizens' militia **and/or** a few retired soldiers, meres or adventurers. If there is a genuine threat, it will come from any resident sorcerer or priests.

15%-30%: Lightly defended. This settlement will have some minor defensive measures, such as portions of outer walls made of wood or stone that enclose part of the community, but the wall can be easily breached or circumvented. The community may also have 1-4 watchtowers made of stone or wood, a small police force or lawman and 2D4 deputies, **and/or** a small complement of soldiers **and/or** a militia (of roughly **3D6+10** fighters). Other than one or two resident men of magic or **1-6** priests who'll be quick to help defend their home, there is no strong military force present.

31%-45%: Moderately defended. The city's defenses include a reasonably tough outer wall that encloses half to all of the community, plus 1-6 stone watchtowers from which defenders can harass the enemy. There are also fortified buildings in town, like the jail and meeting hall, that can be used as bases of defense. The community is also likely to have a small police force or lawman and 2D4+4 deputies, a small complement of **1D4x10** soldiers and a militia of **1D4x10** fighters, plus one or two resident men of magic and/or 2D6 priests who'll be quick to help defend their home.

46%-60%: Fairly defended. The city has a full range of defenses, including a defensive wall that contains all or most of the community, fortified gates of entry, each with a stone guard tower, **3D4x10** professional soldiers, **3D4x10** militia, a small force of law officers (**1D4x10**), a small, fortified garrison where the soldiers live and the militia meets and trains, and reserve stores of food and basic supplies (to last out a siege). The community is also likely to have 1-6 resident men of magic **and/or** 4D6 priests (of different faiths) who are likely to help defend their home town. While this can hold off bandits, monster raiders or disorganized invaders under 200 strong, a large, well-drilled and well-equipped invasion force could take the town within a week or two, as could powerful raiders armed with magic.

61%-80%: Adequately defended. The city has a strong outer wall with several stone watchtowers located at city gates and other strategic positions. The city's military is well-equipped and well-trained, although they are probably lacking in experience (most are **1-3rd** level), and numbers may be a bit light (equal to 3-5% of the population, so if there are **10,000** citizens there will be 300 to 500 troops). Among the army is a special squad of **1D4+4** practitioners of magic (typically wizards **and/or** warlocks; 2nd-6th level) to help with magical opposition and offer heavy (magical) artillery support. The community will also have a militia of **1D4x100** men, plus a number of resident men of magic and priests who *may* help defend their home town (the exact number and level of loyalty of these two groups can vary dramatically from the equivalent of a small, undefended town to dozens). This community can handle most commonplace problems such as crime, troublesome adventurers, bands of raiders and brigands, pirates, the occasional (low level) dragon or other group of (**1-6**) powerful monsters or men of magic, and small armies of **Orcs** and other ravaging monster races not more than **1,200** strong.

81%-90%: Heavily defended. The city has a strong, tall, thick outer wall with stone watchtowers located at city gates and other strategic positions. The city's military is well-equipped and well-trained with a reasonable amount of battle experience (65% are 3rd-5th level, officers are 6th to 10th level, the rest **1st** and

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2nd level), and strong numbers (equal to 15-20% of the population; i.e. **20,000** people means 3,000 to 4,000 troops). Typically 1-5% are low (2nd-4th) level practitioners of magic, most commonly Wizards and Warlocks, with a handful (2D4) at 6th to 12th level.

The community will also have siege weapons, internal fortifications (palace, stockade/prison, churches, etc.) and may even have an inner defensive area such as walls, gates and moats around the palace. The militia and police force will both be equal to 1% of the population and can join in the defense or held back as reinforcements **and/or** to handle civilian defense and organization (i.e. riot control). Of course, there are a number of resident men of magic and priests who *may* help defend their home town, but their exact number and level of loyalty and willingness to fight can vary dramatically. Even some large towns and cities may have only a few men of magic, although in the Western Empire, a city is likely to have dozens (the majority ranging between 1st-7th level). And large towns and cities in the Empire are likely to have hundreds of priests (ranging from **1st-5th** level) representing a dozen or more different gods.

Cities of this type can typically handle a siege by entire armies ranging from 5,000 to 12,000 invaders. They are very difficult to overcome in an out-and-out battle, and usually are only taken by a large, relentless army, subterfuge, starvation, or magical means. The reputations of cities like these make military commanders plan extensively before attacking. These cities often have considerable supplies in reserve for waiting out sieges.

91-95%: Fortress city. Fundamentally the same as the Heavily Defended City, only the troops will equal 20% of the population, 2-4% of the troops will be men of magic (most 3rd to 5th level; leaders being 6th to **11th** level), and there will be a church and priests (most 2nd-5th level) dedicated to serving the army and who engage in healing, helping and counselling the troops (equal to 2-3% of the troops).

Fortifications are elaborate, with massively thick walls (15-25 **feet/4.6** to 7.6 **m** thick and 20-40 **feet/6-12 m** tall). These walls will have full battlements, siege weapons and other defenses at strategic locations along the top, towers at each gate and strategic locations and garrisons of **1D4x100** troops stationed at each gate and one or two other strategic locations, in addition to the regular army. This outer wall will enclose **70-100%** of the main community (Note: A town often outgrows its original, main defenses, so a the community may spread outside the main fortifications, although the heart of the city will always be those inside the walls. Likewise, outlying communities of villages, small towns, outposts, farms and grazing land are commonly found outside cities, especially large ones. The people in these areas can flee to the fortified city for protection in case of invasion, or call upon the city guards to address criminal activity, bandit raids and incursions from rival communities or monster armies).

The palace grounds will have a fortified wall (about half the size of the outer wall) and towers above each gate, plus a garrison of the most loyal and experienced troops (300-500 troops; 4th to 6th level) to protect the grounds at all times. Furthermore, there is usually a police force and militia, as well as siege weapons (catapults, etc.) and excellent stores of food and supplies (can last **1D4+4** months without difficulty).

Taking a city like this would entail a siege by a full-scale army for at least six months, if not considerably longer, **and/or** by an extremely powerful force wielding great magic or calling upon demonic and unnatural forces.

96%-100%: Impregnable — at least in theory. There is no such thing as a truly impregnable fort or fortress city, just those so heavily fortified and well defended that most would-be attackers tend to pass on messing with it. Of course, this doesn't mean it cannot be infiltrated and plagued by rabble-rousers, sabotage and (comparatively minor) terrorist assaults from within, as well as crime and corruption.

Fundamentally the same as the Fortress City, only magical defenses are heavily incorporated. Wards and mystic symbols can be seen etched into the doors, gates, and walls. Magic circles and wards are on the floors at strategic locations and offer protection to storage bays and important rooms. Magic circles may be used to summon the forces of nature, magical forces and supernatural creatures to help defend the city. The number of magic defenders represents 3-6% of the army, generally 4th to 7th level with leaders being 8th level and higher, and includes Summoners and Diabolists. There is also likely to be a special division of Psychic Healers (1% of the troops) and a dozen or two Mind Mages or a strong group of priests that serve the army (equal to 3-5% of the troops).

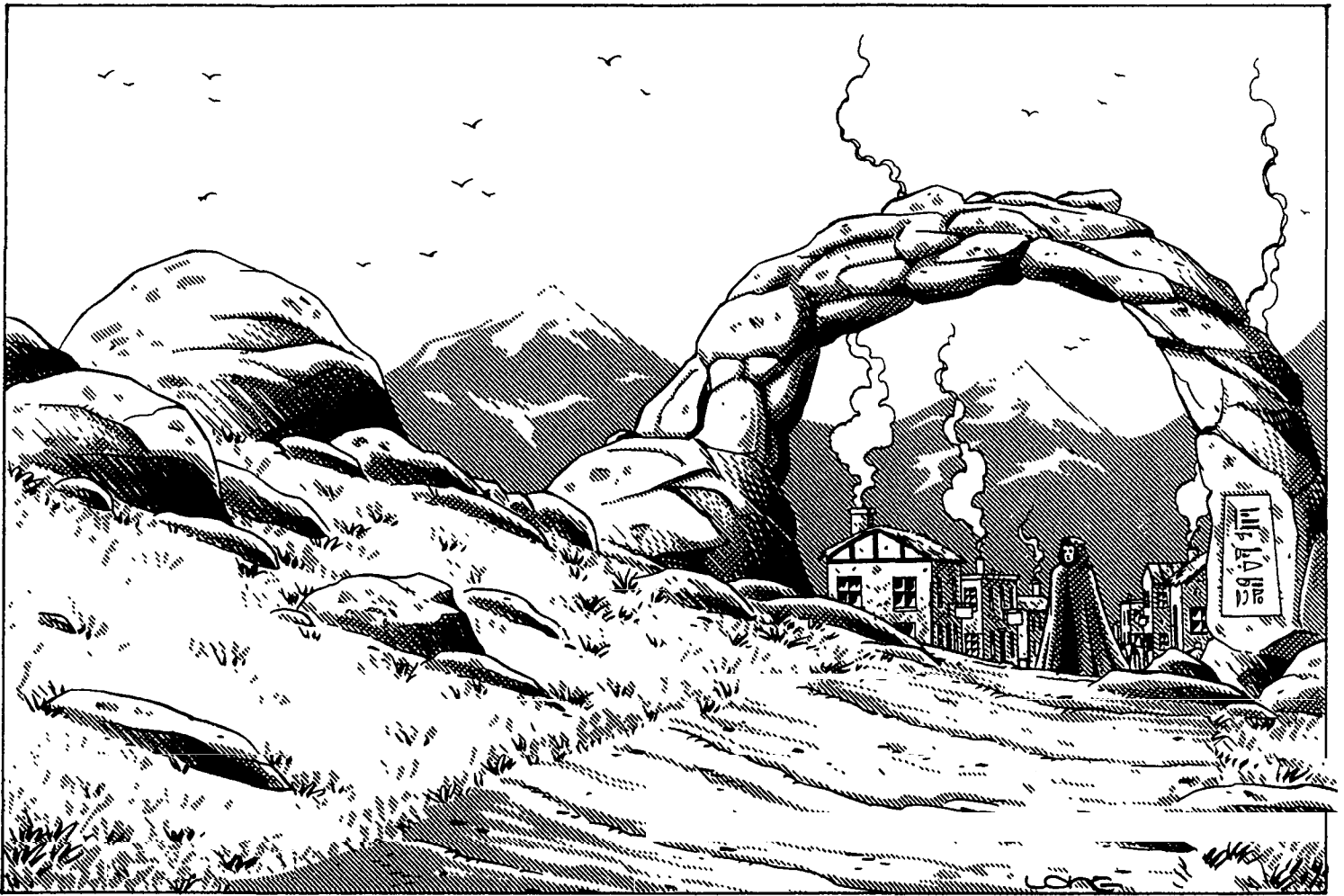
Impregnable defenses are rare because they are usually too costly to maintain. Consequently, they are usually reserved for the most important strategic locations, like the capital city of a kingdom, a precious resource, a crucial trade port, and important strategic border outposts, towns and cities; occasionally, wealthy, paranoid communities can be included in the mix. Note that being impregnable doesn't necessarily mean the community is an aggressive or violent military power. For example, the Pueblo Indians had great defenses but weren't warriors, they just wanted to live in peace.

5. Type of Government: In the Palladium world, most small communities are run by a single monarch, powerful family, or council of elders. It is a rarity to have *elected* officials. Larger communities are often under the control of a powerful landlord or overlord (mage, warrior, dragon, monster, or other powerful being and his or her henchmen); occasionally a church, merchant, guild, clan, or other group.

Note: All cities and most communities in the *Western Empire* are run by one or more nobles or noble families (Barons, Dukes, Lords, etc.) and their chosen officers who, in turn, answer to the Emperor and the Imperial Government (and Army). These nobles (typically a branch of a particular noble family) manage and control the local military and most levels of government and bureaucracy, as well as own businesses and/or land. Other noble families, advisors, politicians, influential merchants, guilds, priests/churches and powerful individuals may exert political and economic influence on the community and its rulers.

For communities outside the Western Empire, use the following table to determine the basic type of government.

01%-08%: Autocracy: Rule by a single figure (despot, tyrant lord, supreme lord, supreme ruler, landlord, etc.) who retains absolute power. These folks are often the ultimate power, including the judge, jury and executioner of their community. Whether



this one ruler is benevolent and fair, or cruel and tyrannical will depend on the individual. Newly formed autocracies are sometimes considered dictatorships or despotic governments until some kind of formal transition of power is established (if ever); many turn into a monarchy or hierarchy. Dragons, demigods, powerful sorcerers and monsters are often autocratic rulers. Henchmen and minions do not represent a hierarchy.

09%-16%: Confederacy: Rule by a coalition of groups who often have differing viewpoints and agendas, but since no one group can assert itself over the others, all the groups work together. Confederacies sometimes are also made up of groups that want as little to do with each other as possible, but will work together for the sake of a mutually beneficial common goal, like running a city or defending against a common enemy.

17%-24%: Democracy: Rule by the people, in which rulers, laws and public policies are determined by the outcome of public elections and majority votes. Democratic governments are either run directly by the voting citizenry (a la ancient Greece), or through a system of elected representatives (a la modern-day United States).

25%-32%: Hierarchy: Rule by a *group* according to "rank." The higher the rank (i.e. King, Prince, Duke, Baron, Lord, etc.), the greater the power and higher the position within the hierarchy. The military is a hierarchy, so are most churches. The stability of this system can vary considerably. Entrenched hierarchies based on religion, cultural custom or other long-standing traditions tend to be more stable than, say, hierarchies where the lower stations must voluntarily pledge their loy-

alty to the group or individual (king, emperor, etc.) above them (a la feudal *states/kingdoms*).

33%-40%: Gerontocracy: Rule by elders; typically rule by old men; "elder fathers," a "council of elders." Governments of this kind feel that only people above a certain age have the experience (and right) to rule and lead.

41%-48%: Gynarchy: Rule by women only. Whatever rights males possess depend of the mentality of the ruling females. In some cities, men might just not have the ability to have political power. In other cities, men might be reduced to a slave status. For an idea of a *gynarchy*, see the *Island of Lemaria* in the *Adventures on the High Seas, 2nd Edition* sourcebook.

49%-56%: Magocracy: Rule by men of magic. Sometimes, these governments are established by men of magic who simply blast their competition to pieces. Other times, it might arise from the people's respect and reverence for men of magic. In most magocracies, psychics, warlocks, and clergy are treated as political competition and are considered potential enemies of the state. This category can be substituted easily for cities run by warlocks or psychics, with men of magic treated as a minority class. Typically operate as an autocracy or hierarchy government.

57%-64%: Militarism Gov't: Rule by the military and the glorification of military power and ideals as a ruling power. Sometimes, these are just interim governments after a coup d'etat until a new government is set up. Or sometimes, this is just the way things are done. Militarism appeals to the more aggressive races, like Wolfen, **orcs**, ogres and giants who believe

the military should also serve as the administration of a nation.

65%-75%: Monarchy: Rule by a single sovereign who *inherits* the throne of power as a hereditary right — a "family" based hierarchy. Monarchies differ from autocracies because they have the added aspect of hereditary **transferral** of power from ruler to ruler.

76%-82%: Oligarchy: Rule by the few. Usually, this is a coalition of absolute rulers who resemble a small confederacy unto themselves. Each member of a ruling oligarchy will oversee a significant portion of the city's government. How these rulers are determined varies. There are oligarchic democracies just as there are oligarchic theocracies and oligarchic militarism.

83%-88%: Pedocracy: Rule by sages, scholars and other learned individuals. One of your more unusual forms of government, typically with an elaborate system of tests to determine who's fit to lead and rule. And you thought all that S.A.T. preparation was for nothing!

89%-95%: Plutocracy: Rule by the wealthy. Plutocracies often require potential rulers to possess a certain amount of wealth before trying for an office. Plutocratic hierarchies might have a variety of offices reserved for individuals of varying wealth. Plutocracies run by various businesses, companies, guilds or other economic organizations generally are considered **syndicracies** (rule by syndicates).

96%-100%: Theocracy: Rule by the top religious power in town. This can be good or bad, depending on what religion it is, and whether or not you worship that religion. The extent to which other religions in town operate will determine the ruling religion's power.

6. Loyalty: This determines the degree to which the city obeys and upholds the laws and decrees of its sovereign lord or ruling power. In some cases, the highest lord of the land may rule the city. Regardless, this table can add a great deal to the character and adventure possibilities.

01%-15%: Rebellious! The community dislikes their ruling power for one reason or another, and openly defies it. Dissent, disdain, and rebellion are in the air. Civil unrest is constant. Laws are ignored and illegal underground operations are firmly established. Will side with the enemy if they think it means getting out from under the current ruling power. Civil war *may* be immanent. The community is likely to be a powder keg ready to explode from the slightest spark. They hate their ruler and will turn against him/it at every opportunity.

16%-30%: Disloyal. The community defies the ruling power whenever it feels it can get away with it. There is no love between the common people and the ruler, and they will welcome their ruler's end. May have openly rebelled in the past, and is likely to rebel in the future. Since they have no loyalty, they are easily bought off by scoundrels and enemies of the realm, especially if they think they can profit from it, sometimes even if it means serious repercussions.

31%-45%: Mildly disloyal. The community usually tows the line, but has been known to defy its ruling power from time to time, and are not particularly pleased or happy with him. Taxes and injustices are a hot topic of controversy. The community usually acts out of self-interest and will bend, twist, "forget," and ignore laws and edicts whenever they can. Typically they obey the ruling power because they fear the repercussions. Their loyalty can be compromised for the right price or opportunity.

46%-60%: Mildly loyal. For the most part, the community obeys its ruling power and pays its taxes or tribute. They don't usually make waves or noise about small issues, but are quick to show their disapproval over big issues that they don't like. The people aren't completely happy with their ruler or just don't feel strongly connected to **him/it**, so they only trust and support to a point. They are not stalwart supporters and their loyalty can be compromised over disagreements, dissatisfaction, or if offered a large enough bribe (or threat).

61%-75%: Loyal. The people are happy with their ruling power and the majority support **him/it** on most matters. Most obey the laws and are very supportive. There are few incidents of defiance or insurrection. Only extreme measures can compromise the support and loyalty of this community.

76%-85%: Heartily Loyal. The city is a strong supporter of its ruling power, and is very dependable in times of trouble. Pays its taxes on time, gives its best troops over to troop conscription, and fights valiantly against enemies of the realm.

86%-95%: Superpatriots! This city is fanatically devoted to its ruling power, supports **him/it** 100% and stands with him even under the threat of death! This incredibly strong support is typically reserved for communities led by extremely charismatic **and/or** heroic individuals, churches/priests/saints and demigods. The feeling is usually reciprocal, i.e. the ruling power has and will stand in the support and defense of his people even under the most difficult of times.

96%-00%: Divided Community. Half the people are heartily loyal to **superpatriots**, while the other half is disloyal to rebellious. This causes extreme tension, civil unrest, brawls, rivalry, hate, feuds, vendettas and treachery between the two sides.

7. Alignment & Level of Law: This determines the *general morality* of the majority of the populace. There will always be exceptions, of course, and this should only be used as a general indicator of how the citizens behave. A city's alignment also is a good indicator of the level of law enforcement, criminal activity, corruption of public officials, and sense of civility. G.M.s may have to adjust this aspect of the community, or pick rather than random roll, to make it fit with the level of loyalty and other factors.

01%-15% Principled. A town of boy scouts and straight arrows. You can expect constant and strict enforcement of all laws, regulations, and taxes. Places like these tolerate no misbehaving from adventurers, such as street brawls, drunkenness and other kinds of havoc. Underworld activity tends to be minimal or non-existent. Corruption of public officials is unheard of.

16%-35% Scrupulous. A place of law and order, but not quite as rigid as a principled town might be. Overall, the people here are good at heart, respectful of others, courteous and friendly. Even if this place is too small to have law officers, wrongdoers are likely to find themselves confronted with angry citizens who are not going to tolerate crime, injustice, cruelty or evil doings; Roughnecks beware. The most corruption you're likely to find here are essentially good public servants who occasionally bend or break a law to serve a greater good, petty crooks and that small minority of low **lives** and crooks that most communities suffer from. Visitors are more likely to bring trouble with them than see trouble brewing from within the community.

36%-50% Unprincipled. One of the more common alignments of merchant cities and border towns. Unprincipled settlements tend to have basically good and decent people who have a fair understanding and appreciation of law and order, but tend to practice a loose adherence to the letter of the law. Rowdiness and very little protocol are common, and personal freedom is highly regarded. However, there *is* a line that cannot be crossed. When push comes to shove, the majority of these people will usually do the right thing. Petty crime, vagrancy, drunken and disorderly conduct and some tolerance toward loose morals are acceptable at these communities. This breeds other less scrupulous alignments who engage in shady under-the-table operations, discreet crime and corruption, but unless it is blatant and clearly hurting people in the community, many of the citizens ignore it. Apathy and indifference are the real sins of this place.

51%-70% Anarchist. A **freewheeling** and often borderline lawless place, much like the towns of the old American Wild West, and many border towns, wilderness towns, and outposts of the Palladium World. While there are likely to be laws, and law officers, city guardsmen or militias to enforce them, the overall mind-set is that laws are made to be broken, every man for himself, and it's a jungle out there so do what you gotta do to survive. Law enforcement officials often hesitate to get involved in anything unless it appears absolutely necessary or is a serious **offense**. If a fight breaks out in the street, folks will watch (from a safe distance) but not usually intervene. Moreover, vigilantism and mob justice is common at such places. Anarchist towns are perfect breeding grounds for a strong underworld, and a lapse of moral integrity. Government officials, influential business people and all too often, even law enforcers and judges can be bribed in regards to all sorts of things, from smuggling to declaring a guilty man innocent to looking the other way and doing nothing to stop an injustice, crime or even murder. Lawlessness isn't so bad that the town is falling into complete anarchy, but crime, corruption and decadence can be pretty blatant. It is a breeding ground for all kinds of petty vendettas, crime and skulduggery.

71%-80%: Miscreant. These outlaw towns either have a completely corrupt government or one too weak to oppose the forces of lawlessness. Crime, injustice and cruelty run rampant in these communities. Those in authority are corrupt, abusive and evil. The citizens are usually a mix of slaves, folks held hostage in their own homes, and people who participate in widespread brutality. For most, even the ones who are not evil themselves, life has little worth and they expect it to be hard and unfair. This is also the kind of place where a powerful tyrant, crime lords, thieves' guilds, assassin guilds, smugglers, gangs, bandits, monsters, evil mages, slavers, and other **low-lives** can set up shop virtually unopposed by the local law. Gangland rivalry, feuds and gang wars are likely, with the innocent peasants caught in the middle. Adventurers of a good alignment need to beware when visiting these hell holes and curb their instincts to help the downtrodden, for these dens of evil are usually quite powerful and very intolerant of **compassion**, nobility and goodie-two-shoes causing trouble in their "perfect" town.

81%-90%: Aberrant. These communities are the dark shadow of a principled town or city. There are rigidly defined and enforced laws, regulations, order and structure. They just might not coincide with conventional notions of law, justice and



mercy. Aberrant towns usually enforce law and order through intimidation, brutality and raw power. Whereas a thief might be imprisoned in a principled or scrupulous town, he would have his hands cut off and fed to dogs in an Aberrant town, but only if he stole from the wrong person, like the ruling power, or somebody under the protection of the ruler, or an influential gang, guild or individual. Robbing and even killing "tourists" (foreigners, visitors and adventurers) is not usually a problem unless it makes a mess or brings the law or vengeful friends or relatives down on the town. Outside of the Western Empire, most Aberrant settlements seem to be populated by "monster races" whose notions of law and order differ from **human**, **elfen**

or **dwarven** practices. Caer **Doragon** in the Yin-Sloth Jungles is a fine example of an Aberrant city.

91%-00%: Diabolic. Most towns and cities of this alignment destroy themselves with their rampant disregard for life, law and order. Diabolic settlements typically are those in a state of anarchy and are dens of evil. Some become this way after prolonged siege, madness-inducing plagues or other widespread social decay. Others are born from evil and are the homes of bloodthirsty bandits, pirates, worshipers of dark gods, members of death cults, and evil-hearted beasts bent on death and destruction for any number of reasons. Particularly vicious **orcs**, ogres, trolls and members of the monster races are known for being Diabolic.

Note: When dealing with regions inhabited by the savage and barbaric monster races (most of whom loathe humans for good reason), like the Old Kingdom, switch Principled with Diabolic, Scrupulous with Miscreant, and Unprincipled with Aberrant.

8. Level of Wealth: The relative amount of money and resources the community has. This is also a rough indicator of the quality of life here, the quality and upkeep of infrastructure and government services (such as the army, street **cleaning**, sewers, law enforcement, etc.), as well as the quality, selection and availability of goods and services. Generally speaking, wilderness and rural communities, even towns and cities, tend to be a little poorer than average. On the other hand, most urban and industrialized towns, ports, and cities tend to be a little richer than average. Also keep in mind that every community has its rich and poor areas, so use this table as a guide for determining how ritzy or ramshackle the "good" and "bad" parts of town are. One final note, the more affluent a community is, the more likely it will have numerous, powerful guilds that control parts of the city's economy.

01%-11%: Impoverished/Dirt Poor; unskilled and uneducated laborers.

12%-23%: Poor, low skills, poor education, farmers/laborers.

24%-35%: Low income but self-sufficient; low education, laborers, farmers **and/or** simple craftsmen.

36%-47%: Solid and holding their own; trade skills.

48%-59%: Strong earnings, working middle class.

60%-71%: Respectably affluent; white collar, educated, skilled artisans, craftsmen, and merchants.

72%-83%: Affluent, well educated and skilled.

84%-94%: Very Affluent, well educated and skilled.

95%-00%: Rolling in Dough! Probably successful merchants, land owners, nobles, politicians or adventurers.

9. Industrial Presence: Roll once to determine the main industry of the community. Subsequent rolls determine other industries. Settlements up to and including small Cities will have one main industry and 1D4 secondary industries. Settlements from Medium Cities and larger will have 1D4 major industries, and 2D4 secondary industries.

01%-03%: Paper Mill

04%-06%: Wheelwright — makes and builds wagons & wheels.

07%-10%: Horse Trade — breeds, trains and sells horses.

11%-13%: Shipyard — building and repairing ships (or carpentry and building if inland).

14%-17%: Stone Mason/Building

18%-20%: Brewery, fermented alcoholic beverages.

21%-25%: Logging/Lumber

26%-30%: Saw Mill/Lumber Processing

31%-40%: Farming: Crops — rice, corn, potatoes, beans, grains, etc.

41%-45%: Farming: Fruit/Orchards/Vineyards and Wines.

46%-50%: Cattle/Livestock (or fishing if a coastal community).

51%-55%: Sheepherding — meat, wool, textiles.

56%-60%: Slave Trade — buying and selling humanoids.

61%-65%: Foundry/Blacksmith — processing metal, blacksmith.

66%-70%: Textile Manufacturing — clothes, wool, yarn, etc.

71%-75%: Meat Processing — **Slaughterhouse/Meat Packing.**

76%-80%: Tannery — leather goods and furs.

81%-85%: Mining precious metals/minerals, rock, sand, gravel, lime, salt.

86%-90%: Trade Center — makes money buying, selling, importing, exporting.

91%-93%: Magic

94%-95%: Entertainment

96%-00%: Other, including illegal trades.

10. Presence of Magic: Although magic is ever-present in the Palladium fantasy world, that doesn't mean that everybody likes it or that it has a strong presence or influence on the community. Roll on the following table to see the extent to which the citizens accept and use magic.

01%-15%: Non-existent. Either the people fear magic and have outlawed it for some reason, or the place simply has no magic; too small and backwater, there's nothing to attract men of magic.

16%-30%: Uncommon. Magic may be frowned upon and avoided in this town or accepted, but there are only a few men of magic here.

31%-45%: Familiar. Magic is common enough not to spook or frighten people, but there are few to no practitioners of magic in town and no magic shop, although the general store, pawn shop or other establishment may carry the occasional magical odds and ends.

46%-60%: Common. Magic is common enough for folks to accept it without fear or reservation. There are a few to several local practitioners of magic and a magic shop or two, but magic just doesn't play an important role in daily life here.

61%-75%: Somewhat prominent. Magic is commonplace, there are several practitioners of magic who live and work in town, probably a magic guild, and at least one or two magic shops, if not more. Slightly above-average magic use here. Perhaps there's an alchemist or two, but don't expect to find anything extraordinary. Do expect to pay highway-robbery prices due to scarcity.

76%-90%: Prominent. Magic is so common here that people barely blink an eye when it is used. For that matter, there are numerous mages who practice a variety of mystic arts, and mages involved in business, politics, the government and military defense, as well as several prominent local figures. There are likely be two or more magic shops, magic weapons, a magic guild and possibly even a school for magic. Adventurers, mercenaries and travellers who practice magic also come to town and are active in the surrounding region.

91%-00% Pervasive! Magic is so commonplace that it plays a big role in daily life. Wizards, Warlocks, Summoners and others are involved in designing, building and maintaining the city infrastructure, play a big role in the military and defenses, are involved in business and politics, and can be seen casually walking the streets and chatting with neighbors. There will be several magic guilds (often divided by magical discipline), a school or two, maybe even a university of magic, numerous magic shops, magical services, magical oddities, magic weapons, items and foods.



11. Presence of Religion: What role the gods and religion play in the community.

01%-12%: Non-existent. Either the people here are atheists, have outlawed religion for some reason, or the place simply has lost its collective faith. A perfect breeding ground for "sin cities" to develop, **and/or** the perfect place for thieves' guilds, vampires, secret cults **and/or** covens to move into.

13%-24%: Moderate: There are one or two small churches/temples with their own congregations, as well as a few shrines and statues to various gods, but generally speaking, religion does not play a big role in these people's lives. Even most of the church goers aren't particularly devout.

25%-38%: One particular god or pantheon. The people are religious, but not fanatics and do not persecute other faiths, they are devoted to one particular faith. The god(s), pantheon or church may be a prominent one, or a small, local and uncommon one, or a secret cult.

39%-52%: Prominent god, pantheon or church. A major, well known and established church strongly supported by its faithful. There may also be 1D4 comparatively tiny churches, temples and cults in town, but 70% worship at the prominent one.

53%-63%: Indifferent and Noncommittal: Churches, priests and statues of the gods come and go. 1D6+1 different gods/pantheons/churches. A few established churches, temples, and shrines operate in town and have growing congregations, but the majority of the citizens aren't open supporters. Gods and churches are secondary concerns. Only 25% are devout church-goers.

64%-78%: Wide Open! Virtually all gods, churches and faiths are accepted and practiced here. There may be 1-4 that are more popular than others, but they don't limit or persecute the others. Small cults, strange splinter groups, preachers, doomsayers, prophets and seers are all part of the scene. In such communities, the churches usually play an important role in the community, and are likely to have a great influence on the ruling

power; in some cases, one or more churches are the ruling power.

79%-88% Wild and Bizarre. Only one or two unique regional churches. Or there may be 1-4 fairly prominent churches/gods or pantheons, but there are also several uncommon, rare to outright bizarre cults or churches and temples, as well as temples or churches for gods/pantheons uncommon for this region (sometimes unheard of except at this particular place). Dangerous zealots and fanatics are attached to many of these strange factions and blood sacrifices (animals and humanoids), frightening rituals, horrific practices and the summoning of dark forces may be involved.

89%-00%: Zealots! Only one church, god or pantheon of gods is worshiped here and no others are accepted. Those who worship other gods do so secretly or suffer terrible persecution and possibly expulsion from the community or execution!

12. Main Religion/Pantheon of Gods: Roll once to determine the foremost religion in town. Roll again to see which religion is the second most powerful. Big towns and cities may have another 2D4 churches, temples and shrines, but all will be tiny by comparison. In general, cults, demon worship and devil worship won't dominate a city's religious scene unless under really weird circumstances, but may dominate a village or other small community. For more information on specific pantheons and deities, refer to the **Dragons & Gods** sourcebook.

01%-05%: Southern/Jungle Gods, all or an individual one.

06%-10%: Aco & The Juggernaut.

11%-15%: Algor, The Northern Sea God.

16%-20%: Church of the Elements (elementals & nature).

21%-25%: The Cult of Chantico or Kalba.

26%-30%: The Pantheon of Rurga.

31%-35%: Kirgi the Rat God.

36%-40%: Utu, Lord of the Dead or other Demon Lord.

41%-45%: Vald-Tegor, Lord of the Undead.

46%-50%: Tolmet the Cruel.

51%-55%: Tark the Spider God (popular among thieves and goblins).

56%-60%: Isis (may include Osiris and the Phoenix)

61%-65%: Church of Light (no dark gods).

66%-70%: Church of Darkness (no light gods).

71%-75%: The Church of Light and Dark.

76%-80%: The Minor Pantheon of Ma'ip or Church of Ra.

81%-85%: The Northern Gods.

86%-90%: The Old Ones, or Devil or Demon Lord.

91%-95%: The Church of Dragonwright (either).

96%-00%: An unknown god, church or cult; regional or secret society.

13. Racial Prominence: This depends largely on where the city is located. Northern Wilderness cities will be mostly Wolfen, while Western Empire, Timiro, and Bizantium cities will be largely human. Old Kingdom cities will probably be mostly inhabited by goblins, orcs, ogres, kobolds or giants. Keep in mind that the character of the city will likely reflect the cultural characteristics of the race that runs the place. Orc and ogre communities and tribes are likely to be governed by harsh rules and a brutal justice system; goblin towns are likely to be anarchy, or run by very corrupt officials, and so on.



This table also can determine the biggest minority in town. Keep in mind how the racial diversity in town will impact race relations. A large **elven** minority in a **dwarven** town will either create big-time racial tension (beatings, persecution, riots), or maybe will have forced these people to put aside their differences and live together (thus creating an unusual racial sanctuary for travelers). Likewise, a human majority with an orcish or kobold minority probably means that the **orcs** or kobolds are a slave population. The following table is probably most reflective of the Western Empire and Old Kingdom, and maybe the Eastern Territory as well. Note: Roll once for the dominant race (50%), and again for the secondary race (20%). There are likely to be **1D4** Other races living in the same community.

01%-12%: Dwarf
13%-25%: Elf
26%-45%: Human
46%-60%: **Orc**
61%-75%: Goblins & Hobgoblins
76%-85%: Kobold
86%-90%: Trolls **and/or** Giants (Titans, Rahu-Men, Minotaurs, etc.).
91%-95%: Other humanoids (Wolfen, Changelings, Gnomes, Bear-men, Lizard men, Eandroth, Tezcat, **Dogres**, Troglodytes, etc.).
96%-00%: True monster races and creatures of magic (Gromek, Boogie-Men, Bug Bears, Centaurs, **Grimbor**, **Maxpary**, **Kreel-Lok**, **Syvan**, sphinx, dragons, **Waternix**, Za, Faerie Folk, etc.).

14. Building Types: This can be a major or minor aspect of city creation, depending on what the G.M. and players expect out of a city. Some folks like to know what every building in a city is down to the last detail, whereas other folks don't mind having just a general idea of what kinds of buildings can be found within a particular city. In general, your average **city's** buildings will consist of 50-60% residential, 20-25% commercial, 15-20% industrial, and 10-20% governmental/military.

The following tables will give you a good idea of what kinds of buildings are available per general use classification. Of course, they also can be used to determine randomly what buildings are in a city. Completely generating a city's buildings at random, however, might come up with some unusual results, so be prepared to furnish a reason to your players for why a city has 10 brothels and no fire department, or make logical modifications.

14a. Residential Buildings: Keep in mind that most cities will have residential districts where buildings of like type will be grouped together. It will be fairly uncommon for a rich single-family dwelling to be next to severely poor multi-family dwellings. However, there's bound to be a good adventure idea behind such unusual groupings.

01%-17%: Poor single-family home.
18%-35%: Middle-class single-family home.
36%-53%: Rich single-family home.
54%-71%: Poor multi-family home.
72%-82%: Middle-class multi-family home.
83%-85%: School or park.
86%-90%: Church or temple.
91%-00%: Rich multi-family home.

14b. Government Buildings: Not all cities will have one of each of these buildings, although large national capitals might. Some of these buildings, such as hospitals, museums and others might also appear as private commercial ventures, depending on the town.

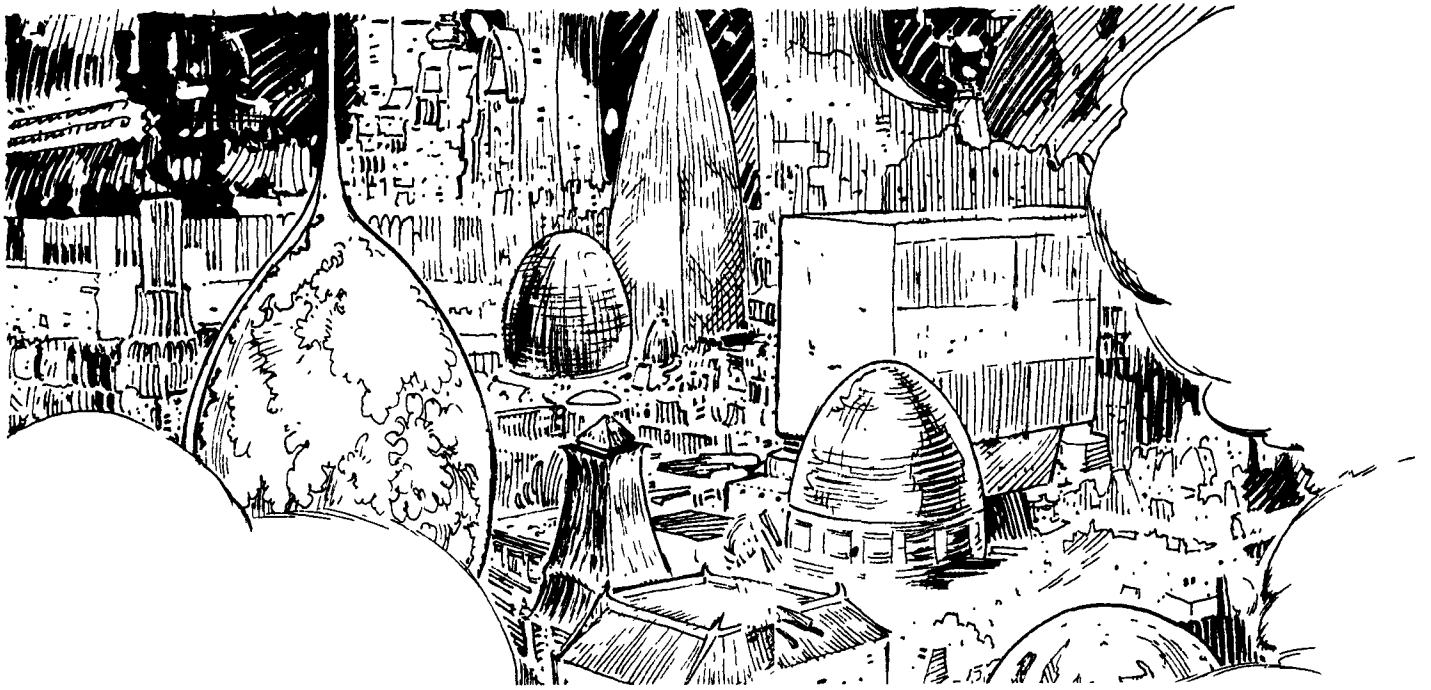
01%-05%: Palace/Government Seat.
06%-10%: Embassy
11%-15%: Mint (currency production).
16%-20%: Barracks (**soldiers/** city guards).
21%-25%: Military academies.
26%-30%: Royal/Governmental Courts and Halls of Justice.
31%-35%: City parks, public fountains, memorials, statues, formal gardens, plazas.
36%-40%: City aqueducts & sewer system.
41%-45%: Royal/governmental docks and shipyard
46%-50%: Naval yard
51%-55%: City menagerie (zoo)
56%-60%: Department of Public Works
61%-65%: Museum
66%-70%: Granary
71%-75%: Water reservoir
76%-80%: Fire department
81%-85%: Sewer authority
86%-90%: Sheriff/constable/city guard post
91%-95%: Cemetery
96%-00%: Hospital/Asylum

14c. Industrial Buildings:

01%-05%: Shipyard or Stockyard
06%-10%: Brewery
11%-15%: Magic (items and services)
20%-25%: Logging **and/or** Carpentry and Building
26%-30%: Sawmill or Lumberyard
31%-35%: **Slave Yard**
36%-40%: Trade Center or Bank
41%-50%: Foundry
51%-60%: Textile Manufacturing (cloth and fabrics)
61%-70%: Meat **Production/Slaughterhouse** & Meat Packing (cattle, hogs, sheep, chickens, other livestock, fish).
71%-80%: Tannery (leather goods and animal furs).
81%-90%: Mining (precious metals/minerals, rock, sand, gravel, lime).
91%-00%: Other

14d. Commercial Buildings:

01%: Alchemist
02%: Antiques
03%: Armorer
04%: Artist's studio (painter, sculptor, **crafter**, musician, mosaic maker).
05%: Bakery
06%: Bank
07%: Barber
08%: Blacksmith
09%: **Bowyer** — one who makes and sells bows and arrows.
10%: Brewery/distillery
11%: **Bronzesmith**
12%: Brothel
13%: Butcher
14%: Candle maker
15%: Casino



16%: Carpenter
 17%: Ceramic **molder**
 18%: **Church/temple**. Roll on Table #12 to determine type.
 19%: Cobbler/Shoemaker and Leather goods repairs.
 20%: Construction and repair firms
 21%: Cooper (barrel maker)
 22%: Coppersmith
 23%: Dairy market
 24%: Dentist's office (this could **hurt...a lot**)
 25%: Detective agency
 26%: Diabolist for hire
 27%: Dip and strip (furniture **refinishing**)
 28%: Doctor's office (non-magical healing only)
 29%: Dojo (combat training school)
 30%: Dollmaker
 31%: **Drug** den
 32%: Engraver
 33%: Farmers' market
 34%: Financial **counselor/accountant/investor/moneychanger**
 35%: Fish market
 36%: Flea market
 37%: Florist
 38%: Fortune teller
 39%: Funeral home/mortuary
 40%: Furniture maker/store
 41%: Gaming hall (cards, darts, billiards)
 42%: General store
 43%: **Goldsmith/Engraver**
 44%: Greenhouse
 45%: Guildhouse
 01%-10%: Mercenaries' guild
 11%-20%: Thieves' guild
 21%-30%: Assassins' guild
 31%-40%: Bounty **hunters'** guild
 41%-50%: Performers' guild
 51%-60%: **Crafters/artisans'** guild
 61%-70%: Merchants' guild
 71%-80%: Industrialists' guild
 81%-90%: **Wizards'/Practitioners** of Magic guilds

91%-00: Psychics' guild
 46%: Hardware store
 47%: Healer for hire
 48%: **Herbalist/apothecary**
 49%: Hospital (fee only — no **freebies!**)
 50%: **Hotel/inn/flop** house
 51%: Illusionist for hire
 52%: **Import/export**
 53%: Ironsmith
 54%: Jeweler/gem cutter
 55%: Jewelry maker/ring maker
 56%: Law **firm/attorney**
 57%: Leather worker
 58%: Library
 59%: **Liquor/beer** store
 60%: Locksmith
 61%: Lumberyard
 62%: Massage parlor (legitimate and illegitimate)
 63%: Miller (windmills)
 64%: Moneychanger
 65%: Notary public
 66%: Nursery (plants)
 67%: Orphanage
 68%: Pawnshop
 69%: Porter/cargo hauler
 70%: Potter
 71%: Private moneylender
 72%: Sage for hire
 73%: Saw mill
 74%: Scribe for hire
 75%: **Self-storage/Warehouse**
 76%: Shipwright
 77%: Silversmith
 78%: Slave market
 79%: Specialty shop:
 01%- 03%: Armed courier service.
 04%- 06%: Beekeeper (and honey **maker!**).
 07%- 09%: Bookbinder.
 10%- 12%: Bookstore.

13%- 15%: Box and chest maker.
 16%- 18%: Calligrapher.
 19%- 21%: Candy store/confectionery.
 22%- 24%: Carpet maker/store.
 25%- 27%: Cartographer.
 28%- 30%: Cheese maker.
 31%- 33%: Chimney sweep.
 34%- 36%: Clown for hire.
 37%- 39%: Collectibles shop.
 40%- 42%: Dog **kennel/breeder** & trainer.
 43%- 45%: Exotic pets store.
 46%- 48%: **Falconer/hawk** seller.
 49%- 51%: Firewood and coal sales (fuel — oil, too).
 52%- 54%: Fine papers.
 55%- 57%: Furrier.
 58%- 60%: Glassblower/seller.
 61%- 63%: Haberdashery.
 64%- 67%: Hardwood goods dealer.
 68%- 70%: Locksmith.
 71%- 73%: Musical instruments (manufacture/sale).
 74%- 76%: Oils and perfumes.
 77%- 79%: Pest control.
 80%- 82%: Pigments.
 83%- 85%: Religious supplies.
 86%- 88%: Security guards/mercenary company.
 89%- 92%: Sign maker.
 93%- 95%: Spice traders/mixers/grinders.

96%- 98%: Stove maker.
 99%- 00%: Wigs and hairpieces.
 80%: Stables
 81%: Stone mason
 82%: Stonecutter, sellers and quarries
 83%: Swordsmith
 84%: Tailor/clothier/finery
 85%: Tattoo parlor
 86%: **Tavern/restaurant**
 87%: Taxi/carriage service
 88%: Theater
 89%: Tinsmith
 90%: Tobacconist
 91%: Toy maker
 92%: University/school
 93%: Veterinary (doctors, Druids, and Beastmasters).
 94%: Wagonwright — buys, sells and repairs new & used carts.
 95%: Warehouse
 96%: **Wizard/warlock/diabolist/summoner** for hire
 97%: Weapon maker
 98%: Weaver
 99%: Wheelwright
 100%: Woodworker



Adventures

Adventure #1: Taking Care of Business

This adventure takes place as the party enters **Borskell's Point**, a city-state on the tail end of the famous Southern Route, a heavily trafficked merchant's run along the coastline of the *Lower Barraduk* region. Moreover, several major land routes intersect here, making this city one of the busiest trading centers in this part of the Western Empire. Borskell's Point is on the eastern end of the region, with the *Scarlet Mountains* regional border only 50 miles (80 km) further east.

Just as the player group nears the town's western gate, the traffic slows to a standstill, thanks to a traffic jam at the city entrance. It looks like they have a long wait ahead of them to get into the city and the hundreds of people ahead of them begin to find shady spots on the side of road. **G.M. Note:** This may be a good opportunity for the player characters to gather some information about the region **and/or** engage in a few **mini-side-adventures** without losing their place in line; things like gambling, arm wrestling, brawling, drinking, telling stories, trading goods or information, and similar things to pass the time. Or the story can jump ahead.

After several hours, a richly dressed message-boy makes his way through the stopped traffic and milling people. He looks very intently at every wagon and caravan. It's obvious that he is especially interested in the various mercenaries and soldiers that have been hired to protect these merchant caravans and wagon trains. As the boy passes the player characters, he notices them and smiles, then runs back in the opposite direction. Soon after, he returns with a richly dressed adult. Clearly, this fellow is a well-off merchant. He approaches the party and greets them, introducing himself as an associate of the great *Jarred Cord*. He will politely inform the party that Master Cord requests their presence at his caravan, so that he might discuss a potential "employment opportunity." **Note:** It is possible some members of the player group or accompanying N.P.C may have heard of this well known merchant — those of Western heritage are almost certain to have heard of this man.

If the group isn't interested, he warmly pleads for them to at least hear him out. As an added convenience, he offers to leave the boy at their location to hold their place in line. He also tells them that he can offer them shade and (free) cool drinks back at his master's carriage. What do they have to lose?

Following Cord's associate, the group arrives at Jarred Cord's caravan, one of the largest and most opulent of all those stuck in traffic. Cord's caravan contains 30 big, heavy wagons, half driven by large teams of top-quality work horses, the other half by *elephants* imported from the Yin-Sloth Jungles (elephants do well in the Western Empire). The wagons' cargo is securely covered by large **tarps**, but it is clear that this caravan is hauling a major payload of goods (or **treasure?**). Master Cord's personal carriage is so large and luxurious, that it is about the size of a small house. Inside, it resembles the sitting room of a

palace. It has a beautiful hardwood interior with colorful tapestries, plush furnishings, silk pillows, beaded curtains, gold serving trays and fine crystal goblets, the works. Jarred Cord steps out of his carriage to greet the player characters and introduces himself. He ushers them inside his carriage which is a pleasant 20 degrees cooler than outside (it is kept at an even, constant temperature by magical means regardless of the outside temperature; very unique and incredibly expensive).

Jarred Cord is an aging human who has gotten a little overweight thanks to his prosperous living, but is in good health and still retains his roguish good looks. He wears extremely expensive and fashionable clothing, and brims with charm and charisma. He is never without his pet Acid lizard, which is extremely docile unless its master is threatened, and is loyal only to Cord. Once the group enters, a pair of beautiful human serving girls gesture for them to sit on silk pillows, and then pour them goblets of fruit juice and leave through a small door to an adjoining room. The entire time, Master Cord smiles warmly and instructs the members of the group to make themselves comfortable. He seems **unworried** about their weapons or any obvious magic items, and treats monstrous members of the group with the same courtesy as the others.

"Welcome, my **friends**. I'm glad you've come. I have a proposition for you." He pauses to pet his cooing lizard before continuing.

"As you can tell, I am a successful businessman. Despite what you see on this road and in this carriage, mine is actually a very difficult way of life. Dangers everywhere, don't you know? Bandits, corrupt employees, rivals, oh ... the stories I could tell. This last trip has been the worst. One travail after another, but I will not bore you with my troubles. Aside from wanting to give you a shady spot to wait for traffic to resume," says Master Cord with a smirk, "I'd like to hire men such as you ... discreet and experienced, wise to the ways of the world."

"For years now, I have been competing with an unscrupulous merchant by the name of *Alston Harriged*. Over the years, we've developed a mutual hatred of each other. My sources inform me that he will also be arriving at Borskell's Point very soon with a shipload of goods. Chances are, given the size of our caravans, both of us will enter Borskell's Point trying to sell much of the same merchandise; blown glass, refined silks, brandy ... and so on. To compete at the same time in the same place, neither of us will profit. And frankly, Harriged has cost me too much money for me to wait until he picks up and moves on so I can conduct my business. In fact, I have good reason to believe he orchestrated several delaying tactics, bandit raids, rock slides, oh, so many things, to delay my arrival here. Ha, but we have still beat him, but only by a half day's journey."

"But this has turned into more than a matter of trade rivalry," Cord continues, "I have only today learned that Harriged will



use the money he makes in Borskell's Point to support rebellious Noble Houses in the *Middle Kingdoms* regions. A sordid affair that will vex my friend the Emperor Itomas, and cause this great Empire nothing but trouble and sorrow. Having come upon this information I feel compelled to take action. I can't, in good conscience, allow this rogue to continue his villainous ways! But alas, I am not a young man, and too many people count on me to risk my own life. **Ah**, but noble warriors ... heroes such as yourselves ..."

Cord gives the party a deadly intense look. "My sources tell me **Harriged** has sunk nearly his entire personal fortune into the shipment he is bringing into Borskell's Point. If he were to befall some ... misfortune ... that prevented him from selling his wares in town, or elsewhere for that matter, the world would be rid of a most vile menace."

"What I am proposing is for you to intercept **Harriged's** ship before it arrives at port. I don't care if the goods are stolen and sold at some pirate port, destroyed, sunken or simply delayed for a week or so by whatever means. Just preventing him from getting off the ship for one week will ruin his sales and give me time to get word to the, **um**, proper authorities to do something with this rebellious cutthroat. Keep and sell whatever booty you may desire, what happens to the cargo is of no concern to me. However, **Harriged** is to be released, unharmed. This last condition is of the utmost importance. **Harriged** is not to be slain."

Cord sits back in the carriage, his demeanor less intense. "For these noble and heroic services, I will pay each of you 6,000 Western gold pieces. One thousand now, the rest when you're finished. Plus, whatever booty you may, **um**, acquire along the way, of course. Furthermore, you will have won my favor and friendship for life, and saved many innocent people the hardship of civil war."

Reading Cord's aura or casting a Words of Truth spell on him will reveal that he is indeed speaking the truth (or at least he genuinely believes what he says. There's no telling about his "sources" of information). Evil and selfish characters probably won't feel squeamish taking this job, but good characters may have concerns. If the party needs more convincing, Cord will add the following:

"I see you're troubled, my friends. I understand. Mine is a fairly harsh way of conducting business, and it isn't up to many people's ... ethical standards, shall we say. But know this: **Alston Harriged** is one of the most diabolic men I have ever known. He **trafficks** in pain and misery. He destroys everything he touches. And he cares not for the sanctity of life. Believe me, I do not pit you against an innocent man by any measure. Know that whatever money he donates to the *Middle Kingdoms* pushes the entire Empire that much closer to the brink of civil war. If time were not of such great import, I would go through different channels, but I cannot. Nor can I trust the local authorities. Even trusting you with this knowledge is dangerous. If word of this treason got out, it could cause riots and mayhem that I don't even want to consider. If my money cannot persuade you to intervene, then perhaps your appreciation of this nation's peace can. And if you have little love of this nation, perhaps knowing that your actions will delay civil war and save the lives and happiness of countless innocent people might."

If the characters do not accept the job, Master Cord will not press the issue further. He will ask the party to keep the con-

versation secret before opening the door to his carriage and letting them out. After that, the merchant, his face sullen and awash with disappointment and worry, will bid them good day, and there will be no further contact. Of course, there will be no adventure, unless the Game Master can fenagle some other angle (perhaps some corroborating piece of evidence overheard in a tavern or among bandits, etc. Furthermore, Cord is willing to negotiate the price, as high as 10,000 gold a piece, and will help arrange and pay for transportation to get them to their target). So let's focus on what happens if the players do accept the job...

If the characters accept, Cord smiles and thanks them, saying that they will be doing a great service. Now to brass tacks. **Harriged** is coming into town by sea on the Western merchantman *Firewind*. The player characters are free to detain **Harriged** **and/or** the cargo ship however they see fit, with the sole condition that **Harriged** be left alive. Master Cord fears that if **Harriged** is killed, all fingers will point toward him and soil his "good name" (there also seems to be more to keeping **Harriged** alive than he's willing to say, but he will not speak of it and magical and psionic probes or mind control cannot get him to reveal what that may be).

The player characters are to enter town away from him and never speak his name, so nobody connects them with Cord's entourage (hopefully nobody important has noticed them entering or leaving Cord's carriage). Once they have successfully completed their mission, they are to go to the *Flickering Lantern Inn*, in the northern business district of town. There, they will meet an associate of Cord's who will pay them and arrange a discreet way out of town, if necessary.

At that, Cord lets the party out of his carriage and bids them good luck. "See you in a week," he says. When the characters get out of the carriage, shouts and whistles up ahead signal that the traffic jam is finally working itself loose, and that the gateway into the city is open again. Once the player characters rejoin the crowd, they slowly make their way through the city gates, and into Borskell's Point, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

Checking at the city's port facilities, the shipwright there says that *Firewind* hasn't arrived yet, but it's due in between 11 and 12 o'clock that night. If asked, the shipwright reveals that **Harriged** does business in town all the time, and whenever he arrives, he almost always shows up around 11 and parks his ship at the end of the dock. However, the shipwright won't reveal anything else unless paid a bribe of no less than 100 gold. After that, he'll offer that **Harriged's** got a habit of staying on board for a day or so to make one last inventory of his stock before off-loading it. During that time, he often has one of the local brothels send an "escort" to the ship as a diversion. The shipwright also reveals that some time back, **Harriged** had a run-in with a local thieves' guild, and has kept a large contingent of bodyguards with him ever since. Ordinarily, cargo is unloaded at dawn.

Intercepting the Firewind

At this point, there are a bunch of ways the player characters can go about delaying or waylaying the merchant vessel. However, with less than eight hours until the *Firewind* pulls into dock, the group must act quickly. Some different plans to detain **Harriged** may include the following. Exactly how these schemes

may be implemented is left to the player group. Of course, the group may come up with something other than one of these:

- **Destroying the dock facilities.** Limited effectiveness, but it would cause a lot of collateral damage and would almost certainly brand the characters as criminals. Furthermore, the heroes would have to contend with the 20+ dock workers who will defend the place with clubs and axes. And then there's the matter of actually destroying the dock. Setting the whole place on fire might work, if the blaze wouldn't attract the attention of the entire city (not to mention the water and fire warlocks in the city fire department). Likewise, using spectacular magic spells to destroy the dock would also attract a great deal of notice — strategically placed Rot Wood spells might work if placed on the dock's support pylons. Then, while fleeing the area, the group would also have to handle the 1D4+2 eight-man patrols of city guardsmen sent to investigate the disturbance. **The Bottomline:** Even if the dock were destroyed, it would only delay the *Firewind* by 4D6+12 hours, as it would go to a different port and shuttle the cargo in by land caravan. Furthermore, Cord's associate will have disappeared, too fearful that he will be connected to the characters' insane exploits.
- **Frontal assault.** Taking the boat by storm once it pulls into dock is the simplest, yet most difficult path to take. All the player characters would have to do is wait for the boat to dock and attack. This means defeating (if not killing) **Harriged's** bodyguards and whatever crewmen that feel like resisting raiders. Then, the group needs to either hold the boat there for a week (not likely) or set out for sea. The initial problem is the weight of numbers, i.e. **Harriged's** bodyguards (3rd-6th level), crew (all 3rd-5th level sailors) and any *surprise* defenses on board (like one or two practitioners of magic; level 5-8; or magical defenses, a demonic minion or slave, Mind Mage, Knight, etc.). In addition, the defenders are led by **Josko Braggish**, a Troll and 7th level mercenary; complete stats provided in the following pages). **Josko** wields a giant-sized, enchanted berdache that is indestructible and does 6D6 damage (1D6 for being giant-sized), and a **dwarven-made**, giant-sized cutlass (2D6+2 damage) that has a silver edge.

Of the *Firewind's* 25 crewmen, all will initially take up arms, but after seeing 1D4+2 casualties or dramatic displays of magic, regardless of the size of the attacking group, all but 2D4 will lose their nerve to fight. Non-combative crewmen will huddle at the fore and aft of the ship during the fighting, and if things get really hairy, they will begin jumping overboard. Likewise, half the bodyguards have fairly low morale, and if they see **Josko Braggish** go down, or half their numbers defeated or slain, they will give up fighting and surrender or flee, leaping overboard.

After his men are defeated, **Harriged** can be found cowering in his cabin below. He will defend himself until he actually takes hit point damage, at which point the sight of his own blood will make him pass out with fear. What the players' characters do next is up to them. The city defenders will arrive in 2D6 minutes to help "save" the ship and the renowned merchant **Harriged** from "pirate raiders," and will treat the player characters as evil, marauding pirates, showing them no mercy. If the group can get the remaining crew and bodyguards to pull anchor and set sail, it will take 1D4 hours

before an Imperial Navy ship can give pursuit (01-35% chance of finding the "pirates").

The group can easily hold off the initial city defense force/police for up to two hours (the defenders will be cautious and try to negotiate their surrender). During this time they can ransack the ship, taking what valuables they can carry, scuttle (sink) the ship and make good their escape with **Harriged** as their prisoner.

- **Seizing control of the ship quietly.** Player characters might try to bluff their way on board by pretending to deliver one of **Harriged's** "escorts" to gain the advantage of surprise or wage a commando style raid in an effort to "quietly" seize control of the ship. If they can do it without much notice, they could then assume command and "pretend" to be the captain of the ship and key crew members. They could then stall the disembarking of the crew and cargo. One great excuse could be contamination of the cargo or sickness/plague among the crew, requiring quarantine, and so on.

Likewise, the player characters may try a mix of long- and short-range attacks (Some players have found the end of the movie "The Usual Suspects" to be excellent research material). Depending on how the fighting goes, the local authorities might or might not be sent to investigate. If there were no serious pyrotechnics, then all that will be required to keep things quiet is a hefty bribe (500 gold, minimum) to the shipwright. Again, the best bet may be moving the ship away for the week, then returning under the cover of night to drop off **Harriged** before scuttling the *Firewind* and its cargo. **Note:** The cargo may be a problem; see *Scuttling Harriged's ship and cargo*, below.

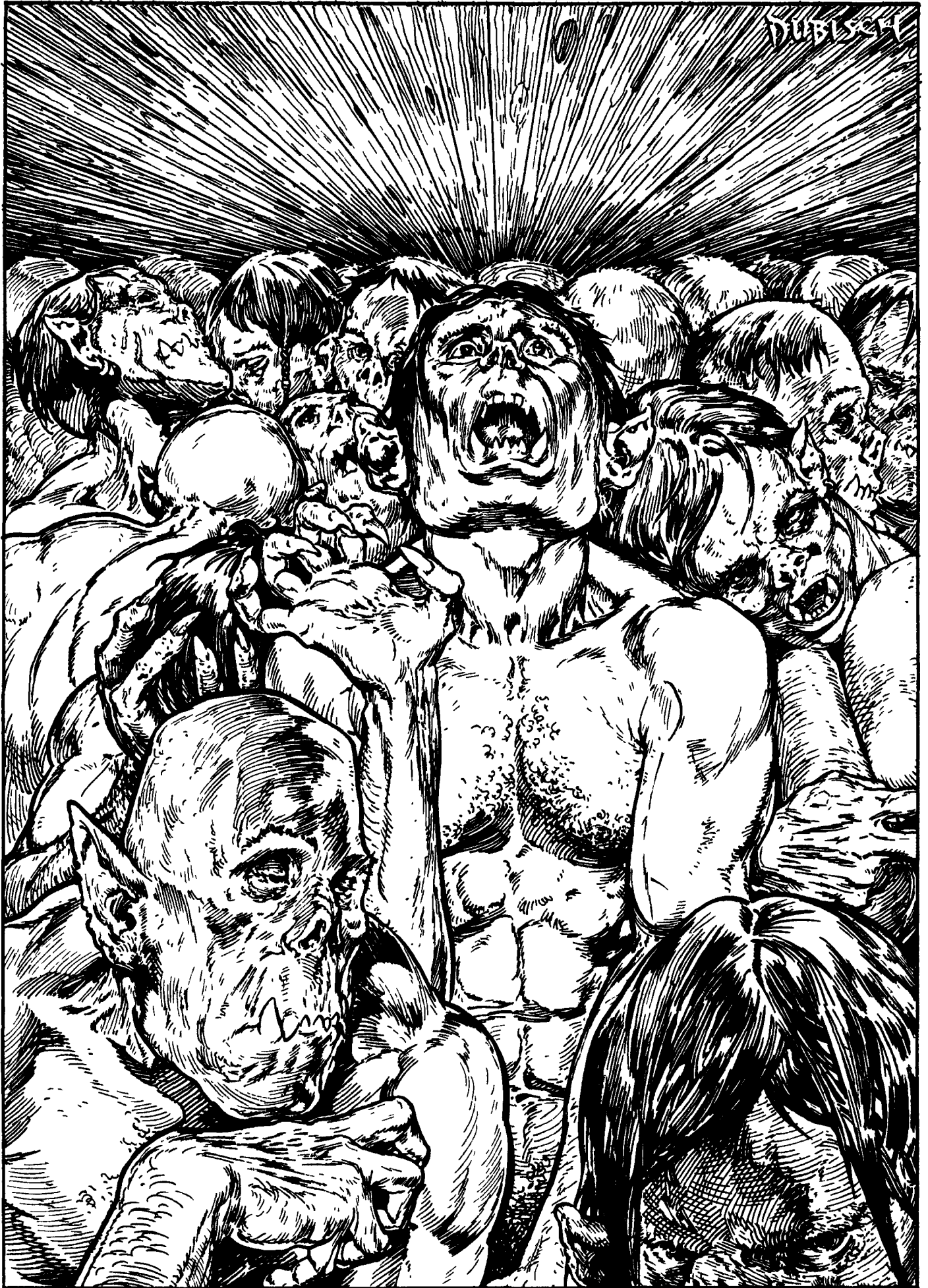
- **Scuttling Harriged's ship and cargo shouldn't be too difficult.** This could be done at sea (may require the service of pirates or the use of magic) or at port. Sinking it at port is effective, especially if **Harriged's** crew and bodyguards have been taken care of.

The only problem is that **Harriged's** cargo isn't glass, silk, or spices, but a huge shipment of **orc**, **ogre**, **goblin** and **human slaves**, captured from the Yin-Sloth jungles! These poor beings are packed like sardines in a can, so tightly that only the hardest of hearts couldn't take pity on them (characters of a good alignment won't consider mass murder under any condition).

What to do with the "cargo" will be an acid test for the alignment of the characters. Sinking the ship means killing about 250 innocent people! Likewise, selling them at the Borskell's Point slave auction or elsewhere (the entire shipment would fetch 300,000-500,000 gold) is also likely to give good and some selfish characters a problem. Just letting the slaves go isn't much help either, since these predominantly monster races have no money, are malnourished, and have no love for humans, elves or dwarves. Those not picked up as escaped slaves the minute they leave the ship are likely to engage in robbing and killing innocent people.

This matter can't be brought up with **Cord**, because by the time it's discovered (probably only after the ship is boarded by our heroes; nobody in port or town knows what the cargo is), he will not be available.

- **Hiring Pirates.** The group may be able to hire some pirates to intercept the *Firewind*. They could offer the bilge-rats half



(to all) the cargo, provided the player group gets Harriged and perhaps some portion of the booty. Pirates would be quick to act on the tip about the Firewind and very likely live up to any deal in which they get the lion's share of the profit. However, there is the danger that one or more members of the pirates' crew may be a member of or affiliated with the thieves' guild that wants Harriged dead. Plus, with pirates, one never knows if they will uphold their end of any bargain, and they may not be happy with a cargo of slaves.

- **Steal the ship!** One of the best solutions for characters of a good alignment is to *steal* the entire ship and sail the slaves back to the jungle or Old Kingdom, or elsewhere, and let them go with some food, clothes and money. Doing the right thing in this scenario could net the players plenty of extra experience points, as well as lead them onto a whole new adventure. Those less scrupulous or caring could sell them at a number of places in the *Yin-Sloth Periphery*, *Land of the South Winds*, and other "foreign" ports. However, they must avoid the authorities and other pirates. And that's an interesting issue too. How will the characters like being branded as "pirates?"

A similar solution might be to seize control of the ship and send it off course and sail around with it for 6-9 days before abandoning ship and letting the vessel and Harriged go about their business. The delaying tactic should be enough to let Master Cord deal with the traitorous Harriged, but the slave cargo may still get sold and the proceeds sent to the Middle Kingdoms to help fuel their plans for war.

- **Abduction.** It's always possible the players might want to disregard Cord's advice and abduct Harriged in town, when the odds are much less in his favor. If this is their choice, then they'll have to shadow the guy as he makes his rounds in Borskell's Point. Harriged will have Josko Braggish and at least six of his other bodyguards nearby at all times. Although Harriged and his guards will stick to big, open streets whenever possible, they must travel through a fairly narrow alleyway on the way to their meeting with **Harriged's** business contacts. This is an excellent ambush spot, since it can be blocked off from both sides, and attackers can also strike from above, provided they get on top of the two-story buildings forming the alleyway. Abducting Harriged at the business meeting will be tough, since the meeting is in a large, open-air tavern, and the business contact is a powerful merchant with seven or eight human and **orc** bodyguards of his own.

After the meeting, **Harriged's** group will again pass through "Ambush Alley" before making it back to the *Firewind*. If Harriged is abducted in town, regardless of where the player characters hide him for the week, the crewmen on the *Firewind* will become concerned and will inquire in town regarding Harriged's disappearance. To make matters worse, the thieves' guild Harriged is on bad terms with (a ragtag gang known as Borskell's Bandits) will have witnessed the abduction and shadowed the players ever since. Borskell's Bandits want to kill Harriged, and will launch an all-out attack on the players to get their man. The G.M. should scale the thieves' power to match the player characters, but the group should be outnumbered at least two to one, if not more.

Other Considerations

Of course, nabbing Harriged is just the first part of the adventure. There are plenty of considerations after that.

Hiding out. Regardless of how the player characters nab Harriged, they've got to keep him out of sight for a week. If they take him on the *Firewind*, then this problem is solved — sort of. Depending on how things are handled, they may have to keep the entire ship out of sight for a week or more. If the player characters sink the *Firewind* while abducting Harriged, or take him off the ship, or abduct him in town, they'll need to find a safe house quickly. People tend to notice if you're carrying around a notorious, bound and gagged merchant, even in the Western Empire. Fortunately for the player, Borskell's Point has a lot of hotels, inns and flop houses, so finding one to stay in won't be hard. The proprietors of such places will probably need a very hefty bribe to stay quiet if they notice Harriged in tow. In the alternative, the group may want to high-tail it into the wilderness for a week. Otherwise, things should be quiet unless the players get attacked by Borskell's bandits. In that case, the proprietor will readily give them up, and everybody will be on the run for the rest of the week.

Remember, once Harriged is known to have been kidnapped, our heroes will be hunted by Harriged's bodyguards (possibly other "friends or associates"), local authorities, the thieves' guild that wants him dead, and probably other "heroes," adventurers and bounty hunters who can expect a hefty reward for "saving" the man. If at sea, this may include real pirates and the Imperial Navy!

If the entire ship has been "pirated" and goes out to sea, there will be inevitable trouble from any bodyguards and loyal crew members on board who will try to sabotage the player characters **and/or** mutiny to regain control of the ship.

Likewise, there is potential danger from the "slave cargo"; i.e. attempted escapes and/or attacks by individuals or small groups, attempts to escape and seize control of the ship, sickness, and the fact that there isn't enough food and water on board to feed the 250 slaves for more than one day! Without food and water, they will begin to die at a rate of **1D4x10** per day.

More complications. Little do the player characters know, but Harriged is completely dependent on a bizarre mixture of drugs from the Yin-Sloth Jungles. He is so addicted, in fact, that if he goes for three days without taking a dose, he will go into convulsions and **1D6** minute(s) later, he will lapse into a coma. Unless the group can get medical help **and/or** the drugs, he will die in **2D6+20 hours!** Unless they are on board and had the foresight to rifle Harriged's cabin when they abducted him, they will probably overlook Harriged's stash of drugs. Come mid-week, they are going to have serious problems keeping him alive. An alchemist probably could whip up something to keep Harriged going, and a priest or healer can keep him alive, but it won't be easy or cheap. And there's always the possibility that the "helper" could "rat-out" the party to Borskell's Bandits or the authorities. The latter is likely if Harriged regains consciousness and begs for help.

What if Harriged dies? Well, that's bad news for the group. First off, Cord won't pay them anything. Sure, he hated Harriged, but he didn't want him dead, partly because he's always feared that he would be blamed for it and suffer grave fi-

nancial and political losses. Depending on the circumstances of **Harriged's** death, Cord might actually send the local authorities after the group to boot. Even if he doesn't, the local guardsmen might come after the player characters if they spotted them fighting Harriged's bodyguards or **Borskell's** Bandits. More importantly, **Harriged** is a powerful man with lots of *friends* throughout the Empire. If the player characters are connected with his death, word will spread about it, and someday, somewhere, somebody is going to come looking to even the score. Just as bad, they will be branded murderers and hunted criminals wanted throughout the Western Empire, each with a bounty of **2D4x1000** gold on their head. This is a label they are not likely to ever lose in the Western Empire. Likewise, if Harriged lives, he is likely to seek revenge (a likely **reoccurring** villain and source of trouble).

Other treasure. In addition to the weapons and gear of the crew, locked in Harriged's cabin are coins worth 1,000 gold, jewelry worth 15,000 gold, a silver dagger, a spy-glass (telescope), several books on the history of the Western Empire, fine silk clothes, and the aforementioned drugs. G.M.s can add a few odds and ends if they like.

BorskellPs Point

Racial demographics for BorskellPs Point: 38,000

48% Human

3% Elf

5% Dwarf

14% Orc

4% Goblin

1% Hobgoblin

5% Ogre

20% Other (mostly transients)

Note: A full 20% to 25% of the population noted above is transient and half of them are nonhumans. The transient population represents sailors, pirates, merchants, traders, mercenaries, adventurers and travelers who constantly come and go from Lower **Barraduk**, but only stay for a limited period of time, whether it be a few days, months or years.

The statistics above do not include the slave population which is roughly equal to half the number of free citizens in the region (27% **Orc**, 15% **Ogre**, 17% **Ratling**, 14% **Goblin**, 3% **Hobgoblin**, 5% **Kobold**, 3% **human**, 16% **other**). The slave trade is also one of this port's specialties.

"The Point," as locals call it, is the last big trading port along the *Lower Barraduk* regional coastline. This coastline is dotted with trading centers where Western Merchants buy and sell goods for trade with other cities along the route or for export to faraway lands. Most of the shipments going to and from other places in the Western Empire, especially other regions, go by overland wagon. Therefore, the shipping industry here, like most of the cities along the coast, deals mostly in international export. The standard practice is to load up on Western commodities like silks, liquors, spices, glassware, and slaves to ship them to other lands, and sell them for cash. Or better yet, merchants will trade for other commodities that will bring an even heftier price back home. The trick is, never return home with an empty cargo hold.

Since Borskell's Point is on the tail end of this trading route, lots of ships never make it this far, or if they do, it's because

they have a cargo of less than top-notch merchandise. As a result, the town isn't as bustling and prosperous as other coastal trade towns. There are still profits to be made here, but you've got to fight for them, and fight, merchants do. Underhanded acts of intimidation and subterfuge, like what Jarred Cord puts our heroes up to, isn't uncommon in this town. There is a saying here: "Gold buys knives which buy more gold."

Borskell's Point is ruled by House **Khifidda**, a hard-nosed group of greedy and power-abusing miscreants. There is little they won't do for their personal gain. What's in the best interests of Borskell's Point, or most of Lower **Barraduk** for that matter, is of little concern to this Noble House. Thus, they buy and sell to pirates and turn a blind eye to pirate activity, smuggling, and the drug trade. There are two thieves' guilds and numerous cutthroats, **mercenaries**, drifters, and scalawags.

NPCs of Note

Jarred Cord Quick Stats

Alignment: Anarchist (with leanings toward aberrant evil).

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 13, M.A. 19, P.S. 10, P.P. 11, P.E. 12, P.B. 13, Spd. 9

Hit Points: 42

S.D.C.: 14

Age: 40-ish

O.C.C.: 9th level merchant and well known in the region.

Attacks per Melee: Four

Bonuses: +2 to parry, dodge, +2 to roll with punch, +2 to pull punch, +2 to damage, 55% chance to evoke trust or intimidation.

Other combat info: W.P. Dagger (+3 to strike, +3 to parry, +4 to throw.)

Weapons: An ornate silver dagger worth 1,500 gold. The dagger is coated with Scorpion's Blood poison (save versus poison or take an additional 4D6 damage).

Armor: Cloak of Protection (A.R. 14, S.D.C.: 200)

Money and other equipment: Jarred never keeps more than 500 gold on him, although he does wear an assortment of jewelry worth nearly 12,000 gold, total. In addition, Jarred keeps a trained Acid Lizard with him at all times. The lizard has maximum hit points and S.D.C. It spits acid for 1D6, but the acid will do 1D6 per round for three melees or until it is washed off. For more information on **Acid Lizards**, refer to the **Monsters & Animals, 2nd Edition** sourcebook.

Skills: Standard fare for merchants, including Lore: Law, History of the Western Empire, Gemology, and Basic and Advanced Math.

Other Notes: Jarred is a schemer, manipulator, and planner. He does not like personal combat and will usually surrender after losing a third of his Hit Points. Jarred hates Alston Harriged with every fiber of his being, and will not stop harassing Harriged until the man's career is destroyed. Although Jarred plays rough, he plays fair, and his word truly is his bond. He will not double-cross or knowingly lie to anybody who hasn't done the same to him first. In this regard, he makes both a deadly enemy and a powerful ally.

Jarred Cord's Entourage: Jarred's bodyguards are all 4th level soldiers that he hired away from a noble army in Lower **Barraduk**. These troops have identical stats and equipment as your typical Western soldier, detailed earlier in this book.

The two female servants are scrupulous, 3rd level peasants (average stats other than P.B.s of 19 and 20) and completely loyal to the merchant. Behind the scenes is **Jarred's** loyal assistant and advisor, an aberrant, 6th level Air Warlock.

Alston Harriged Quick Stats

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 17 (+3% skill bonus), M.E. 8, M.A. 5, P.S. 11, P.P. 15, P.E. 14, P.B. 9, Spd. 11

Hit Points: 43

S.D.C.: 21

Age: 51

O.C.C.: 10th level merchant

Attacks per melee: 3

Bonuses: None. He used to be a much better fighter before becoming a drug addict.

Weapons: Carries a pair of **dwarven** daggers (+2 to strike and parry, +2 to damage).

Armor: Soft leather, (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20)

Skills: Standard fare for merchants.

Money and other equipment: Harriged has over two million gold stashed in various banks throughout the Western Empire. He also carries 25,000 gold on his ship (this is in addition to other treasure noted earlier), the *Firewind*, hidden beneath the floorboards of his cabin. Harriged is completely addicted to a weird mixture of drugs found only in the heart of the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Where he first came across this crippling concoction is unknown, but he is so dependent on it he must take it routinely, or he will die in the resulting withdrawal. He carries three vials of the drug on his person at all times, and he has a large stash of the stuff hidden in his cabin on the *Firewind* (easily a 30 day supply).

Other Notes: Harriged absolutely despises Jarred Cord and constantly does things to undermine Cord's business. He used to be the more shrewd adversary of the two, but ever since spiraling into drug addiction, he just isn't what he used to be. He has started becoming sloppy, and his competitors, especially Cord, have noticed.

Alston Harriged's Bodyguards: All 10 of these guys are 3rd-6th level human mercenaries who have +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, parry and dodge, and have 2-3 attacks per melee round. They all fight with broadswords and wear chain mail (A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 44). The leader may have a magic weapon if the G.M. desires. There may also be one or two other powerful fighters (knight, assassin, etc.), practitioners of magic or even 1-2 minor demons or deevals (or one greater demon or powerful monster such as a sphinx, Za, etc.) serving as a secret defender. Such an addition is left to the G.M., but probably shouldn't be included unless the player characters are especially powerful.

Josko Braggish Quick Stats

Race: Troll

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 9, M.A. 4, P.S. 26, P.P. 19, P.E. 22, P.B. 5, Spd. 17

Hit Points: 64

S.D.C.: 40

O.C.C.: 7th level mercenary, head bodyguard for Alston Harriged.

Attacks per melee: 4

Bonuses: +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +4 to pull punch, +6 to strike, parry and dodge, +11 to damage, +14% to save vs coma, +4 to save vs magic and poison, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Other combat info: Has all kicks and does critical strike on a natural 18-20.

Weapons: Giant-sized, enchanted **berdache** that is indestructible and does 6D6 damage (1D6 for being giant-sized), and a **dwarven-made**, giant-sized cutlass (2D6+2 damage) that has a silver edge.

Armor: Scale mail (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 75)

Money and other equipment: Josko has Harriged keep all of his money for him, so he carries none on his person.

Other Notes: Josko enjoys working for Harriged because it means he doesn't have to think much and he can bust a lot of heads. But recently, he has noticed his boss acting increasingly irrational, strange and erratic. If Josko survives this escapade, he will probably seek work elsewhere. But before he goes, he will want to collect all the money he asked Harriged to hold for him. When he finds out Harriged spent it all on drugs, Josko will steal the 25,000 in gold (he knows where it's hidden), then torture, kill and eat his boss, before seeking work elsewhere.

Borskell's Bandits

This thieves' guild is one of two prominent groups operating at Borskell's Point (there are a handful of small ones too). They make most of their money through simple extortion and robberies, but have recently added drug trafficking to their crimes because it is so profitable. This crew used to buy and sell with Alston Harriged until he double-crossed them a year ago to the tune of 275,000 gold. Now, they will stop at nothing to get this guy's head and fly it from the highest point in town. When they find out that Harriged has been captured by some independent band of outlaws (and being held in town?), they will want to get their hands of him very badly. They'll first try to kidnap him away from the players' group. If that fails, they'll engage in an all-out attack and may offer 10,000 gold to any cutthroat and bounty hunter who can provide the man to them alive. If these bandits get their hands on Harriged, they will torture him for 1D4+1 days before finally killing him.

Tbliunk Dubtcha Quick Stats — Bandit Leader

Race: Elf with a scarred face.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 13, M.A. 13, P.S. 15, P.P. 20, P.E. 15, P.B. 15 (was 20), Spd. 15

Hit Points: 48

S.D.C.: 29

Attacks per melee: 3

O.C.C.: 6th level thief and current leader of the thieves' guild.

Bonuses: +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +4 to pull punch, +7 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge.

Other combat info: Karate Kick, Crescent Kick, Roundhouse Kick.

Weapons: Paired axes (2D6) that are eternally sharp (+3 damage) and return when thrown.

Armor: Studded leather, A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38.

Money and other equipment: Tbliunk has access to most common equipment and poison back at his hideout. He also has

23,432 gold personally, has two potions of healing, a ring of invisibility, and uses a gryphon claw as his favorite weapon.

Other Notes: Tbliunk wants Alston **Harriged** dead, and that's that. He will gleefully kill anybody, player characters included, to get to Harriged. He is willing to strike a deal to get the merchant, but once he has Harriged he will try to kill the characters anyway (if he thinks he can beat them).

Typical Borskell Bandit

Average 1st to 5th level thieves, +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, parry, dodge and damage. Most fight with long swords, knives and crossbows. Most wear soft leather armor (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20). They will follow Tbliunk's orders, but only until they have lost half or more of their own number. After that, they should make Mental Endurance checks (roll under M.E.) to see if their loyalty holds out. There are 74 of these thugs in Borskell's Bandits scattered throughout the town. This does not include the legion of stool pigeons, informers, spies, assassins, bounty hunters, pirates and independent thieves who sell and trade information or services with the guild.

The Firewind Ship

Type: Western Merchantman.

Crew: 15 1st level sailors with no combat bonuses. All have only 20 hit points and 10 S.D.C. They will fight with cutlasses if the ship is attacked, but will flee if Josko Braggish or one-half of the bodyguards are killed.

Size: 35 feet (10.7 m) long, 18 feet (5.4 m) wide.

Excess Cargo Capacity: 30 tons.

Speed: 10 mph (16 km or 8.6 knots).

Features of Note: Two decks, and one lifeboat (200 S.D.C.) designed to hold 12 passengers/rowers. The ship also has a light ballista for defense, with 12 bolts.

S.D.C. by Location:

Mast — 80

Sail — 35

Front Section — 550

Mid-Ship — 450

Rear Section — 600

Hull per 10 foot. (3 m) diameter — 100

Keel per 10 feet (3 m) — 225

Rudder — 100

Value: Aprox. 300,000 gold in good condition; the ship is only five years old.

Other Notes: This has been **Harriged's** ship since his last one sank in the harbor of Caer **Itom**, under mysterious circumstances. Harriged has refrained from seriously modifying this ship since he uses it to carry illicit cargo, and wants to attract as little attention as possible. One distinguishing mark is a gash on the bow left by a hungry sea serpent that was encountered off the southern coast of the Yin-Sloth Jungles.

Adventure #2: The Hunt Club

For this adventure, the level of the characters isn't as important as their relative level of fame **and/or** notoriety (this may be as limited as a recent local act of heroics). This is a great adventure to follow up a series of exploits that have recently thrust the group into the public eye, for whatever reason. Soon enough, our heroes will learn that fame and glory sometimes carry a heavy price.

Fresh from their latest adventure, the party rolls into *Caer Kurgas*, the capital of Upper Kighfalton. As the city notes on Caer Kurgas indicate, this mammoth, sprawling metropolis has an extremely high population density and large areas of unspeakable squalor. It also has some of the finest plazas, noble palaces and commercial districts in the Western Empire.

The adventure begins after the player characters have conducted their business for the day and have retired to a tavern for some drinking, **storytelling** and carousing before returning to wherever they are staying. As the characters walk home, they spot a well-dressed couple — a young man and young woman — being attacked and robbed in a nearby alley. The couple is surrounded by a group of ragged-looking thugs, all punching and kicking at the pair (The G.M. should adjust the number of these thugs to match the size of the player group). Finally, the largest thug draws a large knife and stands above the man of the couple, who appears to be unconscious. This all happens so quickly that the player characters won't have a chance to take any action yet.

"Okay," the thug says. "Let's finish it." As he raises the dagger for a strike, one of the other thugs notices the player characters, who are watching the entire scene not more than 20-40 feet (6-12 m) away.

If the player characters jump right in and try to intervene, then skip the following dialogue and go right to the combat stage.

Otherwise, the thug turns around and sneers at the players. "What the hell are you looking at? You want a piece of this?"

"I think they **do**, Jock," says another thug, who is clearly itching for a fight.

Jock (the thug with the knife) points his dagger at the party and says, "Well, heroes? How about it?"

Basically, these guys are looking to goad others into combat. If the player characters still don't try to help the young couple, then one of the thugs will go over to the young woman, draw a dagger and begin cutting through her clothes. This villain's intentions are clear, and all but a miscreant or diabolic character would be loath to let this travesty continue.

G.M. Note: These thugs do not look impressive at all. Other than being savage and bold, they are clad in dirty, tattered clothing and appear more likely to be angry peasants or street punks than professional bandits or soldiers. Only a few have ordinary looking weapons, none wear armor, and some members of the gang even look a bit nervous or anxious (**G.M.s**, this fight will work best if the players figure their characters can defeat these bozos quickly and easily).

Combat Ensues

Once combat begins, however, it should become all too apparent that these guys are no ordinary thugs. They hit harder, faster and meaner than most **orcs**, and seem to welcome the attack rather than fear it. Player characters wielding non-magical weapons will notice, to their horror, that their weapons do not harm these rag-tag peasants.

After a melee round of fighting, the "young couple" gets off the ground and dust themselves off. They flash smiles of wickedly sharp teeth, as do the rest of the thugs. Their skin drains of color, and their eyes almost glow with a pale, sickly red light. (Now would be a good time for a Horror Factor roll; a 13 or higher is needed to save).

Yep, you guessed it. They are all *vampires*, and this whole staged robbery was just a lure to get this evening's meal!

As combat continues, the "young woman" says, "At last! These ones have some fight to **them!**" And with that, the entire group will savagely attack the party using all of their **vampiric** abilities. **Note:** During that first melee round, have the thugs attack with their fists, feet or weapons only, since they are maintaining the ruse that they are normal humans. This is a test of the **characters'** mettle until the young woman of the vampire group decides that the party is worth fighting with full force.

The Vampires

This group of vampires belongs to a secret society called **The Hunt Club**, a ring of foul villains who view stalking humanoids as a kind of grand safari, and exciting prelude to the subsequent feast on their victims' blood. The Hunt Club has prowled the streets of Caer Kurgas for centuries, targeting individuals who they think will offer some fight or amusing flight. Most of these victims, no matter how strong, eventually are overwhelmed and devoured. But a select few who impress the Hunt Club vampires are sometimes turned into vampires themselves and indoctrinated into the vampire society. The bottom line is these undead creatures are extremely jaded, decadent individuals, looking for some kind of thrill to spice up their eternal lives.

Hunt Club "safari parties" go out nightly in search of suitable prey, usually in groups of 1D4+2, but sometimes more. This group is just one such party. The total strength of the Hunt Club is about 40 individuals.

In this combat scene, the "thug" vampires and the "young men" being attacked" all possess identical attributes. They are considered "lesser" vampires among their kin, and will obey any commands given by their group leader; in this case, the female vampire, *Leandra Skalix*. Leandra is the self-styled "Duchess of **Kighfalton**" and the "princess" of the Hunt Club (a Secondary Vampire; powerful, but subservient to the Master Vampire that lords over the secret society). She will flee combat if she loses more than half of her hit points or until she has only one other vampire fighting alongside of her. All other vampires in this encounter will fight to the death or until Leandra flees, at which point they will flee too. (Leandra's stats are available at the end of the adventure, along with the profiles of the Hunt Club's other notable members).

If Leandra is slain in the fight, the other vampires will turn to mist or bats and fly away, but not before one of them hisses at the party and shrieks, "We will return, and in greater **numbers!** Let the hunt begin!" If the party kills all of the vampires here,

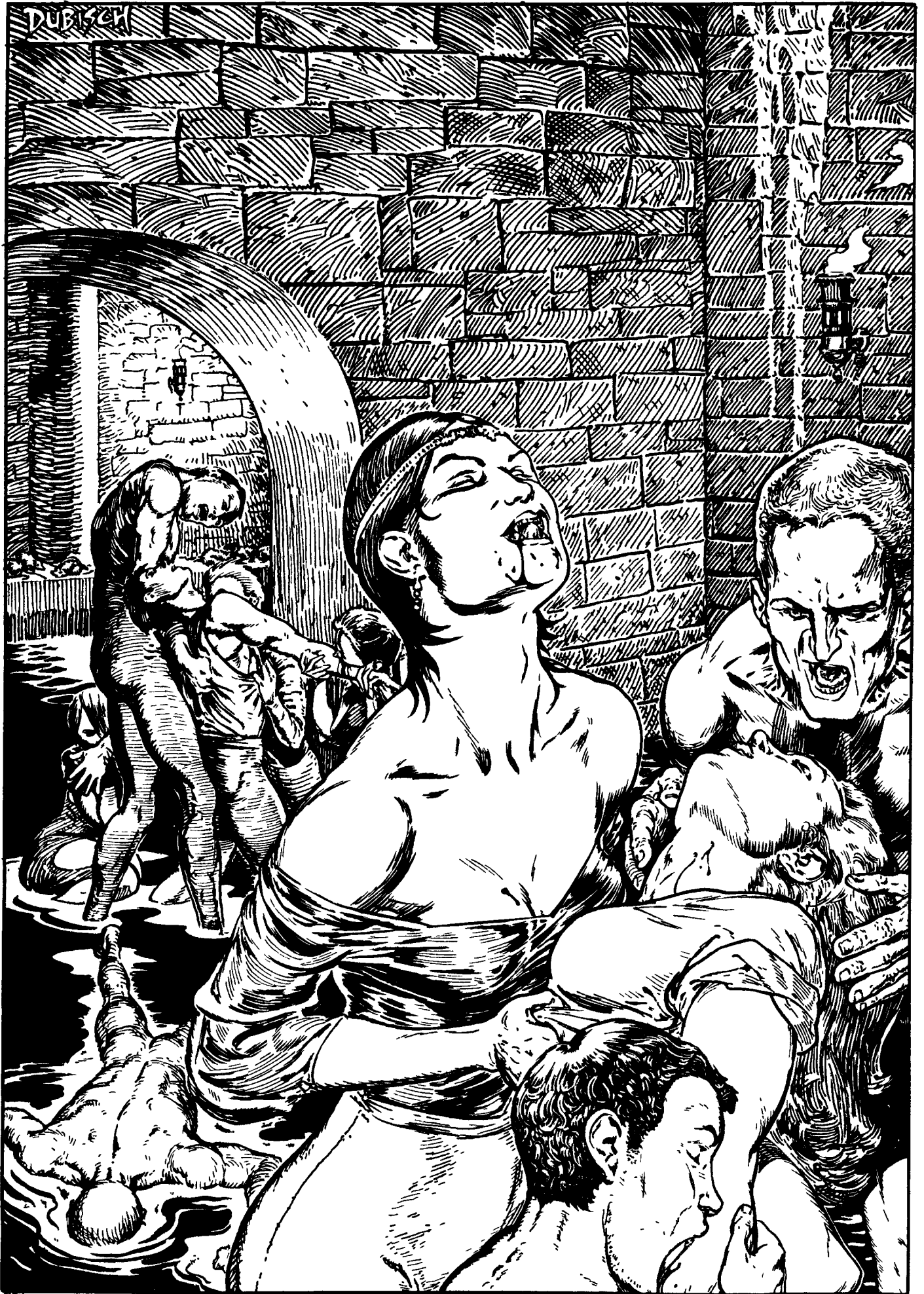
then the last one to die will say this as his or her final words. Once the vamps flee, they won't return that night. **G.M.'s Note:** Any fallen vampires whose bodies are not properly disposed of — i.e., decapitated and mouth filled with garlic and burned or exposed to sunlight, etc. — will regenerate and come back to life. Then they'll really have a grudge against the players!

The rest of the night should be an uneasy one for the player characters. They won't be attacked any more that night, but the group doesn't know that. Preparing for the inevitable attack the vampires warned about is a good idea, but at this hour, all the churches and alchemists' shops are closed. Trying to recruit help at any taverns is likely to illicit drunken jibes and rude responses.

When dawn breaks, the player characters will have about 14 hours until nightfall, and the next vampire attack. How our adventurers spend their day is up to them. Whatever they do, unless they have destroyed the Hunt Club by nightfall (unlikely, as it should take days or weeks to track them all down), they will be set upon by a large group of vampires (one for every player character, plus Leandra and one other "major" member of the Hunt Club — see the end of the adventure for N.P.C statistics). These nightly attacks will continue with increasing intensity for as long as the player characters reside in the city without successfully destroying the vampires and their lair. The fourth or fifth night will bring about an all-out assault by at least 20 members of the Hunt Club, including the leader. This attack will be pretty straightforward and without subtlety, games or trickery. Just a frontal attack using brute force with only one goal: to kill the group of warriors who dare to stand against them. By this point, the player characters will be so hated that none of them will be considered for vampire conversion (a blessing really). Worse for the vampires, such a large attack will draw considerable attention to their presence, and they will have to lay low for months, perhaps even leave the city for a while.

If the player characters decide to leave town rather than directly confront the Hunt Club, they will be set upon by the vampires in the wilderness that night, but are not likely to pursue them much farther. Make sure to impress upon the players that the more their characters stymie the Hunt Club, the worse the Hunt Club will want to chase them down and extract vengeance. If sufficiently provoked, these vampires will stop at nothing to destroy the adventurer group and add them to their long list of vanquished prey. At that point, the characters' only chance for survival will be to return to Caer Kurgas and destroy the Hunt Club. (Of course, the characters may be able to use a Magic Portal spell to jump hundreds of miles away, but that isn't a very adventurous solution to the problem. Furthermore, heroes won't leave these dangerous monsters running loose in an unsuspecting city and will return with a vengeance).

During the day, the player group should be given every opportunity to equip themselves with anti-vampire tools (holy water, Globe of Daylight scrolls, wooden stakes, garlic, holy symbols, etc.). The party also might want to learn more about their adversaries. Researching at local churches, alchemists' shops, sages and libraries will reveal the city's long history of vampire activity, and the sinister goings-on of the *Hunt Club* spanning centuries. Little history is available on specific members of the Hunt Club, save that it has been in town for many years and that nobody knows exactly where these nightbreed



hide during the day. As our heroes poke around for information, they will eventually be referred to two authorities on the subject — an alchemist named *Nelbun the Mad* and the city's main temple of the Church of Light and Dark. Nelbun the Mad is reported to have some idea of where the Hunt Club's lair may be, but nobody's ever consulted him because he's been written off as a nut case. The Church of Light and Dark reportedly is in league with a group of renowned vampire hunters whose services could be most helpful in rooting out this undead menace. On the downside, obtaining the services of these specialists will probably be very, very costly.

Visiting Nelbun the Mad

Nelbun's shop is a cramped, cluttered place taking up the lower level of what appears to be an old winery. Customers enter through the front door but immediately walk down a flight of stone stairs into a large, dank, stone basement with large street-level windows near the ceiling to provide rays of dusty sunlight. Nelbun sells information rather than manufacture magic items. Despite his nutty demeanor, disjointed way of talking and disheveled appearance, he is actually very intelligent and quite shrewd (he couldn't have become an alchemist, otherwise).

After some initial chit-chat, Nelbun will tell the player group all they want to know about the Hunt Club. This cooperation lasts for a couple of minutes (basically telling them what they already know and a few tantalizing bits of background or vampire fighting info). After that, however, he will charge 500 gold for any further consultation. For that money, he will tell the adventurers that the city has been plagued by vampires for over 300 years, maybe as long as a thousand. The vampires never seem to be more than 50 or so. Oddly enough, they seem to pick on out-of-towners, especially rich and powerful-looking adventurers, as their primary prey, although local folks, especially war heroes and troublesome soldiers, also fall prey to them. Nelbun adds that these vampires don't just hunt people for food, but for sport, hence their name. They are all demonic fiends with no regard for human life and a lust for murder.

After that, the alchemist will fall conspicuously silent until he receives "further consultation fees" of another 500 gold. Despite being smart and shrewd, Nelbun is also pretty touchy, so any extended verbal abuse about the additional fees will result in him throwing the characters out of his place (G.M. Note: If the group refuse to go, make sure Nelbun has the resources to force them out — remember, this guy is an alchemist with many magical powers and items at his disposal. The players **SHOULD NOT** be given the opportunity to overpower him!).

Upon receiving the extra 500 gold, Nelbun will smile toothily and pocket the coinage. He leans over to one of the characters as if relaying a big secret and explains that the Hunt Club is not just a group of vampires, but its leaders are an ancient family of Western Nobility! Nearly 500 years ago, the last vestiges of the original members of House Kighfalton (one of the Western Empire's first and greatest Noble Houses) wasted away after long lives of extreme decadence. What is not generally known is that a number of the last Kighfaltons, in a fit of over-privileged boredom, actually tracked down a vampire and had it deliberately transform them into immortal creatures of the night. Apparently, these sick and twisted individuals had tired of

conventional earthly pleasures, and took to their **vampiric** appetites with great glee. Soon, the nobles transformed their courtiers and close friends into fellow vampires.

The whole group then retreated to an unused part of the city's underground aqueduct system, where he is certain they established the Hunt Club — a perverse parody of a normal Western court, where the members conducted nightly "surface safaris" for food and pleasure. Victims snatched from up top may be slain and fed upon in the streets, or beaten and brought down below where the rest of the Club can feed on them. Occasionally, especially tough prey kill one or two members of the "Court," so new vampires are recruited from future "victims" — members of noble families being preferred targets. Nelbun also fears that the vampires have a slave pen of two or three dozen human prisoners who serve the Club as servants and food (draining them enough to feed, but not enough to kill them). Whenever somebody disappears from the streets of Caer Kurgas, folks clutch their holy symbols and hide indoors, for they know the Hunt Club is once again on the prowl.

After saying all of this, Nelbun falls silent, as if he is giving a dramatic pause. After a few seconds, though, it becomes clear that he is holding out for even more money. Without another 500 gold, he's not talking. If the players don't have that much, he'll be happy to barter for the information, accepting any magic items or unusual alchemical components at 25% of their worth. After payment, Nelbun will share with the party exactly where he thinks the Hunt Club can be located (and he's correct). There is a section in the southern residential district where the great old manors and plantations used to be hundreds of years ago. Now that section is nothing but crumbling tenements, but there hasn't been a rat sighted there in over a century. Clearly, the Hunt Club is dwelling somewhere under the ground there, deep within the old catacombs, sewers and aqueducts. That is where one should begin searching.

Whether the group is able or willing to pay this last fee, Nelbun offers one last bit of helpful information. All of the great Western cities have serious vermin problems, Nelbun explains, nodding to several medium-sized gray rats scuttling along the edges of the walls of his shop, slipping into small holes along the walls and floor. It is common fact that vampires summon rats as minions in combat, often commanding hundreds of the little creatures. The few people who have ever survived an attack from the Hunt Club (after the first night, that is — nobody's ever survived more than three nights of the Hunt Club's attentions) mention how the vampires were fond of using large bodies of rats to tip the scales in their favor. Indeed, it is reported that the Hunt Club uses thousands of these creatures to guard their lair during the daytime. As a result, wherever these vampires roam, there tend to be no rats — they have all been summoned away, you see. They also use a hundred Serpent Rats and are reputed to enlist a band of 20-30 Ratlings as their loyal daytime minions and defenders. As fate would have it (yeah, right), one of the few products Nelbun sells is a magical smoke bomb that repels rats (but not Serpent Rats or Ratlings). The fumes will send rats within a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius scurrying for cover and keep them from returning for 1D6+6 minutes. He sells them for 200 gold each; dozens are available. He also offers vials of Holy Water and scrolls of Globe of Daylight for half the usual cost.

If he is asked how he knows so much about the Hunt Club, he smiles, and says only, "those who know, know." That's all Nelbun has to say. If the players press him for more information (understandable, since they did shell out 1,500 gold), Nelbun will add that the underground passageways in the southern district are in disrepair, so many of them will have caved in and are impassable for humans (not vampires in mist form). But the Hunt Club is fond of bringing its prey to its lair (evidenced by the lack of bodies left behind), so there must be some way of getting to the lair through the catacombs. **Note:** Asking around will reveal that Nelbun has had a run-in with vampires and a cult of **Vald-tegor** in another city and hates them. While he's not willing to take a direct hand in the extermination of the Hunt Club (he has to live here), he's willing to give (okay, sell) others information and materials that might help them battle and kill the undead abominations.

Visiting the Church of Light and Dark

The high temple of the Church of Light and Dark is one of the largest religious buildings in Caer Kurgas. The temple, a thousand year old structure of granite and marble, towers nearly nine stories high and is home to one of the most prosperous orders of the Church in this part of the Empire. Everywhere in the temple are rich tapestries, **beautifully** carved stone columns, priceless statues and large collections of holy artifacts on display.

Upon entering, the player characters will be approached by *Brother Jolio*, a human acolyte in charge of receiving visitors. If the group politely describes the nature of their visit (to get help in locating **and/or** fighting vampires), Brother Jolio will bid the party to wait for a moment while he fetches somebody who can help them. During the wait, the adventurers will notice the incredible grandeur of this place, and that it must have cost huge, huge amounts of money to build. Throughout the structure, the ethereal sound of singing monks and priests echos across the wide, open spaces of the temple. Worshippers shuffle in and out, paying their tithes in small drop-boxes or saying prayers in front of the various shrines for each of the Gods of Light and Dark.

After a few minutes, the party is approached by *Father Busurras*, a portly, smiling, middle-aged priest. **Busurras** takes the players into one of the temple's many side-chambers — meeting rooms off the main chapel area — where they can speak with some privacy. Once the door shuts, **Busurras'** jovial demeanor melts away. "Brother Jolio tells me you have run afoul of some vampires, **hmm?**" **Busurras** snorts twice then makes a loud swallowing sound. "What makes you think the Church can help you with this?"

This is a test of the characters' diplomatic skills. Simply demanding that the Church should help out will only alienate Father **Busurras** and get them shown the door. Likewise, whining for help will fall on deaf ears. Characters who successfully use their Mental Affinity, Physical Beauty (**Busurras** isn't that pure at heart), or cool logic and heroic charisma will get him to soften up. Likewise, offering Father **Busurras** a sizeable monetary donation to the Church (at least 300 gold) will get him to listen to the groups troubles with greater interest. Once the warriors have bent **Busurras'** ear, he will mention that the Church's prior rector, Bishop Arcadia, had campaigned long and hard for

House **Ne'Klosh** to root out the Hunt Club's whereabouts and destroy the entire group. After a while, the Hunt Club decided to voice their opposition to Arcadia's plans by abducting him in the middle of the night. The next morning, the old priest was found hanging above the temple's main doorway, his torso slashed to ribbons and his body drained of all of its blood. Others who have cried vampire and called for their extinction have met similar fates, so most people pretend the undead either don't exist or are not a serious problem.

"Bishop Arcadia was my friend," Father **Busurras** whispers, growing angry at the thought of what the Hunt Club did. Then he calms down a bit. "But the Church can't afford to challenge these monsters openly. They killed our Bishop and others who have threatened them. Who knows what they'll do next! And more importantly, nobody here is willing to take the first step. They all know that if they do, they too shall end up swinging from the entrance. I wish I could **help, but ...**"

At this point, the adventurers have to convince **Busurras** to further aid their cause. How they do this is up to them and the opinion of the G.M. Underhanded (or desperate) characters can attempt any form of mind control, but the strong-willed Father **Busurras** has a +4 to save. Moreover, any failed attempts at mind control will bring the conversation to an abrupt halt, but not before **Busurras** says to the party, "If you think you can bend the will of the righteous to fit your petty causes, then think again. Good luck against the vampires. I see you are both cut from the same cloth. **Now**, leave this place, and never return."

What will work best to convince **Busurras** to help the party is if the players honestly convince the frightened priest that they actually have a chance of defeating the undead fiends. As much as Father **Busurras** wants the Hunt Club destroyed, he won't help underpowered fools march off to their deaths by facing invincible foe. But if the player group can convince him that theirs is not a fool's quest (they did defeat one group of these vampires already, after all), then he will help in subtle but important ways.

Enter Maxwell Toth

In addition to providing them with all the holy water they can carry at no charge, he can also provide each with a wooden holy symbol for the cost of one gold each (silver ones cost 20 gold). He will have one of his acolytes send a Magic Pigeon to *Maxwell Toth*, a freelance undead hunter who lives in the city, requesting his services. Toth and his crew show up within the hour, ready to go hunting (although Father **Busurras** doesn't explain this to the group, Toth secretly works on a retainer for the temple). After a brief introduction, the priest tells the player group who Toth and his cronies are, and what they do. After that, how the two groups work together is up to them. As far as Father **Busurras** is concerned, he's done all he can. The matter is out of his hands now.

Maxwell Toth is something of an oddity because Undead Hunters generally are above **mercenarism** of any kind. For some reason, Toth doesn't work this way (Maybe it has something to do with being a distant relative of House Toth, a provincial noble house). While this has alienated him from most other Undead Hunters, it has endeared him to those with certain undead problems that need immediate attention. For a hefty fee (often 1,000 gold per day, plus expenses), Toth will investigate

and eliminate any undead presence. To aid him in his endeavors, he has recruited four like-minded individuals who serve as his apprentices. All are considered greedy mercenary mavericks, but these guys don't care. For them, the thrill of hunting the undead (and getting paid well for it) is enough gratification. They don't need the approval of their peers.

Fearless as he is, Toth has never gone after the Hunt Club, even though he has known about it for some time. The reason was mostly financial — if he took these guys out for **free**, that would eliminate the likelihood that somebody would eventually pay him to do it. There was also a question of **firepower**— Toth and his crew are tough, but not tough enough to take on the Hunt Club alone. And the problem is most adventurers aren't suicidal enough to go along on a vampire hunt, and any other Undead Hunters simply won't work with Toth (or have fallen prey to the Club). When Father **Busurras** approaches Toth with the proposition to accompany the player characters to attack the Hunt Club's lair, the opportunity is too great for him to resist (The up-front payment and promise of big money if successful won't hurt, either).

In general, Toth will try to assume command of the expedition at every turn, talking down to the members of the group as if they are complete idiots. Even if the player characters correct him on this, he will still remind them that he is "the expert" on vampires, not they, and that if they expect to get out of this caper alive, they'd better start listening to him. Whether or not the adventurers want to go by **Toth's** rules or not is up to them. G.M.s, be sure to play up Toth as an arrogant, self-serving show-off and know-it-all. He may be skilled, but he's also obnoxious as hell and it shouldn't take long before the characters are fed up with him. The trick here is to deal with Toth in such a way so that he isn't encouraged to abandon the group altogether. As much as the players may dislike him, having him on their side definitely improves their chances for survival.

Maxwell Toth, Undead Hunter Extraordinaire

O.C.C.: 6th level Undead Hunter (see the *Yin Sloth Jungles* sourcebook for complete details on this O.C.C.).

Alignment: Unprincipled

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 15, **M.A. 8**, **P.S. 18**, P.P. 14, P.E. 15, P.B. 19, Spd. 15

Hit Points: 39

S.D.C.: 20

P.P.E.: 110

Age: 29

Attacks per melee: Four physical or two by spell magic.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +2 to strike and disarm, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +3 to pull punch, and +6 to damage, and 45% chance to charm and impress.

Other combat info: All kicks, Critical strike on a natural 18-20. W.P. Sword (+3 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 to throw).

Weapons: See Magic Items.

Armor: Plate and Chain, A.R. 15, S.D.C. 100

Magic Items: Vampire Slayer: A two-handed sword with a blood-red blade that is well balanced (+2 to strike), inflicts 2D6+4 against mortals and 4D6+4 against demons and the undead. The sword can cast any combination of the following spells three times daily, at 6th level proficiency: Blinding Flash, Globe of Daylight, Liquid to Water, and Circle of

Rain. Furthermore, the hilt of the sword is shaped into a holy symbol that will keep vampires at bay.

Heart Throb Crossbow: Fires wooden stakes 110 feet (33.6 m) that inflict 2D6 damage, but can be used on a Called Shot aimed at the heart. If the attack is successful (-3 to strike) the heart is staked, the vampire takes 5D6 damage and falls into a coma.

Toth uses no other magic items on the job because of his supreme confidence in his own ability, and that of his Vampire Slayer sword.

Spells: Armor of Ithan, Call Lightning, Carpet of Adhesion, Circle of Fire, Decipher Magic, Expel Demons, Expel Devils, Fire Ball, Globe of Daylight, Reduce Self (6 inches), See the Invisible, Sense magic, Sense Traps, Size of the Behemoth, Superhuman Strength, Tongues, Turn Dead.

Skills: Standard for Undead Hunters, see page 34-36 of the **Yin-Sloth Jungles** sourcebook.

Money and other equipment: Toth has a virtual arsenal of vampire-hunting equipment back at his home in town, but he carries little of it into the field other than a mirror, holy symbol, and a satchel with a **mallet**, **10** wooden stakes and a pair of silver daggers. He also maintains an impressive library on vampire and monster lore. Toth has squandered a good deal of the money he and his crew have earned on ornamenting his armor, launching frivolous publicity campaigns, partying, and so forth. He still has a good chunk of cash hidden away as an emergency fund.

Other Notes: Toth is supremely overconfident and is a terrible braggart. The only thing that keeps him in business is his impressive record of defeated monsters and undead, particularly vampires. If not for that, he would be driven out of town by any number of parties whom he has annoyed to the point of violence. Toth doesn't treat his understudies too well, either, and they all yearn for the day when they can go off on their own, or when Toth gets himself killed and they can take over the business themselves.

Maxwell Toth's Apprentices

Jessup, Kathan, Hroza and Gulk.

O.C.C.s: 1st level Undead Hunters.

Alignment: The first two are anarchist, the others unprincipled.

Average Attributes: I.Q. 14-15, M.E. 15, M.A. 7-10, P.S. 17, P.P. 11-16, P.E. 10-16, P.B. 8-12, Spd. 9-13.

Average Hit Points: 21

S.D.C.: 20

P.P.E.: 80

Age: All in early 20s.

Attacks per melee: Three

Bonuses: +3 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +3 to pull punch.

Other combat info: W.P. Sword (+1 to strike)

Weapons: All fight with long swords plus their respective magical weapons, described below.

Armor: Plate and Chain, A.R. 15, S.D.C. 100

Magic Items: Jessup and Kathan each have a Heart Throb crossbow and a dozen stakes. Hroza and Gulk each have a Holy Star.

Spells: Same as Maxwell Toth, above.

Money and other equipment: These guys are Toth's pack mules, and they each carry a full complement of **dungeoneering** equipment (rope, **torches**, iron spikes, etc.)

and vampire-fighting equipment (vials of holy water, extra holy symbols, cloves of garlic, etc.).

Other Notes: These four young humans have already gotten more than they bargained for by signing up with Toth. By being associated with this guy, their future reputation is already shot in the eyes of other undead hunters. So like it or not, the only way these guys will ever get any respectability in their field is to either stick with Toth for a while, or start their own freelance businesses. These four guys are all much easier to get along with than their boss, and the players are much more likely to see eye-to-eye with these characters than with Maxwell Toth.



Finding the Hunt Club

Once the party is ready to go after the Hunt Club, they should travel to the section of town Nelbun the Mad spoke of, where there are no rats in the streets. In this part of town, the street intersections all have large circular grates in the centers of them so rainwater and city filth can drain away. Of all of these drain grates, only one is detachable, and it is through this portal that the vampire hunters must enter the sewers.

The Caer Kurgas sewers were one of the few things that didn't get rebuilt during the Reconstruction. They are a massive network of stone catacombs and waterways about knee-high in putrid **water/filth/garbage**. Anybody down here must roll under their P.E. on a 20-sided die, or be at -1 to strike, parry and dodge, and be at -10% on all skills (because they will be fighting off a constant surge of nausea and distracted by the stench). These P.E. checks must be made once an hour.

The catacombs are dark, cold and slimy. Many of the walls have serious stress fractures in them and numerous passageways have either collapsed or look like they are about to. Periodically, the party will pass under one of the street grates, up above, through which will be a steady trickle of foul liquid and garbage.

Eventually, the group will find the way to the Hunt Club's lair, but it will take them about eight hours of searching, during which a lot of valuable sunlight will be wasted. A much quicker way is to either Sense Evil (which the characters can use like a homing beacon to track the source — the Hunt Club) or the Track Humanoids skill. What's that, you say? How do you track humanoids when you're knee-high in raw sewage? Well, this is

when the players discover that along the edges of the waterways are thin ledges just wide enough to walk on. Anybody making a successful Track Humanoids roll will notice human footprints along these ledges — tracks left by either Hunt Club members or the victims they brought down here! Using these tell-tale signs, the group will home in on the Hunt Club's location within two hours.

Ratling Ambush!

Once the party is on the Hunt Club's trail, they eventually will delve deep into the sewer system, far away from where they originally entered. They will come across a huge subterranean chamber, at least 1,000 feet (305 m) square. No torchlight or lantern will illuminate the entire area, only those with **nightvision** can be of help, because there is no ambient light here. Extinguishing the party's light will result in total blackness (-8 to strike, parry and dodge).

It seems the only way through the chamber is straight through, but once the party is in the middle of it, they will hear a chorus of shrieks and hisses, accompanied by the whooshing of what sounds like flying arrows. All of a sudden, a volley of small spear-like projectiles comes out of the darkness at the group! It's an ambush!

The attackers are eight Ratlings, four on their right side and four on their left. Unknown to the player characters, this chamber has a raised edge all around it, so the Ratlings have a slightly elevated position on them. They are firing upon the party with crossbows, and the bolts are covered with a crust of sewer goo. Each hit will require a roll against the target's P.E. or they will contract a serious infectious disease. If these wounds are not cleaned out in three days, they will become gangrenous and cause death in another 2D4 days. Dirty wounds can be cleaned by the Medical skill, but once they have gone gangrenous, only magical or psychic healing will be of any use.

The Ratlings each have 30 hit points and 10 S.D.C. They wear studded leather armor (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38) and four of the eight fight with long swords. Two fight with battle axes, one uses a mace and chain, and the other uses a horseman's hammer. The Ratlings will fire their crossbows until the invaders get within melee range. This will take some time, since the player characters' foot speed will be reduced by 33%, thanks to the thick sludge around their legs. Moreover, until the group can cast some light on the Ratlings, most will be at -8 to strike them or to parry or dodge their crossbow bolts.

Combat Note: Like the rest of the Caer Kurgas sewers, this chamber is on the verge of collapse. The use of any seismic or stone-altering spells on the walls or floor will probably result in* a local cave-in. The player characters can try to dodge the falling debris, but if they are hit by anything, it will inflict 1D4x10 damage! Moreover, cave-ins in the sewers are bad news if they block off the way the players came. Without a clear path of retreat, the group will be committed to finding and destroying the Hunt Club before sundown.

These are the vampires' daytime minions and protectors, with squads of 6-10 scattered throughout the catacombs. Keep in mind, these Ratlings are in no mood to negotiate, and even if they were, they are vile, nasty creatures who really don't like surface folk. Furthermore, they fear the vampires more than any mortal warrior, so they fight to the death.

The Lair!

Good tracking skills will make finding the lair take only another hour. Otherwise will the party take another three hours to find the spot. Remember that daylight is wasting, and that if the vampires are down here, by about 7 p.m. the Hunt Club will awaken and begin heading to the surface for dinner. At this time, they will almost certainly learn of the presence of the invaders from their Ratling minions or bump into the group. This will turn into an immediate conflict. Initially, the group will have to fight five or six vampires, but shortly after this initial skirmish, they will face a group of 2D4+6, followed by a similarly sized group and then another, along with the leader of the group. Fighting the entire group will probably be impossible. However, if the players are successful in defeating the first small and second large group, it will unnerve 3D4 other vampires who will escape into the night to regroup and figure out what they should do. Slaying the leader of the Club (which is inevitable) will cause even more confusion and an unwillingness to fight these powerful mortals.

The Hunt Club's lair is easy enough to spot once our heroes find it. This is the one part of the sewers that doesn't look like it is about to fall apart. Blocking off one of the waterways is a massive stone door that will take a combined P.S. of 40 to push open. The door is warded with a trigger ward that, if the door is tampered with in any way, will set off an area affect, protection by infliction — a death ward on the floor beneath the door. (This area affect ward is hidden under a few inches of murky water and will be very difficult to spot with the naked eye.) The area effect ward will blast everybody within 25 feet (7.6 m) for 4D6 damage for 4 melee rounds (unless the players back away from the door until the alarm sequence ends). **Note:** The door is perforated with dozens of tiny holes, so vampires can easily pass through when in mist form. In addition, the true name of every vampire club member is inscribed on the back of the door so they may open and shut it without triggering the wards.

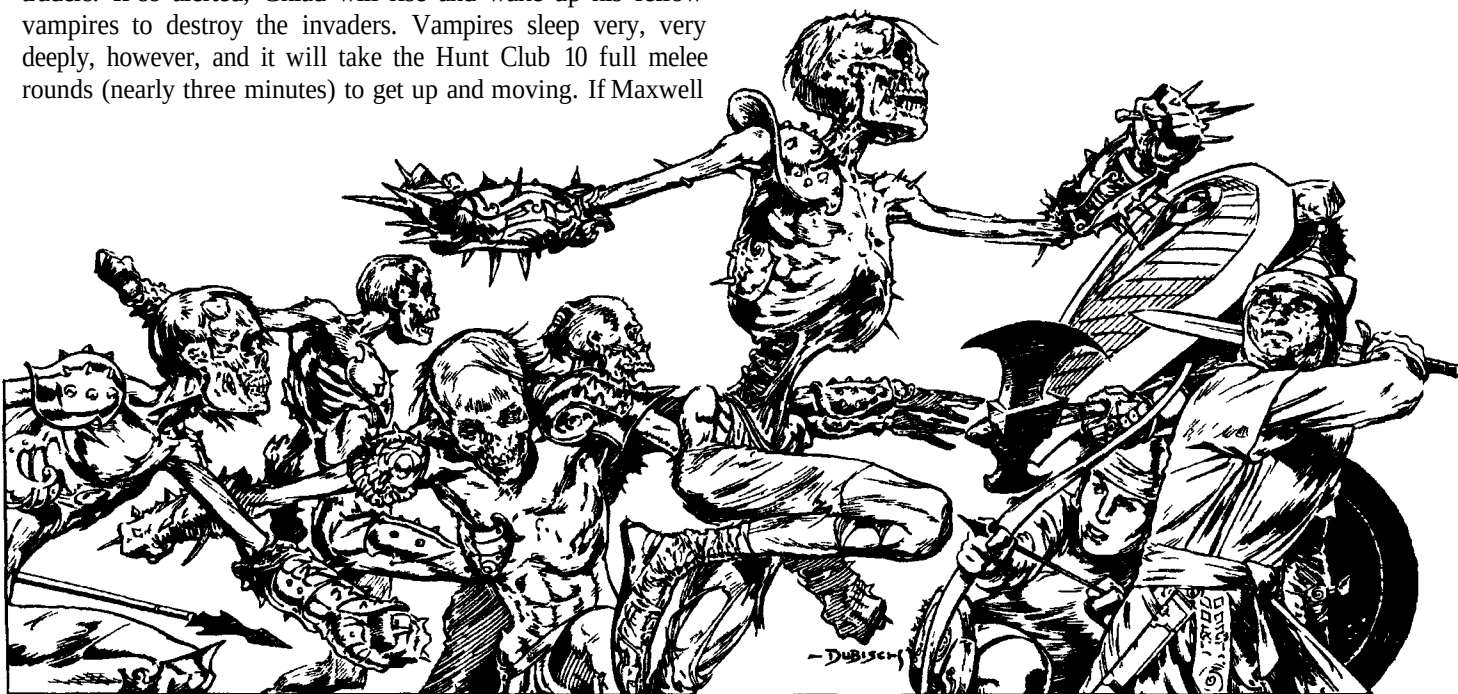
Also on the door is a silent alarm ward that will alert **Koromir Ghlad**, the ruler of the Hunt Club, that there are intruders. If so alerted, Ghlad will rise and wake up his fellow vampires to destroy the invaders. Vampires sleep very, very deeply, however, and it will take the Hunt Club 10 full melee rounds (nearly three minutes) to get up and moving. If Maxwell

Toth or any of his apprentices are still alive, they will know this, as would any character who makes a successful Demons and Monsters Lore skill roll. If the alarm has been set off, then the player group will be in a race against time to get inside the door, find the vampires' coffins, and destroy them before they can fight back. If not, the vampire fighters still have some time, but they should hurry before they run out of daylight.

Opening the door without setting off the ward alarm will be impossible, but teleporation, mystic portal and other magical means could circumvent it. Once past the door, the adventurers will be inside the lair of the Hunt Club.

The lair is designed like a noble court, with formal seating, banquet and audience areas all within a single, grand chamber. The decorations are lavish and refined, but they have deteriorated terribly over the years. What once were beautiful plush carpets are now matted, stained and sticky. The curtains are tattered and grimy. The furnishings are creaky and mold-weakened. On one side is a hideous banquet table with the bones and body parts of countless victims carelessly discarded in a pile. The entire place is a sick parody of a real court — as if there truly were a nobility within the undead, and this was their regal, ghastly palace.

Once inside, the characters will see on the far wall a pair of passages leading out of the chamber. As the characters go toward them, they will hear a creaking sound from behind. Turning around, they see a group of zombies (roughly one per character in the group) coming straight for them! The zombies are particularly fearsome because they have armor plates bolted into their flesh for added protection (and visual effect). These monsters have a Horror Factor of 16 and will not stop fighting until destroyed or driven back somehow. The zombies only duty is to destroy anybody who enters this place not accompanied by a vampire. If the other vampires enter here, the zombies will cease attacking (a flaw in their instructions) and resume their stand-by positions.



Zombies

S.D.C.: 200; **A.R.:** 13

Attacks per Melee Round: Three

Bonuses: +2 to strike, parry and dodge.

Weapons: The zombies will attack with their fists, which are covered in wicked, spiked metal gauntlets. Each blow from these monsters does 2D6+7 (that includes their strength bonus).

Special Abilities: Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), supernatural P.S. and P.E., impervious to normal weapons, poison, drugs, disease, heat and cold.

Vulnerabilities: Zombies can be hurt by fire, magic, and weapons that are either silver or magical. Zombies also fear flame; small torches will have an Horror Factor of 6 for them, a man-sized fire will have an H.F. of 12, and larger fires have an H.F. of 15. If the zombies fail their Horror Factor rolls in the face of fire, they will cower in the corner of the Hunt Club's main audience chamber and not advance at all. In fact, a single torch-bearing character could, technically, wave several of the zombies into a corner and set the torch down in front of them, keeping them stuck for as long as the torch would burn.

Battling Vampires

Once past the zombie guardians, it is on to the main coffin chamber. This chamber is as large as the audience chamber, except it isn't decorated at all. There are just two rows of coffins, each containing a member of the Hunt Club. There are 40 members total, minus however many the players destroyed before arriving here. The coffins themselves are stone. Their lids can be pushed aside by a combined P.S. of 18.

At this point, all the characters have to do is dispatch the vampires however they can. All of these villains are completely helpless at this point, and the adventurers can do what they will to them. Casting Globe of Daylight spells inside a vampire's coffin is a nice way to flash-fry these baddies, inflicting 4D6 damage each melee round the globe is contained in close quarters (it needs to be opened a crack to cast the globe inside). It will take 1D4 melee rounds for the undead to escape the coffin, at which time the Globe of Daylight will hurt its eyes and keep lesser vampires at bay. Of course, opening the coffins and staking the vampires is ideal (the bodies can be disposed of later). The vampires can awaken and function in the safe darkness of their subterranean lair, and every time a vampire is "staked" it will open its eyes and shriek in agony. Each scream has a 01-30% chance of awakening 1D4 of the other slumbering vampires, but it will take them three melee rounds to wake up enough and slide open their coffin to get out and attack (characters should hear and see the coffin lids sliding open, unless they are already locked in combat).

What our stalwart heroes don't know is that they tripped another silent alarm ward upon entering this chamber, so whether or not they tripped off the alarm ward on the lair's front door, **Koromir Ghlad** is waking up, as are **Leandra Skalix**, **Ving Hamish** and **Math Gomny** (perhaps 1D6 others as well). For dramatic purposes, have these notable vampires be the last to confront the adventurers. This will make the probability of the party's fighting them all the higher. Seeing his minions destroyed will send Koromir Ghlad into a killing frenzy, while Leandra, a survivor, is more prone to cutting her losses and fleeing.

It is possible to destroy the entire Hunt Club, especially if the entire party and Maxwell Toth's Undead Hunters get here in one piece.

Slaves: Scratching and muffled sounds from behind a portion of a wall reveals a secret door to another chamber that is filled with terrified slaves. Most (70%) are humans who have been used as slaves and livestock — there are 23 total.

In the back of the chamber is a 41st sarcophagus which contains not a vampire, but the sum of the Hunt Club's treasure. In it is 36,780 in Western gold, 10 rubies worth 1,000 gold each, and a diamond tiara worth 3,500 gold. There are also a number of non-magical items including two vials of holy water, six vials of Dragon's Blood poison, three potions of Fire Resistance (in vials that are identical to the Dragon's Blood vials), a half dozen silver daggers, two silver short swords, two silver longswords, a silver battle axe that magically glows, and a number of other odds and ends according to the G.M.'s wishes. Make the treasure appropriate for the risk. The player characters should be glad to have rid the city of these fiends and will enjoy such intangible benefits as an improved reputation (at least in the city), the appreciation and favor of the main Church, the (reasonable) respect of Maxwell Toth, and the gratitude of the rescued slaves and their families (these people will spread the word of the characters' great deed in saving them and killing all or most of the vampires). Really, the player characters are lucky to get out with their lives.

Epilogue

After dispatching the Hunt Club and returning to the surface, Maxwell Toth and his undead hunters will thank the party for an invigorating adventure and bid them farewell. As friendly as Toth is, he is a little cool toward, and leery of, the group. They fight vampires **well** ... too well, in fact. If they decide to stay in Caer Kurgas as freelance monster fighters, he's going to have some serious competition on his hands.

Father **Busurras** will also hear of the party's success and thank them profusely for their service. As long as the Father lives, the group shall always have a friend in Caer Kurgas and the powerful local branch of the Church of Light and Dark.

And what if any of the vampires escaped during the fracas? The player group will receive a message within the next 48 hours stating the following: "You have provided us with the finest of Hunts, good sirs (and ladies, if any), and it is with profound respect that we hereby rescind any and all attempts to collect your good names in the ledger of our victims. You have our respect. Farewell." The letter will be unsigned, but it will be written in blood (cue the "Twilight Zone" theme ...). Our heroes can search for the escapees, but they won't **find** them. Caer Kurgas will not (obviously) suffer from vampires for at least a decade.

If Koromir, Leandra or Math got away, each could be an interesting recurring NPC villain. Certainly as for Koromir or Leandra will crave revenge, and could become the party's worst nightmare, tracking them from city to city in an effort to extract revenge and make them suffer. And wouldn't it be wild, if maybe, just maybe, Koromir, Leandra or Math claim to have seen the light and try to get the characters' help in restoring their lost humanity (not likely to be **sincere**)? Such an effort would require a great deal of trust on the groups part, and would also involve them in more vampire goings-on and treachery.

Noteworthy Members of the Hunt Club

Koromir Ghlad, Prince of Kighfalton

True Name: Koromir Kighfalton

O.C.C.: 10th Master Vampire; 8th level noble, 4th level Diabolist.

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 21 (+7% skill bonus), M.E. 21, M.A. 18, P.S. 29, P.P. 22 (+4), P.E. 20, P.B. 21, Spd. 24; supernatural P.S. and P.E.

Hit Points: 120

S.D.C.: 40

Age: Looks to be in his 30s but is over 1000 years old.

Attacks per melee: Five

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to pull punch, +3 to parry and dodge, +17 to damage, +3 to save vs psionic attack, +4 to save vs insanity, +10% to save vs **coma/death**, 50% chance to evoke fear/intimidation or trust, 55% chance to charm or impress; also see vampire abilities.

Other combat info: W.P. Sword (+4 to strike, +4 to parry, +2 to throw), W.P. Dagger (+4 to strike, +4 to parry, +5 to throw) and Paired Weapons. Karate kick, crescent kick, roundhouse kick. Body throw/disarm. Critical strike on a natural 18-20.

Weapons: Koromir prefers to fight with his bare claws, but if his foes look especially tough, he will fight with a magical bastard sword that does an additional die of damage, is eternally sharp, and continually glows with an amber light. The sword does 3D6+5 damage. Koromir also has a pair of magical daggers that do 2D6 per hit and return when thrown.

Armor: Leather of Iron, A.R. 14, S.D.C. 250

Magic Items: Aside from his magical weapons, Koromir also has a silver rune key (5 charges), a **cherubot** rope, 2 potions of the Might of the Palladium, and a ring that enables him to **teleport** as the spell three times daily. Koromir will use this ring as an escape device if things look bad — in fact, he has even prepared a secret chamber in another part of the sewers where he can teleport to with no chance of error. Here, he has most of his personal belongings and gold stashed away. He can also get to this chamber in mist form.

Money and other equipment: Koromir has nearly 100,000 gold. He also has a huge wardrobe of fine clothes that have deteriorated over the years, making him look like a ghastly version of a fashionable nobleman. A large wine collection that he keeps in his hidden lair contains wines that were once prime vintages hundreds of years ago and are worth about 2,500 gold a bottle, but they have since turned to almost pure alcohol. Still, Koromir keeps this collection as a reminder of when he was a respected member of Western society, so long ago.

Other Notes: Koromir Kighfalton started the Hunt Club 1,126 years ago and has come to deeply regret doing it. Although he is a villain through and through, he detests being a vampire. **Vampiric** immortality had its novelty for about 500 years, but after that, Koromir grew tired of feeding off the living. He realized that despite all the power he commands as a lord of the night, what he really craves is to live under the sun, to enjoy normal, earthly pleasures, and to once again

rule in the dominion of men. The only thing that keeps him going is the power he wields as a Master Vampire and ruler of the Hunt Club, but this too is getting old for him. Koromir yearns to break free of his vampiric curse, and will investigate any rumor that promises becoming mortal again without ill effects. He will not consider suicide as an end to his frustration and pain.

Leandra Skalix

Duchess of the Hunt Club

and Princess of Kighfalton

True Name: Leandra Sara Skalix, cousin to the Kighfalton family.

O.C.C.: 8th level Secondary Vampire, 7th level noble and amateur assassin.

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q. 17 (+3% skill bonus), M.E. 23, M.A. 24, P.S. 17, P.P. 18, P.E. 17, P.B. 24, Spd. 17; supernatural P.S. & P.E.

Hit Points: 75

S.D.C.: 45

Age: Looks to be in her 20s but is really over 1000 years old.

Attacks per melee: Four

Bonuses: +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to pull punch, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to damage, +4 to save vs psionic attack, +6 to save vs insanity, +4% to save vs **coma/death**, 80% chance to evoke fear/intimidation or trust, 70% chance to charm or impress; also see vampire abilities.

Other combat info: All kicks. W.P. Paired Weapons. Critical strike on a natural 18-20.

Weapons: Leandra fights with paired weapons at all times — usually a **dwarven** rapier (2D6, +1 to strike and parry, +4 to damage) and a **dwarven** dagger (2D6, +2 to strike and parry, +2 to damage). She is fond of poisons, and will envenom her rapier with Basilisk's Eye (save vs poison or suffer 4D6 plus paralysis for 2D4 minutes) and her dagger with Dragon's Breath (save vs poison or suffer 6D6).

Armor: Leandra wears no armor because she feels she doesn't look good in it, and doesn't really need it; see vampire abilities.

Magic Items: None — Koromir forbids it. He feels Leandra is too powerful as it is.

Money and other equipment: Koromir keeps all of Leandra's things locked away. She tends to keep whatever jewelry her victims have on them, for she loves adorning herself with sparkly things. She wears a gem-encrusted ring on each hand (worth 4,000 gold and 3,500 gold, respectively), and a necklace worth 8,000 gold. Otherwise, her attire is simple — a loose, billowy shirt open at the neck, tight leather breeches, and knee-high boots. Sometimes, Leandra likes to set up pretend scenarios to draw in her victims (like the staged fight that got our heroes involved). During these staged events, she will wear one of her many "disguise" outfits to play the part. She loves pretending to be a rich noblewoman or a high-class escort.

Other Notes: Leandra was the first vampire Koromir ever created, and she is the only one still alive today. She is incredi-

bly beautiful and seductive, and she loves using this power to twist the will of mortals (and some of her fellow vampires, too). She is vicious, black-hearted, and completely untrustworthy. What's more, she is slowly going insane with bloodlust and is growing more and more uncontrollable, even by Koromir. She is ready to become a Master Vampire herself, and within a few years, is likely to start her own group of vampires subservient to her. A homicidal maniac, she feels Koromir is getting soft in his "old age," and that the Hunt Club is in need of new leadership or that she should start her own band. If Koromir is slain or leaves the group, **Leandra** will take over and launch a campaign of bloodletting that will make the entire city tremble with fear.

Ving Hamish

True Name: Ving Hamish Lexipol

O.C.C.: 6th level Secondary Vampire and noble.

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 22, M.A. 14, P.S. 17, P.P. 14, P.E. 17, P.B. 15, Spd. 15; supernatural P.S. & P.E.

H.P.: 45

S.D.C.: 30

I.S.P.: 58

Age: Looks to be in his late 20s but is really over 100 years old.

Attacks per melee: 3

Bonuses: +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to pull punch, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +4 to save vs psionic attack, +5 to save vs insanity; also see vampire powers.

Other combat info: Critical Strike on a natural 19-20. No weapon proficiencies.

Weapons: Ving cannot stand the thought of personal combat, so he owns no weapons. When he has to, he fights with his bare claws, but also relies heavily on his psionic powers.

Armor: None.

Magic Items: None. Ving has little interest in them, oddly enough.

Psionics: The usual vampire fare, but Ving relies on them heavily.

Money and other equipment: Ving used to have some money, but it's all been spent. All he really owns is the clothing on his back. He is so slothful that he hasn't got the urge to collect material wealth or possessions.

Other Notes: Ving is a foppish nobody who had little respect for life when he was a mortal and has even less respect for it now. He considers the living as mindless, disgusting cattle. He finds the act of killing distasteful, and will do his best to convince others to bring blood back for him. He is extremely lazy, and all he really wants is for people to wait on him hand and foot while he does nothing. Other Hunt Club members resent him for this attitude, and who can blame them?

Math Gomny

True Name: Mathul Gomnyxl; an elf.

O.C.C.: 5th level Secondary Vampire and ex-4thlevel wizard.

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 19 (+5% skill bonus), M.E. 19, M.A. 12, P.S. 17, P.P. 12, P.E. 17, P.B. 13, Spd. 13; supernatural P.S. and P.E.

Hit Points: 50

S.D.C.: 25

P.P.E.: 143

Age: Look to be in his 30s but is really over 150 years old.

Attacks per melee: Three physical or two spell attacks.

Bonuses: +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to pull punch, +2 on initiative, +2 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to save vs psionic attack, +2 to save vs insanity; also see vampire powers.

Other combat info: W.P. Staff (+2 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Dagger (+2 to strike, parry and throw).

Weapons: A magical staff that inflicts 2D6 per strike and is indestructible. Three times a day, the staff can fire off a volley of 6 magical blades of force (roll to hit for each one). These blades do 2D6 each and are +3 to strike. Math's other weapon is a magical dagger that does 3D6 damage per hit and does double damage to dragons.

Armor: None.

Magic Items: A scroll with the following spells: 10-Foot Wheel of Fire and Mini-Fireballs at 5th level power.

Money and other equipment: None to speak of.

Spells: All common knowledge spells plus the following: Cloud of Smoke, Blinding Flash, Chameleon, Mystic Alarm, Armor of Ithan, Carpet of Adhesion, Superhuman Speed, Shadow Meld, Energy Bolt, Fear, and Thunderclap.

Other Notes: Math was initiated into the Hunt Club only 100 years ago, but has quickly risen as one of the groups' main powers. Math's sense of honor gives him little tolerance for the excessive behavior of Leandra and the slothfulness of Ving. Should Koromir abdicate his position as ruler of the Hunt Club, Math will do all that he can to obtain the leadership. Killing Leandra and Ving will not bother him in the slightest.

Math is a wily combatant, and will rely mostly on his spells. Typically, he will first cast an Armor of Ithan on himself, then a Carpet of Adhesion on his enemies. After that, he will either cast a Superhuman Speed for extra attacks (if he wants to engage in HTH combat), or he will begin shooting off Energy Bolts. He is also very fond of his vampiric summoning abilities, and will summon and command large numbers of rats to attack his opponents. If a battle fares poorly, Math will try to escape using Shadow Meld or Chameleon or by turning into a bat or mist. He will not want to leave his magical weapons behind, especially his staff.





Palladium Fantasy Vampires

By Kevin Siembieda

The vampires presented in the pages of this book are not simple monsters with a page or two of basic information. Instead, we have taken the classic undead vampire of myth and examined him under a microscope. We have considered the many aspects of his nature and have speculated on how vampires might **function** in a society. Consequently, the vampire information is presented in great detail, making them very complex villains.

Please note that while we refer to the hideous creatures as the "true" vampires, the so-called *undead* are creatures of myth and legend. They are not real. Much of the data presented is drawn from a variety of different vampire myths and legends from around the world with new and **originalfictional** characteristics and conclusions added (like the elemental aspect of the vampire and their societies). Other vampires and undead, and zombie-like creatures also exist in the Palladium World, but are not covered in these pages (some can be found in **Monsters & Animals, Second Edition**).

Design Note: Players of the **Rifts® RPG** will quickly recognize much of this material as modifications from the **Rifts®** sourcebook, *Vampire Kingdoms*. However, Palladium Fantasy fans will find it amusing to note that I originally designed the fundamental "Palladium Vampire" — Master, Secondary and Wild — for my own **Palladium Fantasy RPG** campaign. The **Rifts®** material was actually a modification and elaboration on the vampires I developed for the fantasy setting. I had originally intended to have this unique outlook on vampires to appear in a special fantasy sourcebook devoted to vampires (Erick **Wujcik** and/or I may still get around to this fantasy book, set in the Western Empire, in the future). However, a modified version first saw print in a **Rifts®** sourcebook, and now, since Bill Coffin has come up with this wonderful adventure using vampires, I find it necessary to include the vampire material in The Western Empire. I hope you like it.

Undead Vampires

In the Palladium World, like many others, there are a variety of monsters that feast on blood or are effectively "undead." Such beings will be described in various sourcebooks and given specific names, powers, abilities and background, such as the zombie, succubus, Mummy **Immortalus**, **Maxpary** Shambler, **Yema** and others — all of which are considered to be "undead," and some vampires because they drink the blood of their vic-

tims. Among the abundance of undead creatures and blood sucking fiends, there is only one demonic species of *True Vampire*, the legendary demons known as **Undead Vampires**. In this book, the term "vampire" will generally refer to the True, Undead Vampire.

There are three types of Undead Vampires, the *Master Vampire*, *Secondary Vampire*, and the *Wild* or "*Lesser*" Vampire (the latter two tend to be subservient to the more powerful Master). The level of primordial savagery increases from Master to lesser vampire, just as the level of intelligence decreases. All three share the same basic powers, although the Master and Secondary Vampires possess limited skills and abilities that the Wild vampires do not.

Undead Vampires live to dominate, terrify and feed on inferior humanoid life forms. Humans and other **humanoids** (including the monster races) are cattle to be quartered and devoured, as well as playthings to satisfy sadistic pleasures. The hellish fiends delight in the fear, pain, and suffering of their prey, immersing themselves in dark emotions and murderous glee. While they require blood as nourishment, most stalk and kill their prey for the tantalizing ecstasy that comes from tormenting and destroying the living. The vast majority of Undead Vampires (99%) quickly **learn** to loathe frail mortals and come to view human life as something ugly and to be broken, enslaved and destroyed.

Most Undead Vampires appear to be completely mortal, whether their form is that of a human or elf, or monstrous **orc**, **wolfen** or other nonhuman. However, most seem to be attracted to humans, elves and other handsome races, probably as a result of their disdain for beauty and the fact that humans are the most abundant (and comparatively, easy) prey to stalk. The vampire can be male or female, adult or child (though they tend toward adults), but never a fellow demon or other supernatural being or creature of magic (the dragon, sphinx, Faerie Folk, and similar creatures cannot be turned into Undead Vampires).

The physical characteristics that differentiate the "undead" from humans are pale (bloodless) skin color like that of a corpse, hollow and prominent cheek bones, lean and bony body (again giving them a corpse-like look; few vampires are fat), long slender fingers (often unusually long) and long fingernails. The eyes are bright and piercing (they glow red, orange or yellow when the vampire exerts his will over others, or when he is using his other powers), and, of course, they possess large canine teeth that often protrude from beneath the upper lip. Most are said to have a "hungry look" about them, as if longing for some unnatural pleasure.

Master Vampires frequently exude an air of cold authority and confidence that is beyond the norm, like some invisible aura that makes humanoids (even non-psychics) feel strangely uncomfortable. Master Vampires are the least corpse-like in appearance and tend to be attractive and a bit more meaty and healthy looking than most. Still they are usually tall, lean, pale in color, and possess all the other physical traits of the vampire; just not as extreme. They tend to be educated, well mannered and dress fashionably, giving them an aristocratic appearance. They can easily pass themselves off as being human.

Secondary Vampires are your classic vampire, with pale, almost white flesh, thin and corpse-like bodies, canine fangs and strange eyes. They are less educated and more savage than the

Master and may wear fine cloths, rags, or nothing at all. Like the Master Vampire, they can often walk among humans unnoticed.

Wild Vampires are clearly the undead. They tend to be terribly thin, often skeletal, have long claw-like fingernails, strange eyes, and white flesh often tinged with hues of blue, pale green or the yellow-brown of aging parchment. They frequently wear tattered rags, loincloths, or nothing at all. Their faces are distorted by snarls and slobbering lips. Their eyes, when not aglow, have tiny pupils, no iris, reddish coloring and the crazed look of insanity. They speak in guttural tones and short sentences accompanied by grunts, growls, and howling. These creatures of the night are savage and wanton murderers who often **torment** their prey before they feast on their blood. They make no effort to conceal their nature. Most vampires are noted to have foul smelling breath. Wild Vampires have a particularly terrible stench for breath and a **charnel** smell about them.

Clear levels of superiority have created a caste system among Undead Vampires. The demons instantly and instinctively recognize their superior and usually bow to their better, acknowledging him or her as their lord. Only the comparatively rare Master Vampire retains a free will when dealing with other powerful vampires. But even they must answer to a higher power.

Lords of the Undead

Undead Vampires are created by god-like supernatural beings. On most other worlds, these beings are restricted to alien intelligences known as vampire intelligences — a monstrous, elemental being that functions like a living virus that infects other creatures. Vampire intelligences are malignant forces of evil dedicated to the propagation of misery. They know nothing about compassion, nor regret, and exist for the sole purpose of spreading hatred and sorrow. They are alien beings that are beyond human understanding of physics and biology. The creatures can straddle three or four different dimensions by fragmenting their life essence and sending that life fragment to live in an alien world while other essences and its own physical body exist in another. The vampire intelligence can divide its life-force, like an amoeba, into an army of tiny fragments. Each fragment is an extension of the multi-dimensional intelligence and is sent through a dimensional rift or allowed to be summoned by a foolhardy practitioner of magic.

Delivered into a new world, the invisible life-force must bond with a living humanoid to anchor itself to that dimension. A willing subject must be found within 24 hours or the essence fragment is automatically returned to its originating body. Using empathy and telepathy, the evil essence seeks out an individual who has already been corrupted by evil, hatred, greed, or dreams of power or revenge. Such a person can be easily beguiled by the promise of god-like power and eternal life.

The fool who accepts such a deal has his or her life essence torn from its living shell of flesh and blood and is transformed into a supernatural creature of evil. The essence of the person and the fragment of the evil intelligence merge, become one, and create a new and horrible life form, the Undead Vampire. Humanity and a natural life are forsaken. The existence the individual once knew is lost forever and the vampire intelligence has its anchor in the physical world of that dimension. A *Master Vampire* has been born and the true nightmare is about to begin,

for he will create other undead like himself, making the intelligence all the more powerful as he continues to spread the pestilence of vampirism among the unsuspecting people.

In the Palladium World, there are a handful of dark, supernatural forces known to have the power to create vampires. They include *Vald-Tego* (*Lord of the Undead*), *Tolmet the Cruel* (a little known power that she keeps secret and uses sparingly to create pain and suffering on earth), various and **unnamed/forgotten gods** and *Alien/Supernatural Intelligences*, and, of course, the slumbering *Old Ones*. In the case of the first two gods, Undead Vampires are not created as an invading army, but to inflict pain and suffering on mortals for the sadistic pleasure and amusement of the god. They rarely create more than one or two Master Vampires at a time, and typically select evil and insane people who pray to them for the power to extract a terrible revenge or who specifically desire to become vampires.

Alien/Vampire/Supernatural Intelligences can create vampires to cause trouble or as part of an invasion plan to conquer part of the world, but this is a rarity on the Palladium World (2,500+ vampires created by a single Master Vampire is usually needed to bring the Vampire Intelligence into that particular world; see **Dragons & Gods** from more details about *Alien/Supernatural Intelligences*).

Unlike other worlds where the vampire pestilence can be linked to one specific Alien Intelligence or god, the Palladium World suffers from random appearances of vampires without any apparent originating source. The Master Vampire is typically a black-hearted soul who has prayed for the power to extract murderous vengeance, or who has a lust for blood, murder and/or obsession with immortality at any cost. From time to time (again, this is a rare occurrence), such an individual goes through a demonic transformation and becomes a Master Vampire. Nobody knows how or why this happens (typically to only the most vile, depraved and wicked individuals), but many mages, clergy and scholars are convinced that it is the doing of the slumbering Old Ones. The theory is that the powerful yearnings, hatred and evil of these vile people somehow manage to reach the subconscious mind of one of the Old Ones and, recognizing a kindred spirit, it transforms the individual into a vampire in order to spread chaos, fear and madness into the world.

Stopping the nightmare before it truly begins

When a vampire first appears it is possible to stop the evil before it is firmly entrenched. Initially there is only the one Master Vampire. It is the Master who creates other vampires to serve him (or her) and to spread torment. The Master instinctively knows he must feed and slowly create additional vampires (see the Vampire's Bite). He also instinctively knows how to use his vampire powers, although experience and practice will hone these abilities and make the Master all the more dangerous. As more *Secondary Vampires* are made, the greater the power of the Master, who commands his Secondary and Lesser Vampires like a demonic squad leader, and if bent on conquest, like a General commanding his army. Thankfully, armies of vampires are a rarity, and most seem content on creating an elite legion of 20-200 vampires who dominate hundreds to thousands of mortals; typically one particular town, city or region (In the case of Vampire Intelligences, the creature's ties to that world becomes

stronger with the creation of each new vampire. When thousands of vampires exist, all born from that first evil essence of the Master, the evil Intelligence may enter that world through a dimensional portal and live among them. Thus, if all of the vampires that bear the Intelligence's mark are destroyed, those ties are severed and the monster loses its hold in that world and must turn its attention to a different dimension. It cannot enter that dimension again for ten thousand years).

Of course the tactic of destroying a Master and his vampire legion is only feasible before there are too many vampires to combat **and/or** the monsters are too firmly entrenched. Surprisingly, there are cults and secret societies who worship **Vald-Tegor**, Tolmet, or the Old Ones, and vampires in general. The members of such cults (frighteningly common throughout the Western Empire, Yin-Sloth Jungles and Land of the South Winds) are inclined to worship and willingly help vampires, seeing them as divine servants of their evil god(s). Likewise, vampires are often able to enlist the loyalty and support of mortals to serve as guardians and minions while they slumber. Such minions are often monster races and always evil beings who serve the undead for personal gain, power, or sadistic pleasure.

A Master Vampire will typically establish a base of operation and begin to create a small circle of additional vampires. For every dozen Secondary Vampires created, the Master Vampire will send **1D4** away to create their own minions at other places. This reduces potential rivalry (and if linked to a Vampire Intelligence) spreads and strengthens the intelligence's link to the world). Thus, a Master Vampire will rarely have more than 1-2 dozen Secondary Vampires under his thrall, but will command scores of lesser or "Wild" Vampires.

Vampire Descriptions

The physical transformation involved in becoming an Undead Vampire turns the mortal into a (relatively) immortal demon. Most scholars and practitioners of magic rank Wild or Lesser Vampires as minor demons; young, inexperienced Secondary Vampires also as minor demons, and elder, experienced Secondary Vampires and Master Vampires as Greater Demons. The dark god or alien intelligence that ultimately spawns these horrific creatures would be considered their demon lord. What differentiates Undead Vampires from other demons are the facts that they were once **human/mortal**, retain some faint memories and skills of their past, human life, and can answer to a variety of dark or forgotten gods to no apparent progenitor whatsoever.

The Master Vampire

The Master vampire is the "father" of the pestilence to follow. Unlike all the other vampires, the Master chooses his fate. He is a human or humanoid who willingly accepts a diabolical allegiance with an unspeakably evil power in the name of revenge, power, or pure evil to become an undead. He knows full well that from that day forward he will be an inhuman abomination that feeds on the misery and life's blood of the innocent. This makes the Master Vampire the most evil and most like his insidious and repulsive creator. The transformation from the living to the undead is instant, requiring only a willing soul. Once done, it *cannot* be undone.

The transformation into a vampire destroys all vestiges of humanity, except for some faded memories and a handful of

skills. The Master, as are all vampires, is reborn, or perhaps unborn. That which was once human (or any mortal humanoid) is transformed into a completely *nonhuman* life form that no longer has anything in common with mortal men, other than its humanoid appearance, and even that appearance is just one of several the vampire can select at will. As a result, the original human attributes and alignment are meaningless, entirely new attributes are rolled, an evil alignment selected, and handful of skills retained (selected).

The Master's new found supernatural powers are instinctively known to him. Just as he instinctively understands his place in the hierarchy of vampires and feels compelled to create a legion of undead to enslave and torment mortals (and in the case of Vampire Intelligences, so that the Intelligence may one day join them to rule the planet). Every vampire the Master creates will serve him or suffer his wrath; few can resist his power.

Vampires are supernatural predators. Their prey, humans and humanoids. As predators, they tend to be savage hunters and run in packs. The king of all packs is the Master. Like many predators, vampires are territorial, often selecting a town, city or land area that they claim as their own. The Master Vampire is the king or "lord" of such domains, and the Lesser vampires are his henchmen and most loyal subjects. The mortals they terrorize or enslave are their pitiful slaves and food supply.

The undead see all humans and humanoids as primitive animals to be corralled, controlled, fattened and eaten like livestock. The Master Vampire is the most arrogant and manipulative of all and frequently partakes in games and tests of cunning and power against humanoid challengers. The perceived end to such enjoyable diversions is to prove the superiority of the undead in general, and him specifically. As one might suspect, Master Vampires are poor losers. Defeat **and/or** humiliation at the hand of a lesser being, such as humans, elves and Wolfen, is an unforgivable blow to the ego and will always call for retribution. Thus, a vampire's lust for revenge is as legendary as his lust for blood. One does not begin a conflict against a vampire, especially a Master or ancient Secondary, unless one intends to see it all the way through to the destruction of the vampire and his legion of undead and other maleficent beings (human and inhuman) that such an evil presence attracts.

Master Vampire

Horror Factor: 14

Alignments: Any evil; radiate supernatural evil.

Size and Weight: Varies, generally human; roughly what he or she was in life.

Attributes: The base attribute plus the number of additional six-side dice to be rolled is indicated as follows: **I.Q.** 14+2D6, **M.E.** 10+3D6, **M.A.** 12+3D6, **P.S.** 18+3D6, **P.P.** 10+3D6, **P.E.** 18+1D6, **P.B.** 16+2D6, **Spd.** 10+4D6

Hit Points: 3D6x10 plus 2D6 per level of experience as a vampire. Vampires are bizarre supernatural creatures that are nearly impervious to all weapons. See Natural Abilities and limited invulnerability.

S.D.C.: 5D6 +1D6 per level of experience.

P.P.E.: 1D6x10

Natural Abilities: Vampires possess a number of strange supernatural powers, including the ability to create Secondary Vampires, **nightvision**, metamorphosis, regeneration, and **M.D.C.** invulnerability. See the detailed descriptions that follow those of the three vampire types.

Psionic Powers: I.S.P.: 3D6x10 and includes mind control over other vampires it created, and **Lesser/Wild Vampires** created by others. The use of this vampire mind control does not require the expenditure of I.S.P. See the other psionic powers common to all vampires described elsewhere in this section. Considered a Master Psionic; requires a roll of 10 or higher to save vs psionic attacks.

Magic Note: If the Master knew magic before being reborn into a vampire he retains that knowledge, but those magic abilities are frozen and can NEVER increase in experience or power. Nor can the vampire learn new magic or increase his personal level of P.P.E. points.

Attacks per Melee Round: Four hand to hand +1 per every four levels of experience. Or can combine with psionic attacks (as many as two per melee); the use of each psionic attack or vampire power (turn into mist) counts as one melee action/attack.

Combat Damage: Damage from punches and kicks are as per the undead's supernatural P.S. plus P.S. bonuses for P.S. over 15. See the Supernatural P.S. table on page 17 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition**.

Vampire versus Vampire; damage direct to Hit Points: All vampires, by their strange nature, inflict damage direct to Hit Points whenever they fight other Undead Vampires. This means that one vampire can kill another, although their mutual regenerative powers makes this difficult.

Combat Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, +5 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 on initiative and impervious to all forms of mind control and psionic and magic sleeps and paralysis.

Skills: The Master Vampire retains the knowledge of his former life but O.C.C. skill bonuses are not applicable (forgotten), only the I.Q. bonus applies. Skill proficiencies are frozen at the level when the person became a vampire and do NOT increase.

New Skills: Three additional skills can be selected for every 100 years of life as a vampire. All skills are at second level proficiency and do NOT increase.

Notes: Creatures of magic, supernatural beings (demons and gods), and immortals cannot become vampires. Master Vampires are uncommon and are always evil. Thus, they are not recommended as player characters. The master vampire can be male or female, almost always human.

The Secondary Vampire

An Optional Player Character R.C.C

The Master Vampire creates other vampires by a *slow kill* bite that transfers yet another fragment of the evil essence into another humanoid creature. The process, described elsewhere, transforms the Master Vampire's slow kill victim into a Secondary Vampire. Tragically, once the Master comes into being, it is no longer necessary to find *willing subjects*. The Master can transform willing and *unwilling* victims alike into the cursed undead, hence the reference to vampirism as a pestilence that can be transmitted to the innocent. The victims of the Master are always become Secondary Vampires.

Despite the fact that they are usually subservient to their creator and the god or Intelligence responsible for creating the Master, they are not much inferior to the Master. All possess the spectacular supernatural powers of the Undead Vampire and are

quite intelligent. The two most notable things that make them inferior to their creator/master are that they are a bit more savage (and therefore, a bit less **intelligent/clever**), and are a bit less physically powerful (see H.P. and S.D.C.). They generally lack the willpower to resist their creator and are subservient to him and most other master vampires, and Unlike the Master, the Slow Kill bite of the Secondary Vampire does *not* offer consistent results. 01-58% of their Slow Kill victims will be lesser, Wild Vampires, not Secondary Vampires.

Those of selfish and evil alignments in their mortal lives readily accept their new monstrous existence and are the least tormented by past memories. Those of a good alignment frequently loathe the monsters that they have become. Many try to fight the unnatural desires for blood and carnage, but most eventually succumb and resign themselves to an existence of evil as the dreaded creatures of the night.

The plague of evil continues as the secondary vampires feed **and/or** create additional vampires by means of the slow kill. They often target family members, friends, and loved ones as victims of a slow kill. In many cases, the feelings of love are gone, but the shadow of a memory compels them to add these people to their evil brotherhood.

Secondary Vampire

Horror Factor: 12

Alignments: Selfish or evil; radiates supernatural evil.

Size and Weight: Varies, generally human.

Attributes: The base attribute plus the number of additional six-sided dice to be rolled is indicated as follows: I.Q. 2+3D6, M.E. 6+3D6, M.A. 6+3D6, P.S. 14+3D6, P.P. 8+3D6, P.E. 16+1D6, P.B. 4+2D6, Spd. 10+3D6

P.P.E.: 1D4x10

Hit Points: 3D4x10 plus 1D6 per level of experience as a vampire. See Natural Abilities and limited invulnerability.

S.D.C.: 3D6 +1D6 per level of experience.

Natural abilities: Standard vampire powers described shortly.

Psionic Powers: I.S.P.: 3D6x10 and includes mind control over other vampires it has created, and **Lesser/Wild Vampires** created by others. The use of this vampire mind control does not require the expenditure of I.S.P. See the other psionic powers common to all vampires described elsewhere in this section. Considered a Major Psionic; requires a roll of 12 or higher to save vs psionic attacks.

Magic Note: Same rules apply as the Master.

Attacks per Melee Round: Three hand to hand +1 per every four levels of experience. Or can combine psionic attacks (as many as two per melee); the use of each psionic attack or vampire power (turn into mist) counts as one melee action/attack.

Combat Damage: Damage from punches and kicks are as per the undead's supernatural P.S. plus P.S. bonuses for P.S. over 15. See the Supernatural P.S. table on page 17 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition**.

Vampire versus Vampire; damage direct to Hit Points: All vampires, by their strange nature, inflict damage direct to Hit Points whenever they fight other Undead Vampires. This means that one vampire can kill another, although their mutual regenerative powers makes this difficult.

Combat Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 on initiative and impervious to all forms of psionic and magic sleeps and paralysis.

Skills: The average Secondary Vampire will retain a total of ten skills. Two additional skills can be selected at levels three, six, nine, eleven, and fifteen. All skills start at first level proficiency and do not increase.

Wild Vampires

Wild vampires are created in one of two ways. They have either been driven insane and into their present animalistic state (often from starvation) or created by a Secondary Vampire. Like the Master, Secondary Vampires can also create new vampires, however, these third generation undead are frequently flawed, one might say, mentally retarded. These misanthropes are incredibly savage and possess the meagerest of mental faculties. Most are crazed predators that are more animal than human. They are primal forces that function on instinct rather than forethought. Their lives are consumed with stalking, killing and feeding. They engage in few other activities other than tormenting and hurting others. As before, the wild vampires are generally subservient to their vampire creator, Master Vampires, and most experienced (5th level or higher) Secondary Vampires.

Wild Vampires, also known as the Lesser Vampire

Horror Factor: 12

Alignments: Evil or Anarchist, but most are extremely evil (diabolic and miscreant), with only 5% being selfish.

Size and Weight: Varies, generally human.

Attributes: The base attribute plus the number of additional six-sided dice to be rolled is indicated as follows: I.Q. 1+2D6, M.E. 4+3D6, M.A. 2+2D6, P.S. 14+3D6, P.P. 8+3D6, P.E. 16+1D6, P.B. 2+1D6, Spd. 10+5D6

P.P.E.: 6D6

Hit Points: 2D4x10 plus 1D4 per level of experience as a vampire. See Natural Abilities and limited invulnerability.

S.D.C.: 2D6 +1D6 per level of experience.

Natural abilities: Standard vampire powers described shortly.

Psionic Powers: I.S.P.: 2D6x10 and includes mind control over other Lesser/Wild Vampires. The use of this vampire mind control does not require the expenditure of I.S.P. See the other psionic powers common to all vampires described elsewhere in this section. Considered a Major Psionic; requires a roll of 12 or higher to save vs psionic attacks.

Magic Note: None. Any magic known in their past, mortal life is forgotten.

Attacks per Melee Round: Three hand to hand +1 per every four levels of experience. Or can combine psionic attacks (as many as two per melee); the use of each psionic attack or vampire power (turn into mist) counts as one melee action/attack.

Combat Damage: Damage from punches and kicks are as per the undead's supernatural P.S. plus P.S. bonuses for P.S. over 15. See the Supernatural P.S. table on page 17 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition**.

Vampire versus Vampire; damage direct to Hit Points. All vampires, by their strange nature, inflict damage direct to Hit Points whenever they fight other Undead Vampires. This means that one vampire can kill another, although their mutual regenerative powers makes this difficult.

Combat Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 on initiative and impervious to all forms of psionic and magic sleeps and paralysis.

Skills: The Wild Vampire retains few of the skills or memories from his former life. Skills are limited to two ancient W.P.s, two physical, domestic, rogue or technical skills and up to three languages (not literacy). All skill proficiencies are frozen at second level; no skill bonuses apply. One new secondary skill can be selected at levels two, four, eight, and twelve. All skills start at first level proficiency and do not increase.

Notes: Wild Vampires rarely have the patience to use technology, weapons, an elaborate plan, or perform a skill. They would rather tear into an opponent with tooth and claw.

Wild Vampires usually run in packs or tribes that can range from as few as 4-6 to as many as four or five dozen. There is little structure to these packs other than the wolf-pack like social status within the pack. Each member has a rank within the pack from leader to the lowest. The lowest members are forced to perform the most menial of tasks and take the brunt of beatings from the dominant members of the pack. To rise in stature within the pack, the wild one must challenge and fight his better. If his opponent is killed or surrenders, the vampire rises to his new position in status. Those that are too disruptive and ridiculously aggressive will be banished from the pack or killed.

Vampire R.C.C.

Experience Table

1	0,000-5,000	8	160,001-200,000
2	5,001-10,000	9	200,001-250,000
3	10,001-20,000	10	250,001-300,000
4	20,001-40,000	11	300,001-400,000
5	40,001-80,000	12	400,001-500,000
6	80,001-120,000	13	500,001-600,000
7	120,001-160,000	14	600,001-1Million
		15	1,000,001-2Million

Vampire Powers

All undead Vampires, regardless of their caste level or origin, possess the same basic powers and abilities.

A Lust for Blood

Vampires are compelled to engage in evil and unnatural acts. Some vampires may try to fight these terrible urges and evil inclinations, at least at first. Others welcome them without resistance. Remember, vampires are no longer human. They have been completely reborn as demonic supernatural beings. An alien life form that now feeds on humans and other mortal beings. The need for humanoid (preferably human) blood is one such horrible urge that no vampire can resist for long.

A vampire should feed on at least two pints (about one liter) of blood once every 48 hours, if not every night. The creature can try to resist the desire and fast. But with each passing night of abstinence, the hunger grows more powerful. By the third night, the creature awakens with stomach pains and a craving to feed akin to the desires of a junky needing a drug fix. But the monster can still resist.

Feeding Frenzy: On the fourth night, the vampire looks worse than usual; more pale, with a waxy yellow hue to his skin, dark circles surround the eyes, the face and hands are covered in perspiration, and the undead is weak, suffering the following penalties: -2 on initiative, -10% on all skills. Worse, every time

he smells human blood within 500 feet (153 m) of him, the vampire must roll to save versus feeding frenzy (a form of mind control/psionics), with NONE of his usual psionic bonuses to save. The slightest cut, a single drop of blood, will trigger the feeding frenzy.

A failed roll means the vampire succumbs to his blood lust and rushes off to feed. Only physical restraint will stop the demon from executing his dark task; the blood lust frenzy lasts for 1D4 hours. Otherwise, the hunger will pass immediately after he has fed. Feeding will also instantly restore the creature to his normal self (no penalties). **Note:** For every night of abstinence beyond four, the vampire suffers a penalty of -1 to **save** versus feeding frenzy. At this rate it is only a matter of time before the creature must feed.

Starvation can lead to insanity: Restraining a vampire is a difficult task, but not impossible. Unfortunately, a vampire cannot die from starvation. All that a forced abstinence will do is drive the pitiful thing insane. After about three weeks of starvation, the vampire descends into a crazed animal state where he cannot think or perform the simplest task, not even speak. Nor can he recognize friends and companions. The tortured beast writhes in agony, the body becoming more corpse-like with each passing night and his every thought is consumed with feeding. If released from his restraints, the vampire will attack and completely drain (killing) the first person he encounters. During this feeding frenzy the vampire does not recognize friends, enemies or his surroundings; all he knows is that he must feed. A few minutes after feeding, the undead becomes lucid and rational, again able to think with a clear head and perform skills. His body, too, resumes its more normal appearance. The time of madness is over.

Prolonged periods of starvation, six months or more, will drive a vampire insane, leaving it permanently in the feral state previously noted.

The Vampire's Bite

The Slow Kill — The creation of new vampires

For reasons nobody can explain, not even the undead themselves, vampires are drawn to human beings. Thus, a vampire's choice for a slow kill (resulting in the creation of a new vampire) will usually be a human or a humanoid whose appearance is as close to human as possible, such as an elf. Likewise, the victim is likely to be **attractive**, especially if the vampire's intention is to create for himself an undead companion. **Note:** Victims slain for their blood or for sheer pleasure do not become vampires and can be any mortal race. Even cattle and other animals may be slain by vampires for the purpose of mischief or mayhem, although they cannot derive any sustenance from animals' blood.

The Slow Kill is the ability to turn others into the undead. To do this, the vampire must slowly drain his chosen victim a little bit at a time for three consecutive nights. On the third night, the victim is slain by having all his blood drained. Three days later, the victim rises from the grave to join his demonic creator. The new vampire will always rise as a Secondary or Wild Vampire and will usually remain subservient to his creator, obeying his every command even if that command endangers his own life. Any intelligent, mortal humanoid can be turned into a vampire by this method.

Percentile dice are rolled whenever a new vampire is created by the Slow Kill of a **Secondary Vampire**. 01-42% means a new Secondary Vampire (subservient to its creator) has joined the legion of undead, 43-00% means a lesser **Wild Vampire** has been created. Wild vampires are difficult to control and monitor even by their creator and are commonly banished from more civilized vampire communities to wander the land.

Wild Vampires can only create other wild and deranged undead. However, they are usually too crazed, savage, or impatient to perform a slow kill. Instead, most lesser vampires are blood drinking predators that kill and devour their prey without forethought or plans.

A Master Vampire is always successful in creating a Secondary Vampire, via a "slow kill."

In all cases, the victim of a Slow Kill is immediately linked to the vampire and will offer no further resistance after the first bite. During the day, the individual is sluggish and sleepy. The character is easily frightened and will act unusually timid. Wits are dull and, when not languishing about, the individual will sit quietly by a window, staring out as if in a trance or in deep thought. Skills are at half, as are attacks per melee. The suggestion of travel will meet great resistance. The victim will insist that he or she is too weary or sick or just doesn't want to travel (because he waits for the vampire). Force will have to be used to make the person leave the area (psionic mind control won't work; overridden by the vampire's influence). If force is used, the entranced person will fight like a tiger with all attacks per melee suddenly back to full! **Even** if removed from the vicinity of the initial attack, the bond between the victim and the undead enables the vampire to sense and find his victim's new location up to 400 miles (640 km) away! Killing the undead assailant before the third night will save the victim from becoming a vampire or an enslaved being under mind control.

Call & Control Victim

A Slow Kill bite creates a mental bond that enables the vampire to telepathically "call" his victim (100 foot/30.5 m range). The victim will obey simple verbal **and/or** mental commands like, "come to me" and "open the door," or "remove the crucifix." The vampire can also place the victim into a trance. While in the trance, the bite victim is oblivious to everything around him and cannot react to outside stimulation, voices, or actions taken by others. Nor can he take any kind of action to save himself or to help others. The person remembers nothing of the events that transpired while entranced.

Mind Control — Human Enslavement

A vampire can also control a human or humanoid through a series of nonlethal bites. The procedure is similar to the slow kill. For three consecutive nights the undead fiend comes to feed, drinking a small amount of blood every visit. The third attack, unlike the Slow Kill, does not slay the victim, but instead, the unfortunate soul is enslaved by the vampire. This is the creation of the infamous vampire **slave/servant/protector**. **Note:** A Secondary Vampire is limited to only one slave under this method; Wild Vampires none. Thus, any other servants or allies must be willing partners in evil. A Master Vampire can have two slaves under mind control.

The enslaved person is now under the vampire's complete mind control. The slave instinctively knows to fear and obey his

master. He will never attempt to run away, nor betray his master even under the pain of torture. The slave can attempt to not perform commands that are completely repugnant to him, or threaten a loved one, but he is -6 to save against the vampire's mind control. Even if the save is successful, the person is still the vampire's obedient slave; he simply refuses to perform that one particular command. Such defiance, however, will result in a violent beating or torture. Continued defiance will incite the vampire to kill him or worse, turn him into a vampire. Only one death dealing bite is necessary because of the previous consecutive three bites and the existing bond between the two. The slave can *NEVER* raise his hand against his vampire master under any circumstance.

The victim of enslavement will sense when his vampire master is awake and when the master requires his services. Likewise, a limited telepathic link is established in which the vampire can mentally call to his servant and his servant will hear his call. Short messages can be received this way too, such as "Come to me now, and bring the carriage (or weapons, etc.)," and the servant will automatically know the location of his master. **Range** is far greater than the Call and Control ability of a victim marked for death, an impressive one mile (1.6 km).

Breaking a Vampire's Spell: The only way to free a person from a vampire's mind control enslavement is to slay the vampire that controls him! Once slain, the person is immediately free of the monster's control, but will never be the same. Roll once on the random insanity table, and once on the Phobia table. There is also a 1-70% chance that the victim's alignment will change to a better/good alignment even if he was once evil; a side effect of having been exposed to such terrible evil.

A vampire's bond between itself and a victim of a slow kill or mind control enslavement before the process is completed (before the third bite) can be weakened and negated if the vampire is prevented from biting his intended victim. If the vampire cannot feed consecutively, the victim regains his strength and force of will. However, vampires are seldom easily dissuaded and will take to the challenge, returning to plague that individual, initiating a new three night sequence until the victim belongs to him or is killed.

Mind Control:

Vampire over Vampire

When an individual is transformed into a vampire, he is reborn and recreated into a supernatural monster. Every vampire recognizes the touch of evil in his brethren, quickly identifying fellow vampires and specifically, the "children" of the same creator.

Members of the same vampire family/essence instantly sense whether their brother vampire is a Master, Secondary or Wild vampire and will treat him accordingly. Vampires that are extensions of other Intelligences/creators are also recognized, but are seen as potential rivals and enemies.

Generally, a vampire will automatically acknowledge his superiors and obey them. However, some, for various reasons, may defy their superiors and attempt to act independently. When this occurs, the superior vampire will try to enforce his will through mind control. When mind control is attempted, the attacking vampire's eyes glow bright and his words sound like thunder. The target of the mind control must roll to save versus

psionic attack or fall prey to the power of the superior vampire. This degree of mind control against fellow vampires is far more powerful and complete than the similar power used to manipulate non-vampires. Mind control can be tried once every melee (with some limitations) and there is no limit to the number of vampires a dominant leader can control. A Master Vampire can attempt mind control on the same vampire as often as once every one minute (4 melee rounds), a Secondary Vampire can attempt it once every five minutes (20 melee rounds), while Wild Vampires are unable to mind control any vampire other than another lesser/wild vampire.

Mind Control Bonuses. Vampires enjoy a high M.E. attribute which commonly provides a bonus to save versus psionic attack, but this bonus applies only whenever the attack comes from a non-vampire or a vampire not of the same family/essence. It does not apply when the vampire is of the same family/essence. Secondary vampires are impervious to mind control from Wild vampires, but can fall victim to mind control by other, older, Secondary Vampires and Master vampires.

Telepathic Link with Minions

The *Master Vampire* also has a permanent telepathic and empathic link to the legion of undead it has created (all of his/her victims who now walk the earth as Secondary Vampires and all lesser, Wild Vampires they have created). This link enables the master vampire to sense when one of his minions is within 10 miles (16 km), when one of his minions is in pain or killed, and enables him to summon all of his minions within a 100 mile (160 km) area. In turn, the minions will sense whether the summons is a general call to gather or whether they should come with haste because the master is in danger. The minions will also sense when the master has been slain.

The Psionic Powers of the Vampire

In addition to the various mind control powers previously detailed, all true Undead Vampires also possess a handful of more traditional psionic powers; I.S.P. is required to use these powers. The wild vampire has the least I.S.P.

Powers: *All are equal to a fourth level psychic, never higher.*

Death Trance

Alter Aura (self)

Empathy

Mind Block

Presence Sense

Sense Evil

Deaden Pain

Induce Sleep

Hypnotic Suggestion

Super-Hypnotic suggestion (NEW, exclusive to vampires)

Super Hypnotic Suggestion

(a form of mind control)

Range: Line of sight; must look victim directly in the eyes (vamp's eyes glow red or yellow when this power is used).

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience (20 minutes for the average vampire) or until the vampire is killed or willingly releases his victim.

I.S.P.: 20 per each try, whether successful or not.

Saving Throw: Standard; gaze into the vampire's eyes and you may be under his control.

This mind control power enables the vampire to place any living creature in a light trance and enforce his will over that of his victim. This power is much more than the psionic power available to Mind Mages. The vampire can actually control the individual as long as the command is not morally out of character or repugnant.

Vampires are masters of hypnotic suggestion and instinctively know its limits and best application. For example: A vampire might control an opponent and tell him to, "Close your eyes and stand in a corner," or "You are very tired, go to sleep," or "Those people need your help, go to them and help them", or "That building's on fire, you must go and rescue anybody trapped inside"; effectively taking the character out of the battle. The closer the command is to the nature and alignment of the person, the more likely the hypnotized person is to comply without hesitation.

A command like, "Prevent your friends from entering this room," can also be effective, especially if something like, "Great danger lies beyond this room, don't let anybody enter," is added to the command. The command is an effective one because it is not abhorrent nor morally wrong. In fact, it may save lives. The hypnotized person has not been told to hurt anybody, only to try to prevent them from entering the room. The individual can use whatever methods or degree of force that would be natural for his alignment and based on his relationship with the people he's restraining. On the other hand, a command to "kill" a friend or teammate would instantly break the mind control.

The most cunning vampires will try to find out a little about the person they are about to control and work the commands to fit the individual. They love this kind of manipulation.



Metamorphosis

A true vampire of any variety can instantly transform into a large bat or wolf, or mist. The transformation takes about seven seconds to complete, or the equivalent of two melee attacks/actions. While in nonhuman form, the vampire retains its intelligence, identity and basic supernatural powers (like invulnerability), but cannot speak or perform skills; in mist form the vampire cannot use its psionic powers or mind control. The types of attacks and actions are limited to the form the undead has adopted. Each metamorphosis grants the vampire special abilities inherent to that particular animal or form (this is unlike magical metamorphosis). Thus, the bat is often used for quick escapes, flying, climbing and spying; the wolf for spying and combat, the mist for gaining access through crevices and for escape.

One of the most bizarre abilities of the metamorphosis is that the vampire's clothing and other **small personal** articles, such as jewelry, money in pockets and light weapons (knife, light sword, handgun), all disappear, but when the **humanoid** shape is resumed, the clothes and personal articles all reappear. Body armor of any kind, crossbows, magic items and other large weapons and materials, as well as any items that do not belong to the vampire, drop to the ground — they can't be taken along as part of the metamorphosis.

Vampire Bat Abilities

Fly: Speed of 50 (35 mph/56 kph)

Other Natural Abilities:

Sonar/echolocation: Enables the vampire to see/maneuver/fly in total darkness at full speed and see the invisible.

Ultrasonic hearing: Hears high and low frequencies; very acute. Can hear a moth's wings beating but cannot understand the spoken word (too slow).

Thermo-imaging optics: Close range, **10 feet/3 m**; for sensing and seeing the heat emanations of warm blood coursing through the veins. But cannot see infrared light.

Combat: +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +8 to dodge in flight, +5% on prowl ability.

Attacks per melee: Half normal, bite inflicts 2D6 damage, claws 1D6 plus P.S. damage bonus. Can inflict vampire slow kill bite and drink blood while in bat form.

Wolf Abilities

Run: Speed of 58 (40 mph/64 km)

Other Natural Abilities: Track by scent 70% and leap 20 feet across (6 m) and about 6 feet (1.8 m) high.

Combat: +2 to strike, +1 to parry, +4 to dodge, +1 on initiative, +15% on prowl ability.

Attacks per melee: Add one to the normal humanoid number of attacks. Bite 5D6 damage (no P.S. bonus).

Mist Abilities

Speed: 11 (7.5 mph/11 km)

Other Natural Abilities: Impervious to all physical attacks, including wood, silver, fire, and most magic. Still vulnerable to water and elemental magic. Can slide under doors, through cracks and crevices, keyholes, etc., and **rematerialize** on the other side.

Combat: None. Cannot attack in mist form. Can perform movement melee actions only. +10% on prowl ability (although silent, the mist is very large and obvious).

Note: Cannot use psionic powers in mist form, but can use them in animal form.

Summon Vermin

The vampire can summon select forces of nature. In this case, vermin including rats, mice, flies, gnats and cockroaches.

The vampire can summon up to 100 rats or mice per each level of experience. The horde of rodents has a horror factor of 9 and can bite, inflicting one **S.D.C./H.P.** point of damage on unprotected victims as they swarm under and around people (**G.M. Note:** Roll 1D6+1 per melee round for rodent damage). They also create a surprising amount of noise and are quite distracting.

Up to 500 flies, gnats, or cockroaches can be summoned per level of the vampire's experience. Flies and gnats create an annoying and icky cloud of insects (Horror Factor 6). They inflict no damage but impair normal vision and hearing.

Cockroaches (Horror Factor 9) are just disgusting, tickle when they crawl against bare flesh, crunch when stepped on, and crawl on everything and everybody in their path. Like the flies, the roaches will cause disorientation and impair vision.

Duration of control: 20 minutes per level of experience.

Note: The typical no-name vampire is only 1D4 level.

Penalties from a horde of vermin: Victims plagued by the vermin lose one melee attack, are -4 on initiative, -1 to strike, -2 to parry and dodge.

Summon Canines

The vampire can summon up to six (6) wolves or dogs per each level of experience. The pack of angry looking canines has a Horror Factor of 8. Generally, each canine has two or three attacks per melee and inflicts 1D6 S.D.C./H.P. points of damage on unprotected victims. They can be vicious and deadly opponents and make fine watchdogs.

Duration of control: 20 minutes per level of experience.

Summon Fog

Old and experienced vampires (level 7 and higher) can create a thick and unnatural fog similar to the summon fog spell. However, unlike the spell, the vampire can direct the fog to move and roll along exactly where he desires it to go. A fog is often summoned forth to cover a vampire's activities or to create fear and confusion. The fog can cover an area of one mile (1.6 km) and is so thick that an individual cannot see clearly beyond four feet (1.2 m). Blurred shapes and shadowy figures are all that can be seen for an additional 10 feet (3 m) and beyond that, only a grey wall of mist. Within the misty curtain lurks the vampire(s), waiting to strike. Details for traveling in the fog are identical to the spell found on page 212 of the **Palladium RPG, 2nd Ed.**®

Duration: 20 minutes per level of experience (7th level means 140 minutes or two hours, 20 minutes).

Limited Invulnerability

Normal weapons of steel, fire and energy inflict no damage to these demonic abominations. This means that even energy blasts from high-tech weapons, electricity/lightning, explosives, bullets, blades of steel, acid, disease, cold, fire, etc., do absolutely **NO damage!!** Nor does alcohol, drugs, anesthetics, poisons, toxic gases, fumes, or smoke have any effect.

The vampire's invulnerability coupled with its super regenerative powers means that the creatures are not affected by poison or disease that may be in a person's blood, including cancer and AIDS; not even for a moment. Nor can vampires pass along diseases. They are, however, vulnerable to weapons made of wood, weapons made of or coated in silver, magic, holy water, and sun light.

Super Regeneration

A vampire can survive and keep functioning normally, even with a wooden spear through the head or a severed limb, but the undead does experience pain and can be temporarily immobilized from accumulative Hit Point damage. When a vampire has been reduced to near zero hit points, he knows he is in jeopardy,

not from immediate death, but from lapsing into a recuperative coma that will make him vulnerable to further attack.

A vampire can fight up to 20 points below zero! At minus 21 the creature drops to the ground and appears to be dead. Chopping off its head will further enhance the illusion of death, but in reality, merely prolongs the time needed to regenerate. Unless proper measures are taken to truly kill the vampire, it will live anew, possibly regaining consciousness in a matter of minutes and fully restored in hours. A vampire must be destroyed in very specific ways or the monster will rise again, such is the vampire's power to regenerate.

A vampire can regenerate physical damage at a pace that no other known creature can equal. Entire limbs, eyes, hair and skin, grow back in a matter of minutes. The entire body can re-form overnight (8 hours), an arm 45 minutes, a leg 60 minutes, lower body 4 hrs, upper body 6 hrs, head 4 hrs. A decapitated head left laying nearby can merge back with the body by slowly dissolving into a mist and re-forming with the body, in about 20 minutes. Note: Hit Points are automatically regenerated at a rate of 2D6 per melee round! Vampires are said to be immortal, and are extremely difficult to kill. But destroyed they must be, or the ghastly abominations will rise again. And they never age.

Other Abilities Natural to Vampires

- **Supernatural aura.** Vampires have a very unique and distinctive aura. Any psychic who has seen a vampire's aura will recognize other vampires by their aura. The aura also prevents the vampire from having a reflection in mirrors or other reflective surfaces. The aura even makes the clothing and other items held by the vampire invisible in a mirror. This also means that still cameras that utilize mirrors in the photographic process cannot photograph a vampire, but video cameras can.
- **Nightvision.** Can see in total darkness up to 1600 feet away (488 m).
- **Smell Blood.** Can smell blood like a shark, up to a mile away (1.6 km), and has a **50%+5%** per level chance of recognizing whether it's human blood.
- **Prowl 50%.** The prowl ability stated here applies to the vampire in humanoid form. The various forms of metamorphosis add a bonus to the prowl percentage when in that form.
- **Echolocation.** This ability can only be used when **metamorphosized** into a bat. Enables the vampire to maneuver in total darkness and see the invisible.
- **Does not breathe.** Vampires do not breathe and can survive in a vacuum or in a toxic gas cloud with no detriment to their other senses or powers.
- **Vampires do not bleed,** except when impaled through the heart.
- **Vampires do not radiate heat.** They are cool to the touch and invisible to modern day heat sensors.
- **Impervious to knockout/stun attacks.** The special knockout and stun attacks provided by some forms of hand to hand combat do not affect vampires. Martial arts throws, flips and holds (locks) are still effective in knocking the monster off balance or holding him in place, but cause no pain/damage.
- **Impervious to normal fires, heat or cold.**

- **Can eat food for a taste sensation or to trick humans, but do not need to eat.** Nor do vampires have the desire to eat. Likewise, a vampire can consume an unlimited amount of alcohol without the slightest degree of intoxication. Poisoned and spoiled food will have no effect either. Accidental consumption of garlic or **wolfbay** causes immediate vomiting and 1D6 damage direct to the vampire's hit points.

Note: The average vampire is usually quite low level, often only first or second level. The Game Master may roll 1D4 to determine the level of an average, unimportant N.P.C vampire, or arbitrarily assign an experience level. Wild vampires seldom achieve a level greater than fourth.

To Kill a Vampire

A vampire can be immobilized, perhaps seem dead, but unless properly eliminated, the creature can be restored to continue its evil. This is where the legends of immortality arise. And indeed the vampire can live for hundreds or thousands of years until slain.

Weaknesses include wood, silver, certain herbs, holy symbols, water, daylight, soil and fire (when used right).

Protection by Herbs

There are two herbs, again linked to the element of *earth*, that can be used to ward away the undead. They are garlic and wolfbay. Hanging either on a door, on or around windows, and above a fireplace will prevent a vampire from entering one's home. Wearing the herbs around the neck will protect one from a vampire's bite. Waving the herb in the face of the undead will cause them to recoil. Nor can a vampire enter a circle made of either herb. Eating large portions of the herbs will cause the monster to retch and vomit blood.

Protection by the Holy Symbol

Any holy symbol that represents a God of Light, but especially the cross, and even the shadow of the cross (T shaped) will cause the vampire to recoil in apparent fear and pain. The exact nature of these powerful symbols is not known, but their influence is world renowned. A cross held firmly in hand can be used to force a vampire away. Wearing it around the neck protects one from the vampire's bite.

The shadow or the physical touch of a cross will inflict such pain that the demon must roll versus horror factor **18**. A failed roll means the fiend is temporarily racked with pain and is immobilized (cannot move/attack) for one full melee! During that melee, the monster will actually appear to smolder and burn. The small shadow cast by the symbol inflicts 2D6 points of damage direct to Hit Points. A large shadow that covers half or more of the body will inflict **1D4x10** Hit Points of damage per melee. Unfortunately, the vampire's regenerative powers prevent any permanent damage.

The touch of a Cross or Holy Symbol does 2D6 direct to Hit Points and leaves a momentary burn mark (mark disappears when all damage is regenerated). The touch is so repulsive and painful that the undead must roll to save versus horror factor **18**. A failed roll means the fiend is racked with pain and is immobilized (cannot move/attack) for one full melee! During that melee, the monster will actually appear to smolder and burn.

The Wooden Stake

Many misguided souls believe a wooden stake thrust through the heart of a vampire kills the demon. They are **wrong!!**

A stake through the heart is a painful means of inflicting a state of *suspended animation*. An arrow, crossbow bolt, spear, or other shaft will all do the job. Some insist that the wood must be made of hawthorn, maple or aspen, but any wood will suffice. The moment the stake hits its mark the demon screams in pain and falls to the ground in a crumpled heap. Moments later, the ghastly fiend seems to stop breathing, blood may gush from the wound, and the body may shrivel to look like an ancient corpse or skeleton. Dead? No.

The state of suspended animation can last for eons with no ill effect. Remove the wooden stake and, in mere seconds, the cursed demon is restored to its full strength and physical mass. The transformation is taxing and sends the monster into a feeding frenzy that forces it to hunt and kill immediately to slake its inhuman thirst for blood.

Undead vampires are elemental in nature. The impalement of a wooden stake or shaft through the heart grounds the monster to the earth and renders it completely powerless and unconscious. Once grounded, the vampire is locked in forced stasis. In this state he is vulnerable to normal weapons and fire, but it remains dangerous. If the stake is accidentally removed or destroyed, the vampire is instantly revived. Even if the demon's body has been mutilated or chopped to bits, it will regenerate. If the head has been removed and discarded, the head will grow a new body overnight (the staked body crumbles into dust when the new body is complete). Or if the head has been severed and the stake removed from the body, the two parts will magically reunite and the creature regenerates.

The only way to destroy an undead vampire using wood is to drive a wooden (or silver) stake into its heart, rendering it helpless, lop off the head, burn the head and body in separate funeral pyres, and scatter the **ashes!** The vampire can burn when made vulnerable by impalement by wood.

Wood Weapons

Any sort of ordinary wooden weapon from spears, javelins, arrows, crossbow bolts, shafts, sharpened wood knives and swords, to stakes, clubs and even chairs used as bludgeons will hurt the vampire, inflicting damage direct to Hit **Points!** But the accursed monsters regenerate so quickly that the damage, no matter how great, is seldom life threatening unless the wooden weapon is thrust into the heart. **Note:** The wood weapon must be made entirely of wood. An arrow or spear with a flint or steel head will bounce painlessly off the monster's hide. However, silver tipped weapons are as effective as wood. Weapons made of wood inflict double their normal damage against vampires.

Silver Weapons

Weapons of silver, whether they be blade, club or arrow, and whether made entirely of silver or just **coated/plated** in silver, inflict double damage direct to Hit Points. Note: The silver must be as pure as possible to be effective. Silver diluted by impurities is ineffective. Any grade of silver that has less than 85% silver content is useless.

Silver is another element that grounds the vampire to the earth and makes him vulnerable to destruction, but like wood, the weapon can not kill the creature itself. Silver plated stakes

and weapons function identical to wood. In the case of the silver bullet, the bullet must pierce the heart and remain lodged in the heart to incapacitate a vampire. If the bullet shoots into the heart and continues through and out of the body, the pain is excruciating, but the vampire is not immobilized and recovers in seconds (loses two melee attacks).

Note: A vampire can remove any foreign particles, such as silver bullets or shards of wood, by turning into mist.

Death by Water

Running water can destroy a vampire. Being immersed in a river, stream or other source of running water will destroy the monster. The moment the creature is immersed in water he loses his other powers and must flee or be destroyed. Running water is like acid. Holding a vampire in or under running water for 1D4 minutes will see the body quickly burn and melt into slime, then disappear without a trace. Suffers 6D6 damage per melee round (subtract damage from S.D.C. first, then H.P.). Even rainfall can hurt and kill a vampire exposed to its cleansing waters (4D6 damage per minute of exposure). When hit points are 21 below zero, the water-logged monster melts into oblivion.

Being immersed in still water, like a swimming pool or horse trough, causes great pain and 3D6 damage per melee round, first from S.D.C. then Hit Points, but will not kill.

Water offers other barriers for the vampire. The undead cannot willingly cross over running water unless there is a bridge to cross, and even then the pitiful creatures must roll to save versus Horror Factor 16 to get the nerve to cross the bridge. The monster can try to overcome his fear to cross a bridge (roll vs horror factor again) as often as four times an hour.

Holy water is water blessed by a priest whose god(s) is of a scrupulous or principled good alignment, or a God of Light. Holy water splashed on a vampire burns like molten lead (3D6 hit points per vial/six ounces). A vampire cannot enter a circle drawn with holy water.

Death by Sunlight

The light of day will turn a vampire into ashes! The undead cannot survive the light or warmth of sunlight, yet another weakness tied to the four elements. A true Undead Vampire will suffer from 1D6x10 points of damage direct to hit points for every melee round (15 seconds) of exposure to **sun/daylight**. While exposed to the light of day, the creatures of the night are powerless. They cannot use their powers and can barely move (reduce the number of melee attacks/actions and speed to one third). In a matter of minutes, they are reduced to ashes; permanently destroyed.

The magic spell, **Globe of Daylight**, does create true daylight, but it is NOT powerful enough to destroy a vampire. However, the magic globe of light is powerful enough to ward off most vampires, holding them at bay just beyond the edge of the light and preventing them from entering the lighted area. Do not underestimate the value of this spell. Furthermore, if cast inside a vampire's coffin (it must be opened a crack) the globe will awaken the fiend and inflict 3D6 damage per minute of this concentrated exposure inside its resting place.

Vulnerability (sleeping) During the Day: Vampires must sleep during the day! The vampire's sleep is a deep, stasis-like sleep from which they are not easily roused during day time.

However, a vampire can be woken and can function for a limited time during the day, as long as he is shielded from the sun. Note: A vampire may be able to force himself to stay awake for as long as one hour before collapsing into a coma-like sleep.

Magic

Magic weapons, magic spells, wards, circles and rituals, as well as attacks from creatures of magic (faeries, dragons, etc.) inflict normal damage to the vampire. Magic can be extremely useful in hurting, containing, and battering a vampire into a coma, but cannot usually kill them.

The only ways to truly

destroy an Undead Vampire

Remember, the only way to completely destroy an Undead Vampire is to drive a wooden (or silver) stake into its heart, rendering it helpless, lop off the head, burn the head and body in separate funeral pyres, and scatter the ashes! The vampire can burn when made vulnerable by impalement by wood or silver. Or by exposing it to sunlight or running water.

Adventure #3: The Hand of Tezuan

This is more of a **fleshed-out** campaign idea than a dyed-in-the-wool adventure. Game Masters can make it as involved and expansive as they might like (when I ran it for the first time, it took nearly seven months to complete), or it can be boiled down to a few game sessions. Given the rewards at stake in this adventure, and the rare opportunity for some serious globe-trotting, I would suggest you make this a lengthy affair.

The adventure begins when the party of adventurers nears the small, fortified town of **Tezuan**, which lies on the eastern border of the *Middle Kingdoms* region. Why the player characters are here is up to the G.M. Maybe they're looking for a place to lie low after a high-profile adventure. Perhaps they are looking for work as mercenaries and heard that the Middle Kingdoms **and/or** neighboring **Vequerrel** Woodlands were looking for warriors. Or maybe they're passing through on their way to the Vequerrel Woodlands or another destination or quest. Or maybe they just happen to be in the neighborhood. Whatever their reason, they've been traveling for days and need to rest and stock up on provisions. Since Tezuan is the closest settlement, the adventuring group is making its way to the town.

Tezuan is built around a small stone fort that used to be an **elven** outpost back before the Elf-Dwarf Wars. The fort was deserted for many years after the War, and was claimed by Western settlers about a thousand years ago during the last big push east. Since then, a meager town has grown up here, fairly isolated from the troubles brewing elsewhere in the Middle Kingdoms.

As the players near Tezuan, they feel a series of minor earth tremors (earthquakes). Earth Warlocks will instinctively know

that these are natural movements, but will be unable to predict if a major quake is on the way. More than anything, these rumblings are just a prelude for what's in store once our heroes enter town.

Border Town: Tezuan

Population: Approximately 10,000 people.

86% Human
3% Elves
2% Dwarves
5% **Orc**
2% Goblin
2% Other

The Middle Kingdoms are largely human and human supremacists, thus there are only a small percentage of **nonhumans**, including elves and dwarves.

Like many settlements in the Middle Kingdoms, the local nobility is in very tight cahoots with the *Church of Light and Dark*. Together, these powers tax the hell out of the populace, which scrapes a meager living from farming, textile production, and raising livestock. Most of this tax money goes into an oversized local military. (About 2,500 infantrymen, 500 archers and 250 mounted knights. Still, they would be squashed easily by the nearby Imperial Garrison, which has a force about three times as large and much more experienced.) With no wars to fight, **Tezuan's** military patrols the town, turning Tezuan into a xenophobic police state. City guardsmen will be suspicious of all visitors, especially "monster races" such as Wolfen, Eandroth, **orcs**, ogres, or kobolds. The hint of Changelings sends them into a panic, and suspects will be taken into custody and brutally interrogated and tested for hours.

Upon entering the town's gates, visitors are required to register (but not surrender) their weapons, and all practitioners of magic are required to sign a pledge not to use their powers within city limits. Priests and priestesses of any faith besides the Church of Light and Dark will be harassed and expressly forbidden from practicing their faith within eye and ear-shot of the town. And to top it all off, psychics will be forbidden to enter town! Psychics discovered to have snuck into town are treated like dangerous outlaws and either captured and taken into custody where they are interrogated as spies (less than 5% are found innocent and released; all others are executed in a matter of 48 hours), or run out of town. The extreme anti-psychoic sentiment comes from the unusual religious fundamentalism of the region, which has long seen psychic potential (and the use of magic) as a demonic power and a direct affront to all that is right and holy in the world. **G.M. Note:** These adverse conditions shouldn't be so bad as to encourage the players not to stay in town. Just bad enough so they feel uncomfortable and are careful to hide their powers.

The only place where travellers are truly welcome to stay is a cozy, little place known as *Hearth and Home*, an inn run by Oslo Foroon, an unusually friendly and open-minded human who enjoys having company and entertaining exotic visitors (i.e. nonhumans). Oslo hasn't had too many visitors lately, so he will be overjoyed at the player characters' arrival, giving them the nicest room in the place (It still isn't much, but hey, you take what you can get, right?). As the players settle in, Oslo will bring up some food or drink, striking up small talk.

At some point, Oslo will make an off-handed comment about the earth rumbles, and how they seem to be getting stronger. If any of the adventurers ask, Oslo will explain that over the last month, the ground has become more and more unstable, and that he fears a large earthquake is on the way. This tectonic activity has been seen as a portent of evil by the local priests and nobles, who are using the growing public concern as an excuse to ask for more tithes — all to appease the gods for whatever wrong the town has done. Oslo is a bit suspicious of this ploy, but isn't about to raise a fuss. If the townsfolk want to throw all their money at the Church of Light and Dark, he reckons, then that's their business.

A few hours later, the big one hits! This is the earthquake Oslo was fearing — a massive upheaval that shakes the very foundation of the town. Thankfully, the worst damage is done to the farms, ranches and country outside of town. Still, 40% of the town's buildings are seriously damaged, 10% are destroyed completely (the inn is spared), at least a dozen people are killed, two dozen missing and several hundred suffer from **fright** and bruises. The adventurers can engage in rescue operations and side adventures, or the G.M. can jump ahead. That night, as our heroes eat dinner at the *Hearth and Home*, Oslo's son, a gangly youth named Ven, bursts into the place, saying that he's got incredible **news**!

Once Ven catches his breath, he explains that he was fishing in a nearby stream when the quake hit. He headed home after the worst of it was over, but about a half-hour later, he heard a terrific rumbling noise — but one that sounded different from the recent quake. Ven went to the source of the noise and discovered that the quake had touched off a landslide on a nearby hill, causing a large portion of the hill to fall away and expose the entrance to a large, buried treasure vault!

Ven's eyes light up as he describes what he saw — a cylindrical stone opening jutting away from the crumbled hillside. "I looked inside, but there wasn't anything there, except for this big, stone door that closed off the rest of the tomb ... or chamber ... or whatever it was!" Ven says. "There weren't no handle or nothing on it. Just this big button with a hand print in it, and all sorts of funny scratch marks around it. I figured I better come and tell you about it, Dad. What are we goin' to do? Go treasure hunting?"

As Oslo listens to all this, he seems both interested and disturbed. What manner of oddity is this? Stone treasure vaults beneath hillsides? Hand prints? Mysterious earthquakes? He asks his boy a few questions, but all he gets is a retelling of the same story, no new details. Oslo looks at the player characters and asks.

"Well, it seems Ven here has found something quite interesting, yes?" He looks out the window and rubs his chin. It is twilight, and the hillside Ven describes is at least an hour out of town. "We probably should go out there and see what has been unearthed, but with darkness approaching, I'm a little concerned about going out there alone. I don't want Ven to get hurt, and ... I'm telling you, something odd is afoot. I can't leave now either. With so many homeless, my inn is full. Would you mind accompanying my boy to the hillside? It would mean a great deal to me. If it means anything, I'd gladly give you a night's stay for free as payment."



Any player with a sense of adventure shouldn't need much enticement to check this out. Oslo himself would love to go, but he admits that he isn't as spry and slim as he once was, and he has too many pressing obligations at the inn (he can't really spare Ven). He gives Ven some extra food and a lantern, and bids the party good luck, asking one last favor, "Please don't take Ven inside the vault. Send him home after he takes you to the hillside." Boys being boys, Ven has other plans.

Following Ven's lead, the party slips out of town, past guard patrols, and into the countryside. After about an hour, the party arrives at the collapsed hillside. The darkness of nightfall conceals much of what's there, and any passerby is likely to miss seeing anything other than the rubble of the collapsed hill. As the adventurers get closer to the exposed "treasure vault," what they see is a stretch of crumbled hillside, and a large (about 50 feet/15 m in diameter and who knows how long), gray stone cylinder jutting out of the side of the hill at a slightly upward angle. It is as if this great stone cylinder was buried deep beneath the hill, but the earthquake rippled the ground and thrust the cylinder up and through the surface. Close examination of the giant stone cylinder shows that it seems to be carved from a single massive piece of granite. Anybody making an Identify Minerals (or Gemology) roll will realize that the local area doesn't have granite rocks of this size. It must have been brought here from somewhere else and buried, long, long ago.

Climbing up to the opening of the cylinder, players will just be able to grab the lower lip and swing inside. Near the cylinder's opening lies the crumpled form of a soldier from town, except his dress is disheveled and stained with wine. The soldier has been dead for a few hours, and looks like he received a lethal blast of mystic energy. His hair is scorched, and the palm of his right hand is blackened, as if he put it upon a flaming surface.

"Guess he got drunk and wandered from his post to check out the noise," Ven comments. "Happens all the time. Town soldiers aren't very disciplined, and who could resist exploring a treasure vault?"

Beyond the opening, the stone cylinder's interior extends for about 20 feet (6 m) before terminating at what appears to be the far end of the entire vault. But this wall is no wall — it is a huge circular door the exact size of the opening of the cylinder itself. There are no hinges or knobs on the door, save for a large, hemispherical button protruding from the center. Recessed into the push button is what looks like the shape of a bulky hand — perhaps wearing an armored gauntlet. Surrounding the push button in an incredibly tight spiral is a string of thousands and thousands of guardian wards, all *of death*. Even those without mystic knowledge will know these are probably wards and, judging from the dead soldier, very dangerous (a sense magic will indicate immense magic energy).

A close inspection of the door by those familiar with wards reveals that several dozen of these wards have already been activated, but there are thousands and thousands more left, and they all seem active! Only a Diabolist or someone skilled in identifying wards can tell for sure, but they are indeed active wards. Each one will inflict **2D4x10** damage if anyone tampers with the vault door or the door's push button. Diabolists will be mystified by the structure of this device, for it violates the current understanding of ward magic. If all of these wards are guarding the

door, shouldn't they all have activated the first time the door was disturbed? Some may think that the wards are actually activated one by one with each push of the door's button, but there's no way of finding this out without actually tampering with the button, which is, like the rest of the Vault, indestructible. The push button cannot be pried away from the door, and messing with it only activates another guardian ward with each attempt.

Anybody who can *read runes* sees repeated references to "Tezuan," and "the Hand of Tezuan." The runic text also bears cryptic references to Tezuan's wrath against thieves, and that his great hoard must lie undisturbed, because he will one day return for that which is his and then smite his enemies and those who betrayed him — whatever that means. Nobody should have any idea who or what this "Tezuan" may be. Scholars and mages among the group will have no knowledge of any "Tezuan" but can't help noticing that the town they are staying at has the same name.

By this time, it's starting to get really dark, and an increasingly nervous Ven suggests the party return to town while they can still see — the darkening sky shows it to be an eerily starless night sky. **Note:** For the time being, this is a good suggestion as there is nothing much anybody can do, at least for the moment. Ven suggests that this "Tezuan" must have something to do with the town he lives in and that maybe his father might know something about this "Hand of Tezuan."

The trip back and re-entry into town will be uneventful. When the player characters return to the Hearth and Home Inn, Oslo has hot food waiting for them, and is eager to hear about what they found. After hearing all the details, he sits back and thinks, running his hand over his balding head and scratching the back of his neck. He finally says, "You should talk to *Jaechus*. He's good folk, you can trust him. Nobody knows more about the local history than him, and if there's anybody in town who would know something about this thing you found, he would."

Oslo takes any of the adventurers who care to join him to see Jaechus at the crack of dawn that morning. Jaechus the Scholar is a pudgy fellow about the same age as Oslo, and it appears that these two have been good friends for years. Once inside the scholar's home, Oslo tells Jaechus what the party said to him the night before. When Jaechus hears the phrase, "the hand of Tezuan," his eyes light up, and he dashes off to one of the **floor-to-ceiling** bookshelves that line the walls of his house. He pulls out a dusty old tome and unlocks it, opening it to a **bookmarked** page that has an illustration of a bulky stone gauntlet on it. The gauntlet appears to be made of many interlocking stone plates, and is covered with densely packed lines of tiny, alien writing that resembles runes.

Jaechus explains that "Tezuan" was a great spell caster of old for whom this town is named. The details about this mage are sketchy because so much information has been lost over the ages, but it seems that thousands of years ago, probably during the *Time of a Thousand Magicks*, there rose a mighty **elven Wizard-Warlock** named Tezuan. Legend has it that Tezuan used a bizarre fusion of elemental and runic magicks to forge a suit of rune-covered magical armor that would protect him from his numerous enemies. After years of toil, Tezuan completed his armor, but by that time, he had grown mentally unstable and

power-hungry. He yearned to rule the world, or at least a substantial portion of it, and he would let nothing stand in the way of fulfilling his dreams of unlimited power.

At this point, Jaechus admits his account of what happened thins out considerably. Apparently, after the insane **Tezuan** was defeated — slain or disappeared — details are unclear, all records of him were obliterated and little else is known of him. His rare magic (perhaps known only to him) has been long forgotten. All that remains of his legacy is the name of the town that was once his home, and a few bits of information. All he can add is that Tezuan is said to have created an unbreachable treasure vault that could only be opened by someone wearing the right gauntlet of his fabled runic armor. The vault is said to be filled with his greatest treasures, but was protected by elemental forces and powerful magic. What's perplexing to Jaechus is that the treasure vault was supposed to have been hidden far away, so his enemies would never find it. If this strange cylindrical structure is the fabled vault of Tezuan, it could hold the secrets of magic lost thousands of years ago, not to mention incredible treasure. All one had to do was find the Hand of Tezuan.

If only it were that easy.

Jaechus doesn't know where the hand is, nor does he know of any other places to gain information on it. He will answer further questions as best he can, but doesn't know much more about Tezuan than he's already told. He does add this: if the party is interested in finding this "Hand of Tezuan" to unlock the treasure vault, they should begin their search right away. Other adventurers, freebooters and treasure hunters will hear about the vault, although he doubts any other locals know anything about Tezuan, not even the nobles, and he promises not to reveal his knowledge if they cut him in for a small part of the treasure, specifically any books they may find. However, should others figure things out, the entire region will be crawling with adventurers looking for the Hand. If the player characters begin looking now, they can get a head start on their competition.

We're going on a Treasure Hunt!

From this point forward, where the Hand of Tezuan is, and what the player characters must do to get it, is left entirely up to the Game Master. Given the power of the Hand of Tezuan itself (see stats below) and the incredible wealth inside **Tezuan's** treasure vault, I would suggest the quest for the Hand be a lengthy and difficult one — and perhaps, never be completed, but which leads to all sorts of adventures. The Hand and Vault of Tezuan are both magnificent treasures that should never be given away easily, nor should they be an excuse to unbalance or "munchkinize" your ongoing campaigns. It is an opportunity for epic adventure. A quest for the Holy Grail or dark secrets that might take a lifetime (or several lifetimes) of adventuring to achieve. Likewise, in an ironic twist, the player characters may slowly uncover more and more information about the evil and insane Tezuan and what *may* be locked inside his treasure vault, only to realize that it is too dangerous to unleash into the world. Thus, if they find the hand, they may ultimately end up destroying it (a difficult adventure in itself) or hiding it where no other might find it and misuse the powers and ancient secrets at its fingertips. To punctuate the evil and misuse of power that the mere promise of the hand offers, the player characters should encounter a number of foul villains willing to do almost any-

thing to get their hands on the secrets of the vault; men, women, mages and monsters willing to kill and obsessed with dreams of infinite power.

When I play-tested the campaign, I turned this into a global search that lasted for several months real time. The basic outline of the campaign as I ran it will follow. Feel free to incorporate this model, or adopt it in part, or make up something completely new. **G.M. Note:** In my version of this campaign, a good portion of it took place outside of the Western Empire — if you run your campaign as I did, you will need many of the other **Palladium Fantasy RPG™** sourcebooks. I used *Old Ones*, *Adventures on the High Seas*, and *The Yin-Sloth Jungles* sourcebooks. Now, on to the treasure hunt! The following is the course of my campaign (along with some additional comments from me and Kevin Siembieda). Use it as a guideline.

- Although Jaechus doesn't have a clue about the Hand of Tezuan, he may (at the G.M.'s discretion) know about legends of magical "hands" or armor that might actually be the Hand of Tezuan. A nice dead end might be an adventure that turns out not to involve the Hand of Tezuan, but the hand of Osiris.
- If characters are going after the Hand of Tezuan, it will help to have more information on it, and where better to research it than the *Great Library of Bletherad*, on the island of Y-Oda, off the coast of the Eastern Territory? There is no greater collection of recorded knowledge in this world, and certainly further clues about Tezuan and the whereabouts of his runic gauntlet are waiting to be found there. Travelling to Y-Oda from Tezuan is definitely a long trip. The players could shave some time off by travelling north to the coast and catching a ship to Phi or Lopan, and from there, a ferry to the Eastern Territory. Or they can ride overland to the same place. Any way they go, the player characters will have adventures and may find other clues and hints about the hand. Ultimately, any trip to the Great Library will bring the group to the heart of the disputed lands between the Eastern Territory and the Wolfen Empire. This is dangerous land for anybody to travel in. Any nonhuman characters should be especially careful. That goes double for any Wolfen characters. Information in the Great Library will definitely offer some more insight on just how uniquely powerful and deranged Tezuan the Mage really was. It may also offer one or more clues as to the whereabouts of the hand. One may lead deep into the Great Northern Wilderness or other dangerous land. Best of all, there may be clues about **otherpeople**, living and dead, who may have known Tezuan and have more information about him and the Hand. One such individual is the Slayer of Mountains. Another is the mysterious (and presumed dead) Nameless Lord — both were people known to associate with the legendary **Defilers** who may also know something about this man and the Hand. Gods, demons, and other mages may also know bits and pieces about the character or of ancient ruins and evil strongholds where further clues *may* be found.

Oh, one more thing. Research on Tezuan, his armor (also lost) and the Hand of Tezuan will definitely attract the attention of (and potential trouble from) other adventurers, particularly powerful mages and dragons.

- Once at the Great Library of Bletherad, the adventures group learns that **Tezuan** indeed built and maintained a large fortress somewhere in the **Floenry** Islands, "away from small-minded fools" and amidst vengeful Changelings. There, he built a small navy and summoned elemental forces of the earth and air to terrorize all shipping in the area, disrupting the commerce of every seafaring nation with trade routes in the southern waters. Common knowledge of the Floenry Isles dictates that there are plenty of mysterious ruins on those islands — any one of them could be the remains of **Tezuan's** ancient citadel. Perhaps his Hand is there. Or if not, then certainly there will be further clues to its location.

Herein begins another long travelling leg that can be peppered with all sorts of adventures along the way. There are two basic travel options. The first is the players can either ferry back to the Eastern Territory and go all the way through the Eastern Lands, through the Old Kingdom, and through the Timiro Kingdom to catch a vessel to the **Floenries**. Or it might be faster to rent their own ship and crew to travel down the eastern coastline and to the island chain directly. A vessel and crew can be acquired in the Eastern Territory, Timiro Kingdom, Land of the South Wind or Island Kingdom of Bizantium.

- Once in the Floenry Island chain, the player characters have to figure out which island to investigate first — there are several options. Exploring the islands has enough adventure opportunities for a separate campaign in and of itself, so the G.M. can let this phase play itself out as long or as short as time (and desire) allows. I placed the ruins of Tezuan's citadel on *Grimbor Island*, using that mysterious exaggeration mentioned as the fortress. If you've already made different use of this, then any of the other island ruins should do, or maybe there's yet another, farther island (or two) not charted on any maps (see the **Island at the Edge of the World** sourcebook for more ideas and adventure options).
- Once at the fortress ruins, the adventurers have to explore it. Here's a great opportunity for a good maze walk — chances to search for secret passages, defuse traps, decipher cryptic instructions and warnings (or clues) written in runes, and the like. Ultimately, Tezuan's laboratory will be found in the center of the complex, perhaps deep underground and in perfect condition. There, he might have some kind of Golem (perhaps different from conventional golems known to the world today), Earth Elemental, undead, or other animated guardians keeping watch over the place. Once these baddies are defeated, the player characters can rifle through Tezuan's notebooks, journals and experiment logs. Here they can learn that Tezuan had performed all manner of bizarre magical experiments, from forging weird, new magical items to trying to create entire new species of humanoid warriors with which to conquer the world.

In my campaign, I engineered this so that Tezuan had been carrying out "*Island of Dr. Moreau*"-like experiments with local animals (apes, monitor lizards, etc.) and making humanoids out of them. The **humanoids** eventually devolved back into hideous monstrosities, forcing Tezuan to flee. The ape-men eventually evolved into what are now **Grimbors**. They spread to the nearby Yin-Sloth Jungles because they pursued the evil Tezuan. His very creations (the worst of which are now gone) rebelled against him and destroyed the

citadel. This is all just my personal conjecture and experiences — feel free to use or ditch this origin of the Grimbors as you like.

Ultimately, our heroes won't find the Hand of Tezuan here, but they will find a weird form of scrying pool in Tezuan's laboratory. Apparently, Tezuan's **proto-Grimbor** servants had used the pool to track the unique runic energies of Tezuan's armor. In the scrying pool is a magical map of the Known World, and right in the center of the Isle of the Cyclops is a glowing, red point of light, indicating the armor's location. Next stop, Isle of the Cyclops!

- The next leg of the journey takes the party along the Yin-Sloth coastline, where any number of adventures can occur along the way. Pirates, sea serpents, hostile natives, you name it. Maybe a tribe of Grimbors or two is prudent, especially if they live among ancient ruins.

Points of interest along the way are the *Dragon's Gate* and the *Orcish Empire*, neither of which are likely to appreciate the presence of humans, **elves**, or other "fair folk."

- Once at the Isle of the Cyclops, there is the whole problem of gaining access to the island. Then, the characters must leave the Trade Port and infiltrate the *Walled City of Clypss*, which is very much against the rules for outsiders such as the player characters. I placed the Hand in a massive Temple to the Gods of Light and Dark in the center of the city (the rest of the armor isn't there). The Hand itself was being stored in a large ceramic urn (hidden among many others) that had all kinds of odd containment wards on it, and a big wax seal on the top. Little do the adventurers know that the urn contains the trapped essence of *Goracs the Slayer*, a beast demon to whom Tezuan gave the Hand long ago. Goracs was captured by warrior priests at this temple years ago and will be bent on revenge the instant he is released. Goracs has maximum attributes, hit points and S.D.C. for a Beast demon, and in addition to his natural fighting and spell abilities, he is wearing the hand of Tezuan, which he will use freely during combat. If the player characters want the Hand, they're going to have to get it off Goracs by force (and he'll flee rather than risk capture or death). Any serious fighting is going to attract the priests of the temple, as well as the giant Guardsmen of *Clypss*, so even if the player group should defeat Goracs and get the Hand, escaping the Isle alive will be a harrowing affair. And the priests will want their sacred relic back.

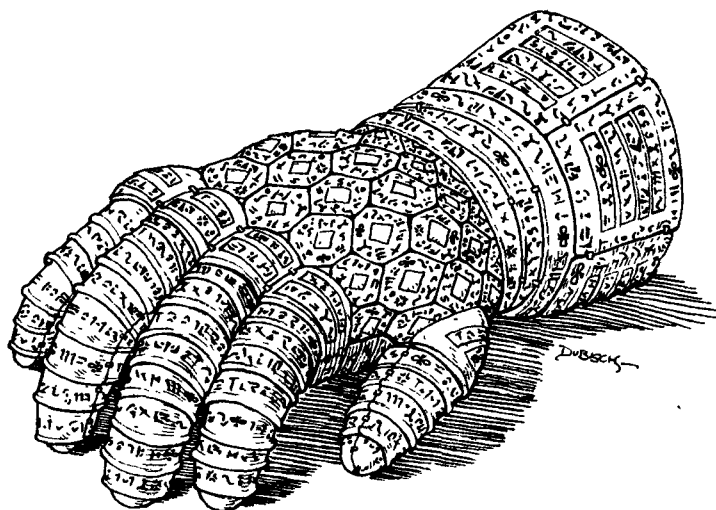
The Hand of Tezuan

A Runic Artifact

This item is a gauntlet made of hundreds of thin, interlocking stone plates that somehow allow for both flexibility and rigidity. The superior workmanship shows that the Hand was not carved or built by a mortal stonemason. Covering the Hand are dozens of weird runes, lightly carved into the stone surface — some filled in with precious metals and other substances.

The Powers of the Hand of Tezuan:

- The Hand will grow or shrink to fit any hand from gnome to giant-size and will even switch thumbs to suit the wearer's preference.
- Supernatural Strength when lifting and carrying weights: The character wearing the gauntlet can lift and carry weight as if his P.S. were supernatural.



- The Hand of Tezuan is indestructible, so the wearer can subject his or her "hand" to any kind of harm without damage. The **gauntlet/hand** feels comfortable to the wearer, but he cannot feel things held in the gauntlet covered hand. Thus, any skills requiring fine manual dexterity or sense of touch, such as picking pockets, picking locks, locating secret compartments, palming, or playing a musical instrument, suffer a penalty of -25%. Also, wielding a weapon with the hand wearing this magical gauntlet is impossible unless the gauntlet is removed; it is too thick to close into a fist.
- As a weapon, the Hand will do 2D6 on a normal strike against mortal foes, but 4D6 damage to supernatural beings and creatures of magic, and triple damage to elementals. It can also perform a power strike against any foe, inflicting 1D4x10 damage (counts as two melee actions/attacks) and 1D6x10 damage against elementals. Note that the magic gauntlet can touch and hurt all types of elementals, even those made of air or water.

Of course, one can not take a W.P. in "the Hand," so any bonuses to strike or parry will come only from applicable P.P. and skill bonuses. The Hand is considered a magical weapon, so it will harm creatures against whom nonmagical weapons are ineffective, including vampires.

- In addition, the wearer of the Hand of Tezuan can perform any combination of the following magic abilities a total of 6 times daily (per 24 hours):

Shockwave: Upon slamming the Hand of Tezuan against the ground, a shockwave will emanate from the wearer, causing 4D6 damage to anyone (or anything) on the ground within a 50 foot (15 m) radius, friend or foe; double damage to all elemental beings.

Impervious to Wind Magic: The wearer is completely unaffected by air elemental magic or any form of magic that utilizes the wind or air. When activated, the duration of this invulnerability is one hour.

Super Telekinesis. As per the Super Psionic power. Any extra I.S.P. expenditure comes from the user's P.P.E., not their I.S.P.

Tamashiwara. As per the **Ninjas and Superspies™** ability. Tamashiwara allows the user to punch holes or shatter objects with a single blow. While using this power and strik-

ing with the gauntlet covered hand, the user gets only one attack per melee round, and must hit his target with a natural roll of 14 or higher to unleash its shattering effect. If successful, the object has been shattered. A large object, such as a door, iron gate or portion of a wall, will have a good-sized hole punched through it, and two or three shattering strikes will destroy a door or make a comparable sized hole in a stone wall or metal. If used on living targets, a successful strike will result in an automatic critical strike (double damage), plus the victim of the attack loses one of his own attacks. Rolling a natural 20 on a Tamashiwara strike results in triple damage! Ordinarily, failing the roll means that the user takes half damage from his strike, but since the Hand of Tezuan is indestructible, that drawback does not apply.

Note: If ever linked to the rest of the stone rune armor, the Hand can perform the above magic 12 times daily and fire a 5D6 damage lightning bolt (1000 ft/30m range) once per melee round (counts as an extra **attack**)!

The curse of Tezuan: Anyone who puts on the Hand of Tezuan will not be able to remove it unless a successful remove curse spell is cast on them. The Hand can also be removed by chopping the arm off just below the elbow! This latter of course action is not usually the choice of the wearer.

The wearer also begins to feel self-conscious and paranoid (not without good cause). He fears everybody is out to get the Hand or fears him because he wears it. The individual becomes somewhat suspicious and fearful of others and he also can feel the evil of Tezuan (or is it the life force that must be contained inside the rune **gauntlet?**). This adds to the general feeling of discomfort and paranoia, as well as makes the character uncertain that the vault should ever be opened. Worse, the character can "feel" the pain and anguish of elementals that are within a 200 foot (61 m) radius of him, or which are made to suffer from the Hand.

As an additional discomfort, whoever wears the Hand won't be able to hide it very well. Even if the wearer has full armor on, the Hand is always oversized, large and bulky, and its stone construction makes it obvious that it is a unique piece. This makes it difficult to keep this thing hidden, which can be a problem if the Vault of Tezuan has not yet been opened. In such a case, any unscrupulous adventurers who hear of the player characters possession of the hand will do almost anything to obtain it and thereby gain the Vault's treasure for themselves.

Tezuan's Treasure Vault

Once the player characters have acquired the Hand, they'll probably want to return to the Town of Tezuan. The simplest way would be to ferry across the sea to Caer Itom and travel overland through the Western Empire back to the town. This will be another long journey and will entail several adventures in the Western Empire as our heroes take the scenic path through its heartland. A quicker way would be for the characters to procure a means of magical transportation. Along the way, they are likely to encounter others who want the powerful magic item **and/or** those who have learned about the treasure vault and want the hand to gain access to it. These are likely to include powerful and evil Western nobles and men of magic (even a sphinx or dragon) who will stop at nothing to get the Hand.

Assuming the quest for the Hand has taken at least a few months of game time (probably longer), the player characters will find that the town of Tezuan has undergone a dramatic transformation since they left. What once was a sleepy crossroads has become a booming adventurers haven. Just as the old scholar, Jaechus, foretold, dozens of adventuring parties have since heard about this treasure vault and are combing the area looking for the Hand of Tezuan — hundreds of fools have perished trying to circumvent the magical safeguards or force their way in. What's more, House **Kaze**, the Regional power of the Middle Kingdoms (and Tezuan) has taken an interest in all of this, and plans to excavate the entire area around the tomb and transport the cylinder and any other artifacts back to the *Regional* Palace (if enough time has passed, the vault has already been moved to the Palace, making it incredibly difficult to get to as it will be under lock and key and heavily guarded). If the contents of the Treasure Vault should fall into the hands of House Kaze, it will give the rebellious Middle Kingdom the power to wage civil war or (especially if years or decades have passed) the opportunity and power to extract blood revenge. If the player characters have had an easy time getting the hand of Tezuan, it might be interesting if actually collecting the treasure turns out to be the most difficult part of the adventure (perhaps impossible without giving up the Hand to the Kaze nobles/authorities).

Once the players gain access to the treasure vault, it's time to see if all of this trouble has been worth the effort. It has. Inside the vault is a hoard of gold, jewels and magic items that would make a dragon jealous.

- **One million gold** in assorted Old Kingdom coinage, stored in 10 stone chests (500 lbs/225 kg each).
- **10 small stone boxes**, each containing an assortment of cut and polished top-quality diamonds, emeralds and rubies. Each collection of gems is worth 100,000 gold.
- **A dragonskin belt purse** containing 25 Old Kingdom Dragon Coins, worth a total of 125,000 gold.
- **The crystal skull**. A skull with a lizard or dragon-like shape and features. It has pinpoints of blue light glowing in the eye sockets. The skull has 100 I.S.P., which regenerates at the rate of 10 per hour, and the super psionic powers of **electrokinesis**, **hydrokinesis** and **pyrokinesis** at 6th level proficiency and power. The **owner/wielder** of the skull can call upon it to perform its psionic powers as long as it has sufficient I.S.P. There are strange markings on the underside of the skull, but they are *not* runes or any known language. Whether or not the skull is a rune item or something similar is unknown. If it has an intelligence, it does not make its presence known. However, the owner/user of the skull will sometimes hear a voice speaking **softly** in his dreams or sometimes during moments of moral decision making. A voice that usually promotes self-interest, revenge and hatred. Furthermore, the skull radiates of evil and great magic.
- **The Belt of Koth**. This magical belt can cast Fleet Feet, Fly as the Eagle, and Swim as the Fish a total of three times each, per day. The spells work at the level of whoever wears the belt. However, the user tires 20% quicker than normal and is -1 to save vs disease.
- **The Greater Rune Broadsword, Modega, the Defender (I.Q. 12)**. Modega is an unprincipled Broadsword that inflicts

5D6 per hit. It has all common rune powers and the unusual ability to double the user's attacks per melee round; a rare power that indicates it is at least 7,000 years old! Modega also gives its user +20 additional hit points, and adds +2 to initiative and +2 to parry and disarm whenever the sword is used. This weapon was never used by Tezuan. It was a prize he captured from a worthy opponent.

- **The Stone of Elemental Power**. Any warlock possessing this fist-sized stone will have his or her P.P.E. increased by 50%, their spell strength will increase by +2, range is increased by 20%, and attempts to summon elementals jump up by +25%. This item is specifically guarded by a minor Earth Elemental who will attack anybody who tries to remove the item from the sanctuary. If successfully removed without killing the elemental, the minor Earth elemental can sense its location and will track the stone down, attempt to retrieve it and return it to the Treasure Vault.
- **The Eye of Tezuan**. This eyeball-sized orb of malachite enhances the possessor's own eyesight as if the following spells were cast on him: **Nightvision**, Eyes of Thoth, See the Invisible, See Wards and See Aura. These powers work constantly, and have no P.P.E. cost. In addition, the Eye can cast any combination of the following spells a total of three times daily: X-Ray Vision, Clairvoyance, and Second Sight. Estimated value of this fabulous treasure is 300,000+ gold.
- **A Book of Tezuan**. This Tome of Images is a true Rune Book with common rune powers 1, 2, 6 & 7, plus Healing/Cleric abilities. Exactly what is printed on the book's pages is up to the G.M. Is it one of Tezuan's personal journals? Some notable spells (nothing too powerful or unusual)? The map to another treasure lair or to a slumbering Old One?! It's up to you.
- **The magic library**. A small inner chamber filled with scrolls, books and papers. However, the moment anybody other than Tezuan himself enters the chamber, a pair of minor fire elementals set the entire library ablaze. All their attacks/melee actions for one full minute are directed at obliterating the library. Once everything is ablaze and 99% destroyed, the elementals vanish, free to return to the elemental plane.

The odds of rescuing anything is only one percent (roll percentile dice). If a 01 is rolled, a character successfully grabs a random pile of paper or a book. This item is either 1D4 magic scrolls with two 4th level and one 6th level spell on each (G.M.'s choice of which spells), or a map of an underground **dwarven** stronghold someplace in the Old Kingdom (can the location be determined from this **map?**), or a book detailing a 150 year segment in the history of the Elf-Dwarf Wars from the elves' perspective. The book has no magical secrets but is of great historical value and can command as much as 80,000 to 100,000 gold in the Western Empire, Timiro, at the Great Library, or among the most sophisticated and wealthy collectors.

Note: A handful of other minor to one or two impressive magic items (scrolls, potions, weapons, armor, etc.) can be included at the G.M.'s discretion. Likewise, a handful of ordinary items like a silver dagger, jeweled ring, blank paper, etc., can be added.

G.M. Note: Whether or not the player characters manage to keep all, half or only a fraction (perhaps a few thousand gold and key magic items) will depend on the individual G.M. and circumstances.

Keep in mind that finding and *keeping* such a vast and public treasure will be difficult under the best of circumstances. One million gold will require a couple wagons alone, and can you imagine the attention these characters will attract wheeling around small mountains of coin? The characters should have a good amount of trouble removing and selling/using the treasure. They are likely to be robbed, cheated and waylaid, losing at least 1D4x10%, if not half or more.

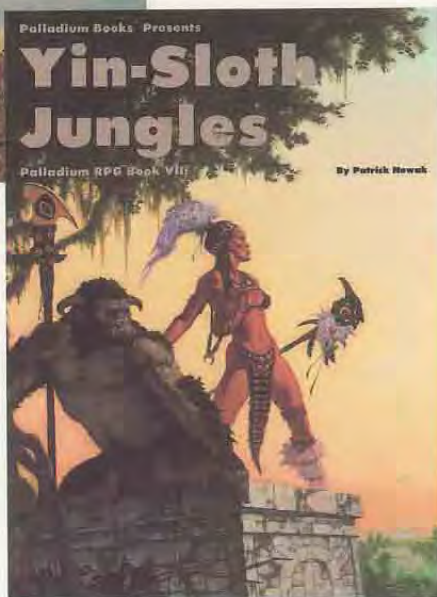
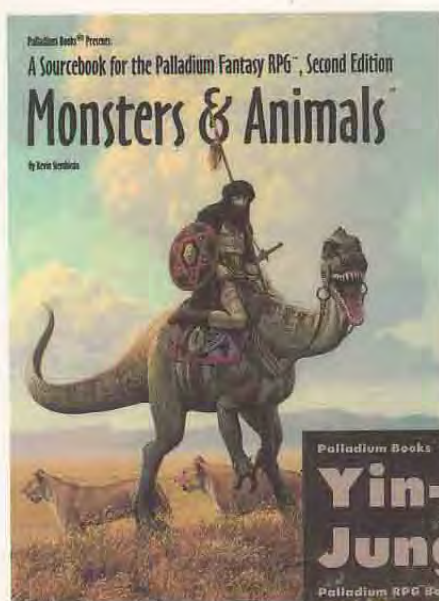
If the Treasure Vault is in the possession of the Kaze House, the characters will be lucky to get away with one magic item each **and/or** 3D6x1000 in gold. Any damage to the items in the vault (like the library) or theft of special items will brand the characters as enemies of the Middle Kingdoms (which can put them in good standing with the current Imperial House and many of the other Noble Houses).

One More G.M. Note: It is believed that Tezuan died a horrible death long ago and that the rest of his fabled armor died with him. Of course, ambitious G.M.s might wish to devise stats for the rest of Tezuan's armor — the helmet, shield, boots, chest plate and the other gauntlet of his famed runic armor. However, none of it is in the Treasure Vault, and none of it may exist on this world (if they do, they'll be really hard to find).

Really enterprising G.M.s might even want to incorporate Tezuan himself into future campaigns! After all, what if he only disappeared, and didn't die? What if he has been in stasis all this time, awaiting the disturbance of his Treasure Vault? Or some trigger within it to revive him? Or is he a ghost, a vampire, or perhaps imprisoned in an ancient rune weapon or magic item someplace? If he comes back, he will be plenty mad at whoever sacked his treasure, something that could keep the players on the run for months and give them a **reoccurring** monster of a villain to deal with.

The exact scope of Tezuan's power should be a mystery and at least **9th-12th** level. And remember, Tezuan is a mage who calls upon a lost (and forbidden) magic art that only he knows. It gives him the power of an Earth and Fire Warlock plus those of a Diabolist (even though legends call him a **Wizard-Warlock**). He has some vague understanding of rune magic too, although making a rune weapon would take him years. So however you make this guy, be sure to make him **TOUGH!** Heck, an entire campaign could be dedicated to the party gathering the strength they'll need to put this villain away once and for all. They just better hope Tezuan doesn't catch up with them before they're ready for the big fight.





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