



THE UNSPOKEN WORD 2
For Hero Wars™ and HeroQuest™

THE THIEVES' ARM



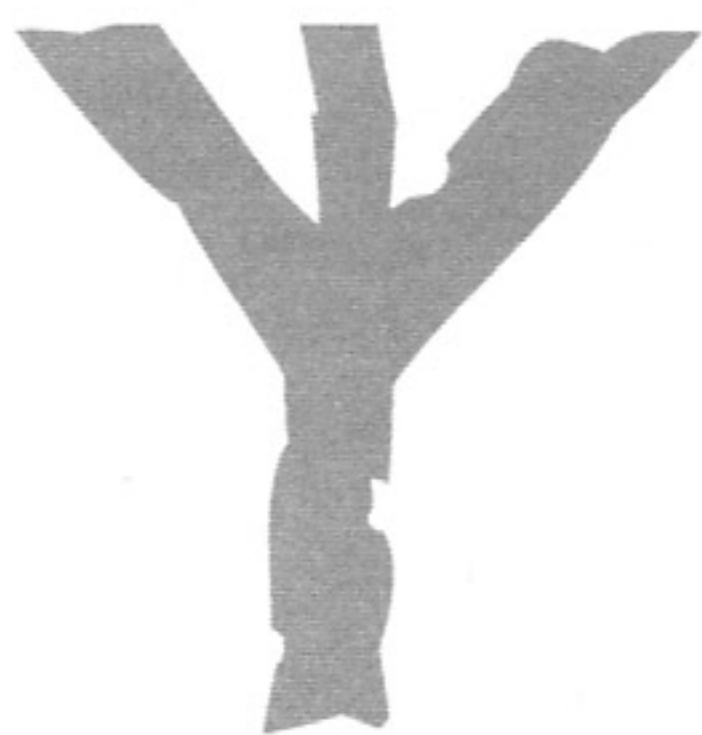
GATHER AN ARMY
OF BANDITS AND
OUTLAWS TO FIGHT
FOR FREEDOM!

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BANDITS TO FIGHT FOR FREEDOM!**

Utw
THE UNSPOKEN WORD

A product for the Hero Wars[™]
and HeroQuest[™] games

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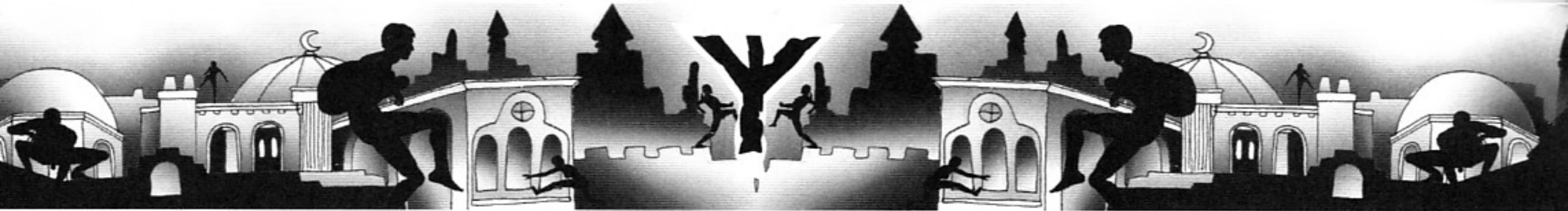
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THE UNSPOKEN WORD



Behind Lanbril's Mask

Greg Stafford

We all know the secret of Lanbril, don't we? Behind all those petty local thief cults and bandit brotherhoods, he is the shadowy Thief God, the Kin-Robber whom Orlanth banished, Grandfather Mortal's errant son. Oh really?

There is the second, deeper, secret. There is no cult of Lanbril, or at least not in the sense most Genertelans who think they know what's going on think. No hidden circle of criminal masterminds, no mighty magics of burglary and deception. To be sure, there are those who follow Lanbril, the First Thief. But they are few and largely confined to a few areas where he himself plied his trade. Indeed, it is important to remember how little the cult of Lanbril is actually worshipped. According to the normal Gloranthan magical ecology a temple generally works only when it has the minimal required number of worshippers: a mere shrine requires a hundred. Given the difficulties in maintaining and even hiding such structures and communities, significant Lanbril networks or temples are extremely rare, and quite possibly never know of or discover each other.

On the whole, though, thief cults are limited and local – indeed, many are simply herocults or guardian entities associated with established gangs: one affinity, maybe, perhaps the secret of heroforming some past criminal. The Oslir smugglers who worship Eroya the Shadow claim that she was one of Lanbril's lieutenants but she was simply an accomplished bargee and fence. The Unknowable Man followed by the Mockers of Karse has a mystique reminiscent of Lanbril, but is just a Pelasakan burglar of unusual skill. Many take Lanbril's name in vain – unusually appropriate for a thief god – but this does not mean that they really are part of a common cult.

Would two secrets be enough for one such as Lanbril? Of course not – while he has no cult as such, there is something there would could call Lanbril (although others may use other names – to the Carmanians he

is Alanabrilis the Disrupter, to Dara Happans, Veskerele the Faceless, in Kralorela, Three-Tongue Jen-Jei). Much like Donandar, Lanbril is an outsider, of no specific pantheon or culture. He represents as much as anything else a transcendent concept,

given shape, form and character. There are those who claim to worship him but never begin to understand his mysteries and there are those who have never heard of Lanbril and yet who exemplify many of his 'virtues.' Those who truly come to understand him realise that his thievery was not just a trade, as many of the petty thieves may think, nor an adventure, as Desemboth avers. Instead, it is part of the natural processes of the universe, another way whereby magic is redistributed and secrets revealed. It is not for nothing that Theft (or Unequal Exchange) is one of the Five Movements, the primal manipulations and transfers of power and form.

However, such enlightened philosopher-thieves are rare and special. Most criminals remain gangsters for the sake of it, worshipping their petty herocults without knowing or caring that there might be something bigger beyond them. In this respect, Lanbril may get collateral worship, the masked and shadowy 'great thief' of every criminal's prayer, but rarely do those who mumble his names in the alleys and rooftops understand him.

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What's in a Rune?

As befits a god of theft and deception, confusion even surrounds Lanbril's rune. To some, his rune is Y, to others, †. In fact, Lanbril has his own rune, †, which is separate from Y, which is one of the Five Movements, Theft and Unequal Exchange.



The Future of the Unspoken Word

We have an ambitious range of products in the works, from further books to CDs of images to use in play. To this end, we are making some changes...

The first is that we have decided to rationalise our books and magazines. It makes little sense to run in parallel 'books' and 'magazines' which have essentially the same size and format, especially as we plan for future issues of UW to be perfect bound, as will our books. To this end, we are going to stop producing *The Unspoken Word* as a magazine, but instead roll our planned future issues (such as *UW3 - the Far Place*) into our book series. There will still be a 'series' in that we will number them consecutively and you can subscribe to guarantee prompt access to the latest in Gloranthan wonder - see the back page for details.

What will this mean for you? Nothing, really: subscribers (see opposite) will receive the same number of books and so on. What this will mean for us is that we are not trying to run two separate but pretty much identical lines. We will also not be pretending to have a regular production schedule - after all, this is a part-time, non-profit-making venture, and we have to be realistic about what we can and cannot promise.

That said, we have high hopes for a relatively quick turnaround on our forthcoming books. Currently being worked on are *In Wintertop's Shadow: life and adventure among the Tarsh Exiles* by Ian Cooper, *Imther: Edge of Empire* by Harald Smith and Martin Crim and *The Far Place*, an anthology of articles and scenarios set in this turbulent region of Dragon Pass. All three will be out this year, while we are also working on a follow-up to the celebrated *Uz* book (which will include a poster-sized map of Dagori Inkarth) and much more.

Other products include a range of *Paper Heroes*, CDs containing high-quality colour figures by Simon Bray, Dario Corallo and Sarah Evans, to be printed out and used as stand-up figures for games, skirmishes and battles. The first three will cover the Orlanthi, Lunar Empire and the Elder Races (see p63).

And there is more, for the Unspoken Word never sleeps...

The Thieves' Arm Story Arc



Mark Galeotti & Simon Bray

When Argrath drove the Empire from Dragon Pass, one regiment of his Free Army was the Thieves' Arm. Little is known of this force, which began as a motley collection of Orlanthi outlaws and bandits but later attracted renegades and rogues from far and wide, whether Tarshite traditionalists, escaped slaves, Praxian riders or even Uz night-raiders.

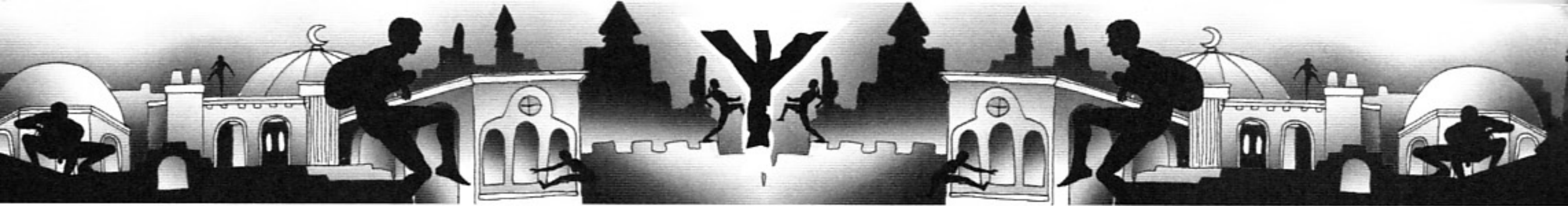
The episodes, organisations and characters in this book can, of course, be used as is or for inspiration in all sorts of ways. However, as an option they have been assembled in such a way as to provide the skeleton for a campaign, which will see the heroes bring together the kernel for the Thieves' Arm, which they can either continue to expand to play a military role in the liberation of Sartar or else use as a basis to enter the inner circles of the Rebellion and thus play a part in the adventures chronicled within the *Sartar Rising* books. Indeed, why should not Argrath himself have risen through forming the Thieves' Arm?

The premise is that the heroes begin by escorting the caravan of a Sartari merchant named Lomald Thrice-Counted from Tarsh to Runegate. The reasons will depend on the heroes and your own game - perhaps they have been forced to flee Tarsh, perhaps this is a mission to prove their credentials to the Rebellion (after all, Lomald often smuggles news and goods into Sartar for them), or maybe it is simply at the behest of clan elders, as Lomald has been a good friend of the clan.

Travelling through the **Bush Range** (pp6-7), the heroes first drive away bandits known as the **Bushwhackers** (pp8-9) then are attacked and overcome by the fearsome **Barren** (pp10-13). Sacrifice appears imminent when, in good cinematic style, there is an unexpected intrusion, a dark-clad **Assassin** (p13).

The heroes are able to save themselves, but also recover a strange, magical knife, the **Blade in the Darkness** (p14). This will be the Narrator's tool for driving forward the game and also eventually a wyter and source of great magic power for the heroes. It is the weapon of the ancient 'honest bandit' hero Erastor Nomansson, possessed of its own wry sentience.





It will seek to persuade them to revive Erastor's dream in this time of need for Sartar, bringing together the 'noble bandits' to support Kallyr's rebellion. It knows many secrets and can push the heroes towards all sorts of criminals who might be valuable allies, from the tiresome rebel **Derkel the Straight-Edged** (p19) to the famously ugly **Fyfi** (p20) and even the gang of the enlo hero **Neep Troll-Killer** (pp30-32) and the **Unbalanced** aldryami (pp33-34). Of course, there are some outlaws who are beyond recruitment or redemption, such as the cannibalistic **Banes** (pp26-29).

As the heroes make new contacts, the power of the Blade will increase. At the same time, they will attract the attention of the honourable Lunar magistrate **Ohenkash Twice-Maned** and his distinctive heroband (pp15-17). In due course, he will be forced to unleash the viciously efficient **PargAddi** Hunter troops (pp35-36) on the heroes.

However, to a large extent the heroes will at this stage still not be gathering forces as such, merely promises of support. They need a base of some kind, and the Blade encourages them to activate Erastor's old, otherworldly hide-out, the Three Oak Glade. To do this will require winning over the **Oakheart Clan** (p37), in whose tula it is based, perhaps by returning their sacred **Silver Bear** (pp40-41), or defeating bandits raiding the clan through use of the **Taming of Valind** heroquest (pp42-44).

Ultimately, activating the powers of the Grove will require successful completion of the **Sandals of Darkness** heroquest (pp45-47), after which the heroes will have a magical base to form a powerful heroband. However, before long they will be contacted by Tarshite criminals seeking their help in Furthest and offering to become the Rebellion's fifth columnists in the Empire. Thus, the heroes will be involved in the **Furthest Shadow War** (pp48-55), an epic adventure which will leave much of this gleaming city in ruins and possibly even hardened rebels besotted with the Lunar heroine JarEel, who herself has vanquished an avatar of the Chaos god Krarsht. They may also have established contacts with the Orlanthi rebel bandit gang, the **Quiet Thunder** (pp56-57), but they can now go on and **Build the Thieves' Arm** (pp58-59) and help raise the Rebellion!



Subscriptions

As detailed opposite, *The Unspoken Word* is changing. Future books in the series will be perfect-bound (except for smaller ones bundled with other products), with high-quality colour covers. As a result, the standard price will rise slightly to the same as we charged for *Uz*.

Existing subscribers will thus get even better value; but everyone can benefit from money-saving subscriptions. Take one out today for the next three books (probably *In Wintertop's Shadow*, *Imther* and *The Far Place*, but we reserve the right to amend our schedule).

Subscription Rates		
	Single Issue	3-issue Subscription
UK/Europe		
Sterling Cheque	£8	£21
Paypal	\$12	\$32
Rest of the World		
Sterling Cheque	£9	£25
Paypal	\$14	\$38

We can accept Sterling Cheques made out to 'M Galeotti & S Bray' and posted to The Unspoken Word, PO Box 278, Madeley, Crewe CW3 9YY, UK, or else PayPal transactions using a credit card (see www.PayPal.com) at the above rates sent to the account Mark@Galeotti.fsbusiness.co.uk. An increasing number of games shops and on-line retailers also stock our products.

The UW Website

The UW website has news of past, present and future products, support material (including several extra articles linked with this issue) and details of how to subscribe to our free news email service:

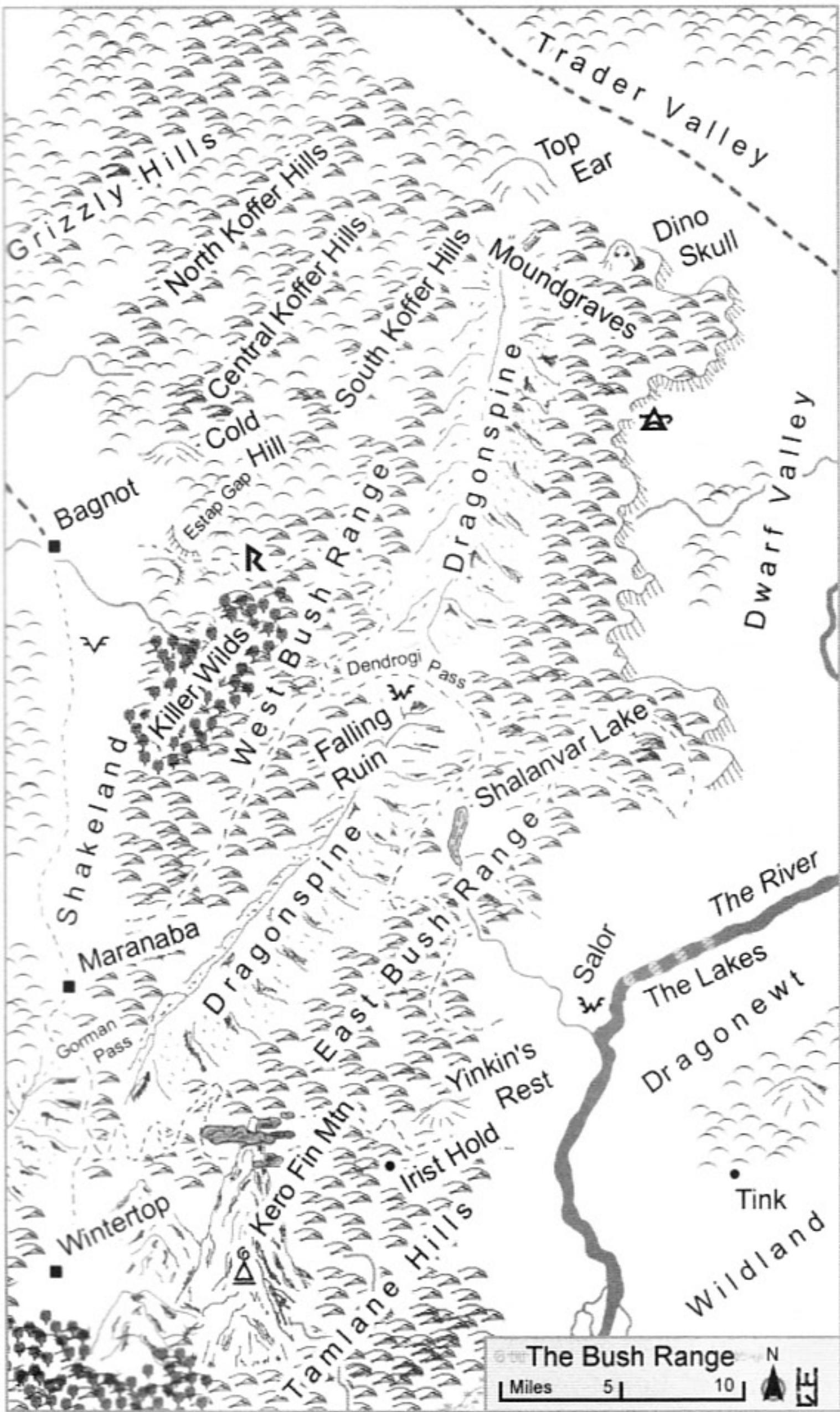
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The Bush Range

Greg Stafford

The Bush Range is the rugged hill-land on both sides of the North Dragonspine Ridge, crossed by the Dendrogi Pass. The land forms are fairly low and even, irregular steep hills with many copses and a few larger wooded areas. They run in a generally north to south direction and include many steep cliffs, overgrown valley bottoms and isolated vales where the Bush Rangers live. The land makes for poor farming and grazing, but is well suited to the bandit clans who infest it. The Bush Ranger clans of the region have no permanent loyalty to each other or outside lords and their clans are indistinguishable from the bandit gangs.



Map drawn by Wesley Quadros from Greg Stafford's original; both text and map © Issaries Inc, 2001

Clavandal Ridges. Former name for the Dragonspine. It is a word from draconic anatomy. See Dragonspine.

Dendrog, Story of. Dendrog was a Vingkotling warrior in the Storm Age. Shalanvar was the Lord Ice Dragon that was a fragment of the Frist Dragon that lived on top of frozen Shalanvar Peak. A narrow pass went past where the Vingkotlings drove their herds from Northland to Southland. Once, Shalanvar ambushed and devoured Harmenval, Dendrog's son, and entombed everything in ice. Dendrog armed and attacked the dragon with such force that it was utterly shattered and the mountain pass was widened from its disappearance. The pass has since been called the Dendrogi Pass.

Dendrog's Grave. One of the notable Moundgraves. It is of red stone different from surrounding rock, because it was made from the shards of Shalanvar. It is topped by a single plinth that bears his rune.

Dendrogi Pass. One of the Five Passes over the Dragonspine. It connects the East and West Bush Ranges and is topped by the Falling Ruins.

Dinkat's Ladder, Story of. Dinkat was a dragon lord who tried to raise a ladder of mystical power from that place to the top of the sky. Every time Dinkat achieved a new draconic insight he raised the ladder a little higher. It was visible to anyone with dragon sight or who chanted a certain prayer. But Dinkat never reached it. He got into a face-off with Dayzatar, stumbled upon his ladder, lost his integrity and fell in pieces back to the world. His ladder broke up as well, and the city was ruined when he fell on it. Parts of him and his ladder still fall into the ruins from time to time.

Dragonspine, North. The North Dragonspine mountains are a startlingly regular series of regular rises and valleys that jut abruptly from broken foothills on both sides. It is actually a part of the First Dragon's spine bones overlaid with the dirt of the ages. They are too steep for horses, mules or normal beasts of burden. The Mountain Sheep clan of the Bush Rangers knows the ways and has the allies to get over them quickly, but no one else can.

Dragonspine. Hills that mark the continental divide in Dragon Pass. They are the backbone of the First Dragon that was killed by Orlanth. Several significant notches through it are the Five Passes. The northern part is startlingly regular series of regular curves.



Estep River, Gap, Fort. Drainage gap in the West Bush Range. A trail beside the river is serviceable except during flooding season. However, it is easily blocked and ambushed. Tarshite timber forts now stand at either end to guard from bandits.

Falling Ruins. Notorious ruin on the Dragonspine Ridge, overlooking Dendrogi Pass. Site of an ancient city and fortress called Intan, it was ruined by the EWF. It was where Dinkat's Ladder was raised, and maybe also a breeding place for human/dragon hybrids, or perhaps a monastery for nonhumans, or maybe a laboratory where the metal animals were forged. The ruins have an allure that many find irresistible even from the pass far below it. The three roads that approach it cast promises to tempt anyone upon them, and within the ruins lives Elemenoria, the Great Temptress who can grant any wish, for a price.

Hyrovan, Story of. Hyrovan was a hero who was instrumental to the rise of the Koroltes Tribe in the Dawn Ages. In his saga he solves the disappearance of several key people by releasing their corpses from the frozen Oradamost Lake. A small army of previously captured bodies is released too, and is instrumental in securing victory at Darval Hill Battle.

Intan. A former city, now called Falling Ruins. It was settled in the Dawn Age by Stravuli tribesmen. It overlooks Dendrogi Pass and its strategic position has caused it to be occupied by every subsequent power trying to control Dragon Pass. However, it was cursed and has been unoccupied since the EWF. See Falling Ruins.

Killer Wilds. Impossible terrain in the West Bush Range. Several vicious trees live here, and the Bindorf Lion, the Janadar Boar and Bandar the Carnivorous Elk as well, who warn everyone to stay away from the resident Nakasa.

Malda is cautious but confident: "We travel through the Bush Ranges. This is a wild land, and people both unwelcoming and ill-favoured, but I expect no trouble..."

Maranaba. Temple of Maran, located in Shakeland.

Moundgraves. Hill region where the Dragonspine, Koffer Hills and West Bush Range all meet, south of Top

Ear. These hills are the huge grave mounds of various ancient heroes, many of whom are forgotten.

Northland. Old name for the lands north and west of the Dragonspine Mountains, first used in Vingkotling Age.

Numb Lakes. Collective name for the lakes in the East Bush Range, noted for their unnatural coldness. Shalanvar Lake is the largest, and all are said to be made from pieces of that dragon's melted parts. Several other lakes, all far from this region, are called Numb Lakes as well, and are farther parts of the shattered dragon. See: Shalanvar Lake, Oradamost Lake, Ura Lake.

Oradamost Lake. One of the Numb Lakes. The icy waters are important in the Saga of Hyrovan when it preserves the corpses of the murdered and releases them to Hedgar. It is in the

Grazelands and has some references in their tales too.

Salu Trail(s). Several bad trails wend and climb through the West Bush Range, culminating at their north end at Dendrogi Pass and south at Maranaba. The area is occupied by a score of small bandit clans and gangs.



Shalanvar Lake. Lake in the East Bush Range, noted for its coldness. It is long and narrow, and freezes off much earlier than any nearby lakes. It is part of a dragon killed by Dendrog. See: Dendrog, Story of; and Numb Lakes.

Southland. Old name for the lands south and east of the Dragonspine Mountains, first used in Vingkotling Age.

Stravuli Trails. Accessible pathways through the East Bush Range. Four trails radiate from the Dendrogi Pass to the River. They are named after two Stravuli tribesmen and two women who now oversee their ancient pathways. All are difficult and dangerous and local Bush Rangers regularly hide the trails or set traps on them.

Tentax Trail. A route from Dendrogi Pass to Estep gap. It goes up and down many tall steep hills and is subject to occupation by bandits.

Ura Lake. This holy lake is also called Enferalda's Lake. Enferalda immersed many wounded or ill in this lake to heal them. Certain diseases are destroyed by Ura Water today. The Ura Shrine nearby is dedicated to Enferalda.

Grave Robber

Simon Bray

Call it tomb raiding, dungeon delving or adventuring; it is still disturbing the ancestors, stealing grave goods and polluting societal traditions. To most, grave robbing is abhorrent, but your family have been doing it for years. Perhaps you are one of the Unwrappers from Esrolia, specialising in stealing sacred Mummies and selling them to Western sorcerers? Seeking forbidden secrets in the tombs of the EWF? Looting fresh graves in Peloria for silver? It is a dangerous trade: traps, magical warding and ancient guardians are nothing compared to the social outrage you would suffer if anyone found out!

Mundane Abilities: Climb, Conceal Item, Disarm Trap, Gauge Value, Keep Secrets, Perceive Traps, Sense Protection, Squeeze Through Narrow Space.

Typical Personality Traits: Disrespectful, Greedy, Impious, Uncouth.

Typical Relationships: To Gang (Most work in gangs), To Family (Grave Robbing is a family tradition in some areas), To Fence (Someone has to buy your goods).

Magic: Any suitable. In some areas there are small cults of Grave Robbers: the Unwrappers worship Guvurg the Earth Soul Eater, an Uz Deity (a legacy of the Shadowlands). Amongst some Orlanthi, Chernan the Seeker's subcult of Lhankor Mhy is used to justify their actions. In Kralorela, Zagatse the Bone Worm steals bones and bodies for his masters in Chern Durel.

Living Standard: Common (The robber may actually have a large stash of wealth, but rarely reveals it for fear of blowing their cover.)

Disadvantages: If unmasked, Grave Robbers are severely punished, outlawed or in some cases sacrificed to placate angry ancestors

Equipment: Hidden Stash, Ropes, Hammers, Sacks, Jemmy, Mule.



The Bushwhackers

Ian Cooper

Everyone in Dragon Pass knows who the Bushwhackers are. They are the ruthless bandits who ambush caravans crossing Exile Country - the East Bush Range, the Tamlane Hills and the Dragonspine mountains.

A caravan crossing the Dragonspine must either pay tribute to the locals or be prepared to fight. Regular caravans pay tribute to the tribal kings. If the king has enough control over the tribe's warbands, has patrols that keep the route free of outside warbands, and the master is not a fool who flaunts his wealth, then the caravan might cross 'bandit country' without trouble. The tribute a caravan must pay is agreed by custom - 'Finovan's Portion,' or a seventh of the caravan's goods. Experienced traders add this 'duty' to the cost of their wares, and carry goods with which to pay the tribute. Paying tribute earns the caravan the protection of the king who sends along a guide. Only brave or foolish caravan masters cross the pass without permission of the tribal king.

A caravan may encounter three types of warbands in the hills. One in the king's pay (usually from the clans whose tulas you are crossing), an independent band (probably from a tribal clan, but one that lives off route and will not share in the king's tribute) and enemies from outside (usually another tribe). Caravans who have paid tribute to the king should be safe from warbands in the king's pay. They are only safe from the other bandits only as long as the patrols of clans in the king's pay are effective in keeping them out.

Crossing 'bandit country' is always a stressful time for a caravan. Eyes seem to be watching from the bushes, trees, and cliff tops. Rocks and pebbles skitter down the hillsides. Were those rock falls caused by feet or by Maran shaking the earth?¹ As the caravan travels the route the caravan will hear the beating of Exile drums as hidden scouts signal the caravan's movement to watchers in the hills.

If a caravan is lucky or strong then bushwhackers may try to ask for tribute first. Scouts approach the caravan - usually a leader and his four storms, but sometimes youngsters being given the chance to prove themselves. The amount demanded varies - locals may just ask for 'Finovan's Portion' but outsiders are more desperate and may ask for much more. They may even be going through the motions, knowing that their demand is exorbitant, so as to force the caravan master to refuse and thus justify an attack intended to seize the whole caravan.

If a caravan agrees to pay tribute then the scouts tell them to leave it behind. Otherwise, the bushwhackers will try to seize it by force. The scouts themselves may try to force a small caravan to hand over the goods, but usually they retreat back into the bushes and the gullies to gather their band. Caravans that don't know better may attack the scouts; this is a mistake - when the warband shows up later they will take bloody revenge for any deaths or injuries.

¹ Create tension - ask the heroes to roll for spotting ambushers but don't show them your resistance roll.

If running the Arc, this is an early chance for the heroes to show their mettle, and perhaps get to know each other, facing or fighting off some bandits. Have the caravan shadowed and then intercepted by Arashee's warband. Heroes may be able to use relationships, oratory or bluff to avoid a confrontation...but this is a good excuse for a fight! Either Lomald cannot afford to pay 'Finovan's Portion' or else he has already taken the sensible precaution of paying tribute, but the caravan has the misfortune to run across a band of Bushwhackers from another tribe. Either way, you can use Arashee's band - but ideally the heroes should evade, deter or defeat them, so that they can move to the next, rather more dangerous part of the story.

The caravan master who refuses to pay has two choices - stand and fight or run for safety. If the caravan runs it has to move quickly. There is no telling how far away the main warband is. The raiders are Orlanthi, with movement magic, so outdistancing them can be difficult. As the caravan runs, the scouts' drums signal its route. Ambushers throw axes and javelins, or use Maran's Shaker magic to bring the rocks crashing down on them, to harass the caravan.² When these skirmishers have disrupted and panicked a caravan, the main body of the warband springs their ambush.

If a caravan stands and fights it is likely to be facing a warband of 10-50 warriors, who will rush howling and screaming from the surrounding bushes in a hail of throwing axes, arrows and clubs. This is a desperate fight - the bushwhackers always make an example of anyone refusing tribute. Defeat means thralldom or ransom, though a bushwhacker may honour a valiant defender by taking their head, scalp, or ears.

If a caravan is unlucky, then the bushwhackers attack from ambush. Outriders and scouts give a better chance of spotting this as can Issaries magic. Again the choice is usually to run or stand and fight. If the bushwhackers failed to spot the caravan's scouts, it may be possible to find another route that avoids the ambush. When the bushwhackers prepare an ambush they often send young warriors to watch nearby routes in case the caravan detects them and take a different route. If the caravan is spotted by these young warriors, the drums will soon call for the chase.

² Use simple contests of Ambush vs. Spot Ambush or similar for these harassing attacks



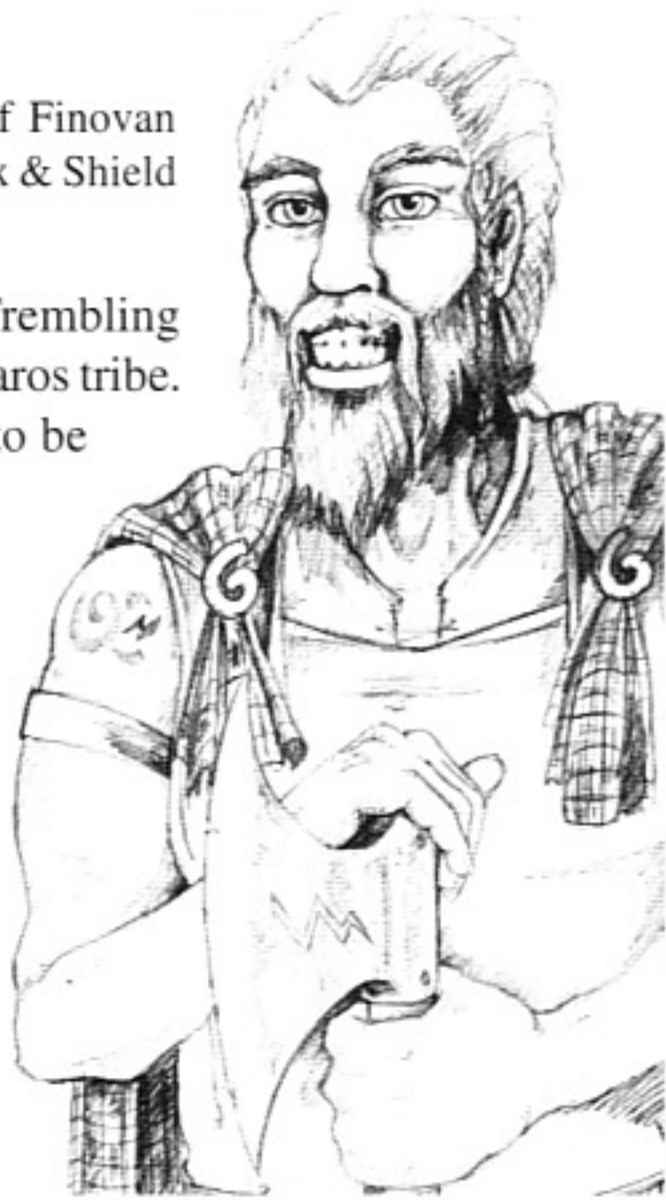
Typical Bushwhacker band

Arashee the Knife

Warband Leader 4W2, Initiate of Finovan 5W2, Local Geography 6W2, Seax & Shield 8W2.

Arashee is the leader of the Trembling Spire clan warband of the Iristaros tribe.

Too far from the Harda pass to be paid off by King Tarkil, the Trembling Spire clan sends raiding parties to test the mettle of its younger warriors. With an ugly scar at the back of his head where a Marantaros tribeswoman tried to scalp him in his youth, Arashee understands the value of caution, preferring to attack from ambush, to skirmish and to weigh the gains against the loss. To a Heortling, the warband has an unusually large number of women warriors: about one in four, most worshippers of Maran Devor. Those who have faced the Exiles before fear them more than the men for their cruelty and savagery.



Male Trembling Spire Warband Member: Warrior 1W-10W, Initiate of Orlanth (Finovan, Destor, Vingkot, Yavor, Helamakt) 17-5W

Female Trembling Spire Warband Member: Warrior 1W-10W, Initiate of Maran (Devor, Erantha Gor) 17-5W

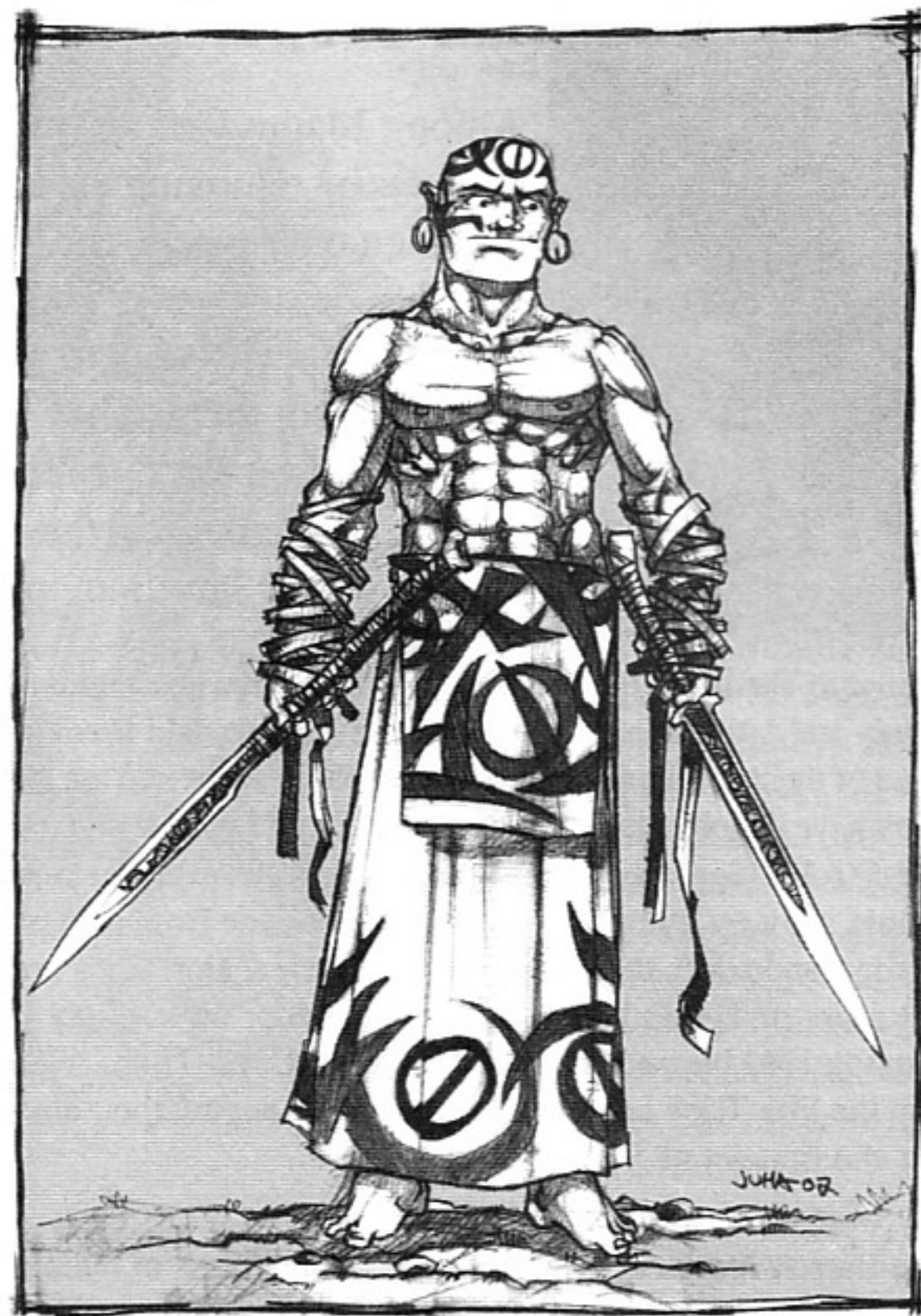
From the Tablets of Ohenkash, Judex

Big Mamma's Little Enlo

Enlo, trollkin, are among the most pathetic of creatures, but someone seems to have found a way of putting them to use. Recently there has been a spate of burglaries across the Far Place. A gang or gangs of these scrawny wretches, using their natural abilities to the fullest advantage, have been eating or squeezing their way into homes at night and stealing everything they can find. Fortunately their sense of discrimination is often poor: a golden torc might be abandoned for a half-eaten haunch of mutton, but nonetheless there is clearly someone or something organising and directing their night-time forays. The popular myth is that they are the brood of 'Big Mamma', an uz crime-lord who spawned them. Yet whoever is behind the attacks appears to take care to identify suitable targets and times. My regard for the Aldachur city watch is poor, but even they would notice a dark troll casing up the homes of the city's great and good (I use the term out of politeness). Some of my aides, who see everything in political terms, instead blame the Torkani, but I am unconvinced. This smacks of the whimsy and greed of a single soul. Someone, perhaps a human, who has rescued these miserable wretches and offered them maybe a chance of wealth, perhaps even a place to belong...

Jathalidos the Scarred Mind

Simon Bray



With his shaven head, simple robes, moon tattoos and contemplative smile, Jathalidos looks to the entire world like a Lunar Mystic. However he is no mystic: his religious practices are truly bloody and sacrificial in nature, being derived from the worship of forbidden gods from far off Chern Durel. Jathalidos is the head of a bizarre sect called the Reaping Shadows of the Bloody Sun, a dangerous group of murderous fanatics and zealots. Lunar officials are unsure of his origins, but members of the sect have been interfering with magical rituals throughout the Empire, especially those related to HonEel. Clashes between temple guards, imperial garrisons and the Reaping Shadows have always resulted in the bloody and spectacular death of the zealots, which has led to even greater disruptions to the rituals. Jathalidos and the Reaping Shadows are known to operate throughout the southern Empire, and he has many hideouts throughout the region. Monstrous guardians defend these caves and ruins. His magic and charisma seem to be capable of turning lowly farmers into loyal and deadly followers, willing to die in the name of their strange gods. As an individual he is a formidable warrior; when surrounded by his self-sacrificing bodyguards, he is nigh unbeatable.

Dara Happan Fanatic 1W2, Chern Durel Mythology 15W, Close Combat (Twin Swords Technique, Unarmed Combat, Twin Daggers) 5W2, Devotee of the Bloody Sun (Shadow 5W2, Blood 10W2, Secret: Summon Monsters from Cauldron 5W), HeroQuester 5W2, Zealot 20W, Cunning 10W, Lunar Philosophy 20, Bizarre Eastern Philosophy 10W, Meditate 15W, Perform Sacrifice 10W, Charismatic Aura 20W, Indoctrinate 16W, Torture 15W, Potent Leader 6W2, Self Control 5W, Powerfully Built 17W, Lithe 5W, Vicious 20, Orate 15W, Find Bolt Hole 17W, Well Travelled 10W, Relationship to Reaping Shadows of the Bloody Sun 5W2.

Followers: Always accompanied by ten bodyguards called the **Blooded** (Fanatical Warriors 18W, Twin Swords 14W, Die for Jathalidos 18W).

Jathalidos' Blood Monsters: These strange creatures are brewed in magical cauldrons during cannibalistic rites. They are constructs, made from whatever creatures were boiled and eaten in the cauldron. They vary in form and powers, although their power is never greater than Jathalidos' summoning magic.



The Barren

Ian Cooper

Among Maran Gor's aspects is Sorgoth Kor, the Bloody Earth, who curses the Earth's enemies by removing the land's fertility. Only Maran worshipping clans support devotees, and then only rarely, for the rituals of her terrible curse invoke Ana Gor, who demands blood to do her work. The Barren are fanatical followers of Sorgoth Kor, enemies of the Lunar Earth who seek to punish all those who side with the Empire by taking the Earth's fertility from them. They may be used as a particularly vicious non-player band, proof that in Dragon Pass, 'rebel' does not always mean hero. Within the story arc, they will capture the heroes and the caravan, and bring them to De Garavum, Great Shaker Temple, for ransom or sacrifice, until a sudden and unexpected arrival...

Feared in Tarsh and the Bush Range, the Barren descend on farmsteads and latifundia, slaughtering the farmers and invoking the curse of their goddess as their victims' blood seeps into the ground. They have struck as far away as central Sartar (against the Locaem) and Esrolia (against the Red Earth). Savage, even for a savage people, they eat human flesh, use leather made from skin of their victims, and adorn their weapons with their scalps. They hold the followers of HonEel in particular contempt and delight in destroying land blessed for the growing of Corn. Those who worship the Fire Tribe are also enemies, for avenging their atrocities was the first act of Sorgoth.

The Barren are fanatics, conducting inquisitions of village and clan leaders – they accuse those who claim that they are not strong enough to resist the Lunar occupation of being sympathisers and curse or kill them as an example. The Barren are terrorists, they do not just kill, but have struck by starting outbreaks of disease in Tarshite cities, and rendered their enemies impotent but alive to serve as a warning to others. This can drive villages to the Empire and not away from it. For this reason, even rebels against the Empire mistrust and fear them.

Near Too Far, in Tarsh, the Barren's magicians won their greatest triumph by entering into a magical contest with Lunar magicians holding HonEel Corn Rites, defeating them and using the blood spilled to curse the land instead. The Tarshite leaders of the HonEel cult responded to this act by placing a bounty on the head of any members of this band brought to one of their temples and banning the worship of Sorgoth Kor within Tarsh.

The Barren

Actual Name: The Sisterhood of the Bloody Earth.

Form: Fanatical Maran worshippers.¹

Cultural Context: Zealous enemies of the Lunar Earth. Terrorists rather than noble freedom fighters.

Ideology:

"Withhold the gift of the earth from its enemies."

"The land will take, but the land will not yield."

"Hard stone is the war face of the Earth."

"Our enemies' blood assuages the goddess's anger."

¹ The Maran cult is fully described in *Tarsh in Flames* and *Storm Tribe*.

"The weeds have overrun the garden and must wither and die."

Look & Feel: Merciless warrior women and eunuchs. Their actions are not those usually allowed: they sacrifice humans to a chthonian goddess; they eat the flesh of others; they murder with disease and curse the land with infertility.

Purpose: Avenge wrongs against the Earth; purge the Earth of the HonEel cult; drive the Lunar farmers from the Bush Range.

Reactions: Outsiders fear the Barren for their curses and use of blood sacrifice. They epitomise the excesses of the Maran cult. When outsiders talk of the horrors committed by the Exiles, it is often those committed by this band to which they refer. For the Lunar stead holders of the Bush Range, the Barren are an ever-present nightmare – raiding the farms, killing or cursing the farmers, and rendering the land useless for further cultivation.

Resources

Leader: Sorgana Landwaster

Renowned Members: Vestenbor the Butcher, Illaro the Galli.

Membership: Thirty core members with sympathisers among some Exile clans and Tarshite hill tribes who act as informers identifying clansfolk sympathetic to the Lunar Earth for reprisals.

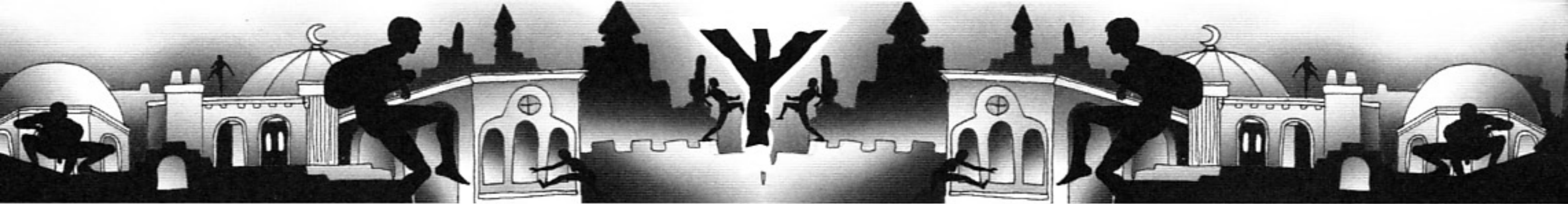
Headquarters: De Garavum, Temple of the Great Shaker.

Other Contacts: The Barren and The Old Earth School share enmity for the HonEel cult and have acted together to thwart the Lunar Earth's ambitions. However, there is a strong Ernaldan element within the Old Earth School which disapproves of the extreme methods of the Barren, suggesting, "There is another Way."

Organisation: Little. Sorgana is the matriarch of the band and the others defer to her. If she were to die, the strongest, Vestenbor, would lead in her place.

Membership Keywords

The Zealots of the Sisterhood of the Bloody Earth are the stereotypical Maran worshippers. Huge fat women, tattooed, and with teeth filed to points, adorned with trophies made of human body parts. The core followers are all devotees, and are subject to the



to the restrictions to never till the soil or herd beats, and eat raw meat. In addition, the Barren are celibate and partake in cannibalistic eating of their enemies. The sympathisers are local Maran worshippers, who have too many ties to their community to follow this band.

Zealot

Mundane Abilities: Acute Hearing, Butcher Human, Close Combat (Mace & Shield, Axe & Shield), Hide In Cover, Intimidate, Ranged Combat (Throwing Axe), Scalp Enemy, Terrorise.

Typical Personality Traits: Brave, Loyal to Leader, Zealous.

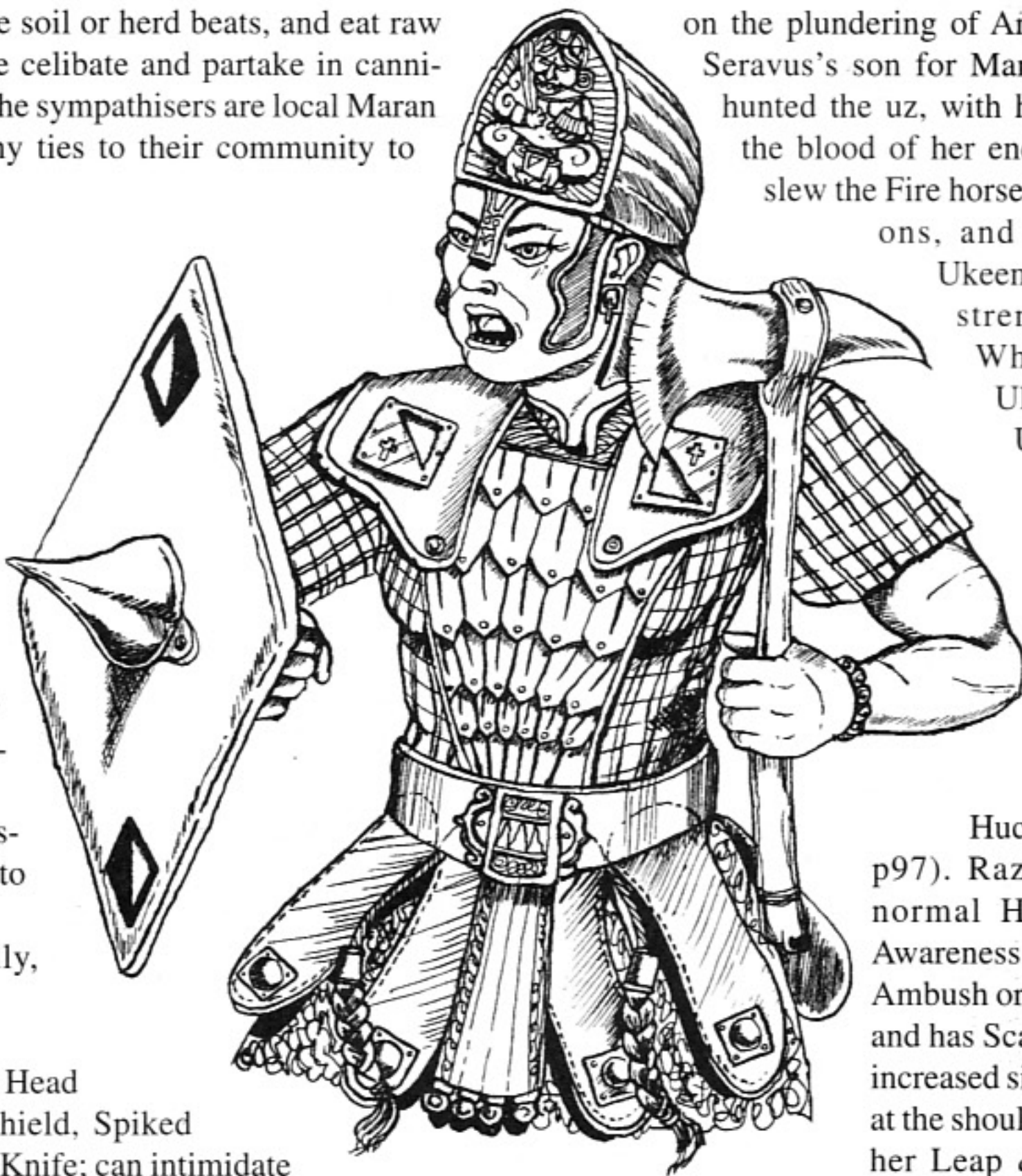
Typical Relationships: to the Sisterhood of the Bloody Earth; to the Old Earth School

Magic: Maran subcult - usually, Sorgoth Kor

Living Standard: Common

Disadvantages: Bounty on your Head

Equipment Brotard Hide and Shield, Spiked Club, Frankish Axe, Butcher Knife; can intimidate the locals into showing their support for the cause with common goods, food, and shelter.



on the plundering of Aron, Ukeena tracked down Seravus's son for Maran to kill. When Erantha hunted the uz, with her axe, Ukeena bathed in the blood of her enemies. When Sorgoth Kor slew the Fire horse, Ukeena carried her weapons, and hunted the Fire Tribe. Ukeena gave her own fertility to strengthen Sorgoth's curse. When Kuravark struck, Ukeena died of her wounds. Ukeena is sometimes called 'The Bloody Huntress', by the band's members, for she gives aid to those who hunt down their enemies to exact a bloody revenge.

Physical Manifestation

Razor is an awakened Huckak (see **Thunder Rebels** p97). Razor leads a pack of five normal Huckak. Razor uses her Awareness of 20W rather than her Set Ambush or Spot Prey 2W, is Large 5W and has Scaly Hide of ^2 reflecting an increased size about 15' (5m long), 10' at the shoulder. Her Kick is at 10W and her Leap & Bite 5W reflecting her increased cunning. Razor

communicates with a series of throaty calls and clicks, somewhat like a 175-pound bird. The Barren's leader is able to understand this communication.

Abilities: Awareness 20W (Smell Blood of Fire Tribe, Track As-sailant); Defence 20W (Watch Back); Curses 20W (Render Barren)

'Razor'

Affectionately known as 'Razor', the Barren's wyter was formally Ukeena Vor. When Maran took up her weapons to avenge the voraladarings and became Devor, Ukeena renounced sowing, weaving, and milking and raised a club too. When Maran went

Huckak

Deinonychus antirrhopus

Ages: All (rare except Green Age)

Distribution: Ralios, Southern Peloria, Maniria, Dragon Pass, Prax.

Habitat: Open Terrain, Hills

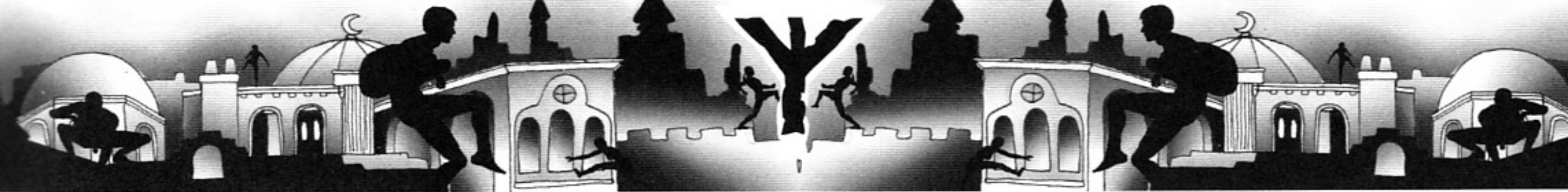
Weapons and Armour: Kick 4W ^3, Leap & Bite 1W^5, Scaly Hide ^1

Significant Abilities: Jump 1W, Run Fast 2W, Set Ambush 18, Spot Prey 18, Track by Scent 17, Large 15



The huckak are descended from the serevings, which Maran created to avenge the destruction of the dordarings by the Emperor. They are not true Quakebeasts for they do not shake the ground when they walk and are creatures of the Inner World. The distinction is a fine point for Lhankor Mhy scholars to debate in safety, away from a huckak pack. Bird-like, swift, agile, and bipedal, the huckak bears a superficial resemblance to a featherless demi-bird with a mouth packed with razor-sharp teeth. It has an elongated flexible neck and a triangular, snouted head with rows of sharp, serrated teeth. It has long bony-tail, for balance, made rigid by bony rods running along its spine. A huckak stands on two bird-like hind legs and has two smaller forelimbs. Its three-fingered hands are nimble with sharp claws. Its four toed feet, have three small claws, with the second toe a 5" (13cm) sickle-shaped claw. When running the huckak rotates its claw toe upwards and runs on the other three toes. From tip of the head to tip of the tail a fully grown huckak is about 10' (3m) long, but crouches on its two hind legs, standing about 5' tall. The name *Deinonychus* means 'Terrible Claw'. *Deinonychus* is often confused with the smaller *Velociraptor*.

Tactics: Huckak hunt in packs, attacking even very large prey animals. They have excellent vision and high intelligence for a Quakebeasts (equivalent to a bird). The sickle shaped claw is used to slash at its victims (with the huckak balancing on its other foot and tail). A huckak may also leap at its foe, striking first with both clawed feet, potentially knocking its opponent to the floor with the impact, pinning them and then finishing with its razor sharp bite (in HW terms this is a high AP bid).



Leaders

Sorgana Landwaster

A huge, fat, mound of a woman Sorgana aspires to the kind of corpulence shown by the high priestess of the Shaker temple. She tries to breakfast once a week on the flesh of her enemies. Fanatical, she is almost one-dimensional in her dedication to her campaign of terror against the Lunar Earth. She has a secret fondness for romantic tales, though she would be unlikely to reveal it publicly, and loves flirtation. Sorgana uses her Rockskin feat for a +6 defensive edge (resistance 15), and her Great Strength for a +6 offensive edge (15). She tends to attack with Close Combat, though she may use Raise Earth as a defence against enemy archers, and Ponderous Step or Open Trench against enemy magicians.

Close Combat 18W^3, Spot Ambush 15W, Warband Tactics 10W, Wage Campaign of Terror 10W2, Intimidate 14W, Easily Romanced 17, Devotee of Sorgoth Kor 5W2 (Earth Making and Quakebeast affinities 5W2, Earth Curse Rituals 10W2); two shield maidens (Zealot 2W2, Maran Devotee 20W)

Vestenbor the Butcher

Scalps hang from Vestenbor's belt and a necklace of ears around her neck. She uses a human thighbone for a club, and a cloak made from flayed human skin. Vestenbor loves to butcher her victim's bodies and then serve them in the pot. Immensely strong many suspect that she is an ogre and not a human. She hates all uncastrated men.

Butcher Human 12W, Close Combat 6W2^3, Loyal To Leader 3W, Ranged Combat (Throwing Axe) 15W, Strong 3W, Terrorise 15W, Hate Uncastrated Man 12W; Devotee of Sorgoth Kor 5W2 (Earth Making, Quakebeast, Earth Curse Rituals); one shield maiden (Zealot 18W, Maran Devotee 16W)

Illaro the Galli

Unusually a male Maran devotee, Illaro castrated himself to show his greater devotion to Maran, even before puberty. A stereotypical eunuch, Illaro is fat and shrill. He hates men, though he is envious of women and their greater closeness to the goddess. Illaro is the strongest magician and tries to provide magical support for the rest of the band. He attempts to augment 5 other members with Rockskin for a +4 defensive edge (resistance 2W), and with Great Strength for a +4 offensive edge (2W). He repeats this until he enhances the whole band. He then attacks enemy magicians or missile users with Knock Down Foe.

Close Combat 5W^3, Loyal To Leader 13W, Ranged Combat (Throwing Axe) 12W^3, Scheme 13W, Shrill Whine 10W, Hate Uncastrated Man 12W;

Devotee of Maran Gor 6W2 (Earth Making, Earth Shaker, Quakebeast); Envy Women 18

Using the Barren

Lomald seems satisfied. 'Now that those mother-cursed Bushwhackers have been sent back to their hovels, we should make good time to Runegate. I don't expect any more trouble on the way'

In general terms, the Barren can be used as one of the more dangerous and disagreeable denizens of the Bush Range and Shakelands. However, within the story arc their main function is to bring the heroes to De Garavum, the Shaker Temple.

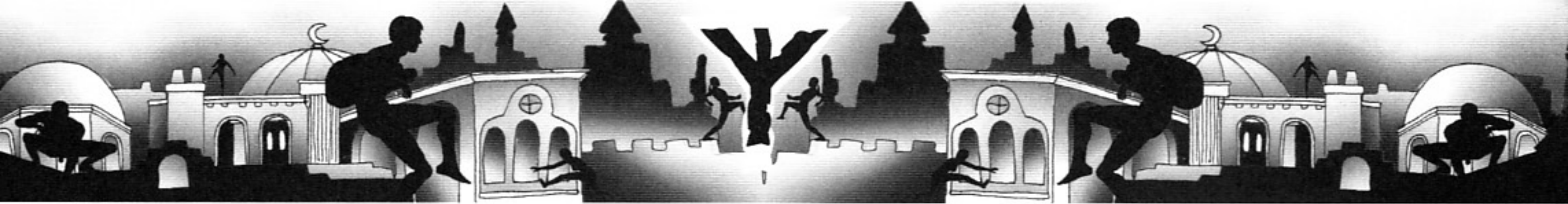
The simplest way of doing this is for them to take Lomald's caravan in an unprovoked and unexpected attack. All good action films need scenes in which the heroes suffer reverses, only to allow them to show their mettle later and justify their righteous violence, so feel free to stack the odds against them. Shamelessly boost Illaro's magic or Sorgana's Intimidation. Throw in wave upon wave of shrieking fanatics, their axes glittering with Dark Earth magics, shrivelled trophies dangling around their necks. Trenches open at their feet; Sorgana's Ponderous Step shakes the earth; Verstenbora pinions her victims with her Great Strength, hurling them into the dust, only for it to Solidify around them. If all else fails, Verstenbora manages to get to Lomald and holds her butcher's blade to his throat. Sure that he can somehow arrange ransom, he persuades the heroes to lower their weapons and submit.

Another nice way to do it is to stage the ambush, allow a combat or two and then tell the players that they *will* be subdued. Allow each to tell the story of their capture, whether heroic, farcical or entertaining, awarding hero points to those who get into the spirit of things. Perhaps Sorana might even take a shine to some swash-buckling hero? (Ritual sacrifice suddenly begins to appear a more palatable option.)

Bound by chains and magics, they are then led through the hills of the East Bush Range. Although they may not realise it, as they approach De Garavum, they enter into a realm of Earthpower. Should they try to cast magics of any other element or kind, difficulties will increase steadily.

Again, allow each hero one – vain – attempt to get free or otherwise take an active part in the story. Successes might be rewarded with snippets of information, hero points or even some edge to future action (palming a sharp stone with which to cut bonds, for example)





This may or may not end up having some later impact - ideally, it will, so that the players feel they are participants rather than mere spectators as the story unfolds.

They are brought to the barbaric splendour of De Garavum, Temple of the Great Shaker.¹ Through the outer ring of standing stones, past the grim guardians, up to the mighty stone gates. With a lowing bellow that hangs heavy in the air, the mighty Quakebeast known as The Opener of Earth, pulls the gates open. Before the heroes is a great square courtyard, lined with grotesque effigies of Maran, at the end of which is the dark, squat mass of the temple itself. Along the groaning chasm which splits the courtyard is a line of Maran priestesses, worshippers and bound commoners. Presiding over them all, as dark and squat as the temple, is the infamous priestess known as Terror of the Earth, second only to Earth Shaker herself. Even as the heroes watch in horror, hefty Maran axemaids hurl six captives screaming into the chasm. Lomald looks in horror at Sorgana. "But, my ransom? Our agreement...?"

Her sharpened teeth flash in a grin showing neither humour nor compassion. "It is a holy and auspicious day.² You may pay your ransom to the Hungry Earth."

This is, of course, the action stage of the film: there has been the necessary reverse, the atmospheric build-up and now the low-down treachery which conclusively proves that the Marani are due for some serious grief. Of course, the heroes face formidable foes. Here, at the heart of the Maran cult, Earthpower is strong. Terror of the Earth is a powerful priestess (abilities of around 1W3), and she is backed up by a horde of rabid initiates, Erantha and Babeester warriors. As if this were not enough, King Varstapoor's shade protects the courtyard, and his moaning, wailing presence (Might 1W3) will soon begin hampering the impious interlopers.

Let the heroes fight a few rounds of combat, attempt a few stratagems, but generally begin to feel that their end must be near. But then, as in all good action films, Something Happens. In this case, the *deus ex machina* is a tunnel-mouth which gapes in mid-air, behind and above Terror of the Earth. From it darts a tall man, swathed in black, oddly-glittering blades in his hands and a strange, flickering shadow at his back: an assassin. No, not just an assassin, an Assassin...

¹ See *Tarsh in Flames* - also our website as a favour to those readers neither enlightened nor fortunate enough to own a copy.

² *Earthmaker* (Clay/Disorder/Sea), *Blasted Earth* (Clay/Disorder/Fire), *Death Mace* (Clay/Disorder/Earth), *Bloody Axe* (Clay/Disorder/Dark), *Gor* (Clay/Death/Dark) and *Earthshaker* (Clay/Disorder/Storm) Days. If you can fudge the journey to have them arrive on one of these days, this is ideal, otherwise just introduce a Dark Feasting Day.

The Assassin Strikes!



It is well known among those who make it their business to know, whether to engage or defend against them, that there is a mysterious sect or cabal of sorceror-assassins, who can appear wherever they choose and bring doom with a blade, death with a cantrip. In fact, they are Chaos cultists who follow one of the 'legs' (or subcults) of Krarsht (see p54), Ishkik-Death-in-the-Night. Engaged perhaps by the Lunars, perhaps the Tarshite government, perhaps someone else, the assassin is here to kill Terror of the Earth, and has come well prepared. The Elemental Progression ring means that Darkness anyway has an advantage over the Earth, and he also bears a range of potent magics, tools and weapons to this end.



Consider this a story opportunity. The heroes should be able to free themselves and either escape in the confusion or else, by assisting in the battle to kill the Assassin, win their lives. They should also be somehow drawn to a simple, black knife the Assassin throws at one point. The character with the strongest relationship to Orlanth or Desemborth will know that it is sacred to his god and it is being misused. It is the Blade in the Darkness, a sentient weapon of the ancient 'Honest Bandit' Erastor Nomansson. It will be the plot tool to drive the story arc and in due course may also become a wyter for the heroes.

This could be used simply as an opportunity to insert a little narrative scene, but it is better to get the heroes to play it through. Make it clear just how dramatic and dangerous a combat this is.

Priestesses will raise walls, open ravines and hurl scouring sprays of rocks. The Assassin will hurl a handful of knives and throwing stars which will kill a dozen screaming axemaids at once, then slice through stone ramparts with a glittering sword cut. The Assassin is extraordinarily fit physically, magically potent, ritually enhanced and fanatical. The defenders are in the very centre of their power and every bit as fanatical. Eventually the Assassin will die (probably having to be all but dismembered) and will then crumble into acrid dust...

And suddenly, there is a voice in your head. The Blade's. It's a sharp voice, full of underhand knowledge and sly wft. Well, my boy, I'm glad to be shot of him. No idea who he was, but he certainly wasn't my type and it was almost all I could do to keep him from knowing what I was. But there's work to be done and you'll do. A throaty, knowing chuckle. Oh yes, you'll do...



The Blade in Darkness

As the heroes flee De Garavum, the Blade keeps up a steady chatter, seemingly without a voice. Nonetheless, they have cause to appreciate its presence as time and again it warns of approaching Marani searchers or else seems to befuddle passing Exile raiders. Once they are in a place of some safety and have a chance to take stock, the Blade seems almost to clear its throat and begin. I want, it says, to tell you a story. And make you an offer you can't refuse...

Erastor Nomanson was a bandit hero of Dragon Pass who lived around 75 years ago (a simple test of Heortling Custom at -2 or Orlanthi Mythology at -4 to know this - a major success means that the hero has also heard vaguely of the Blade), a follower of both Finovan and Desemborth, who began as a daring cattle raider but then began turning his skills to gathering a band of like-minded fellows to serve at King Tarkalor's side in the harrowing of Phargentes of Tarsh. He ultimately fell in battle to the axe of Rurik of the Breagalos, but his magical ally and totem, the Blade in Darkness, was apparently lost.

The Blade is a sentient daimon, a magical weapon but above all source of advice, protection and power. It will seek to convince the heroes that this is the right time to revive Erastor's dream and raise a band of bandits and outlaws to support the rebellion. It can offer magical powers, and also play on both their ambition and also their Heortling spirit. This is an adventure and a cause!

The Blade has a full knowledge of Erastor's exploits and the Dragon Pass of the mid-16th century and understands crime and criminals well. It has also picked up much of what has happened more recently in Dragon Pass while being traded and passed from one criminal to another. Up to now, it has either failed to persuade its bearers to take up Erastor's cause or else (as with the Assassin) realised that they were not the right person to hear his message and instead turned its powers to concealing its true power.

The Blade also has an uncanny knack of noticing clues which might indicate criminal activity or simply sensing the presence of potential recruits. Thus, it is entirely appropriate for it simply to say that smugglers are around, only later explaining that a barge seems unusually low in the water, suggesting that sacks of contraband have been tethered to the bottom of the hull.

It will seek to persuade the heroes to swear the first and second of Erastor's Oaths (the third waits until they form a heroband), binding them to his cause and each other. When other criminals are won over, they will swear the first Oath, committing them to coming and joining the Thieves' Arm once the heroes are ready, have a base and enough pledges of support.

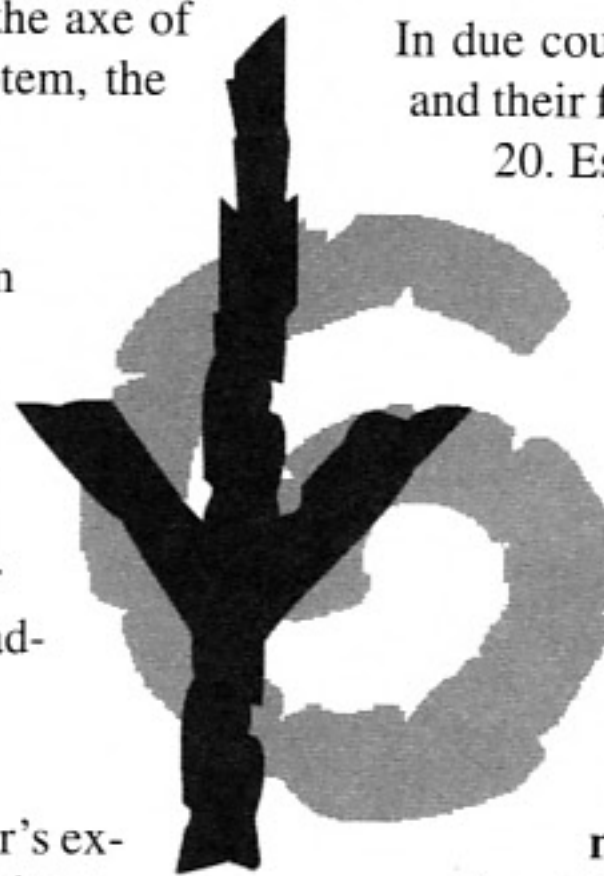
The Blade's powers will grow as the heroes increase in might and stature and as more individuals and groups take Erastor's

Oath. When the heroes first find the Blade and assuming they agree to ally themselves with it, then it will grant them each a single minor power related to covert action at a rating of 18. A hunter, for example, might acquire Unseen Vigil while a warrior gets Unexpected Attack. The Blade is not yet to be considered a guardian entity for they are not yet a proper heroband.

In due course, it will be in a position to grant all the heroes and their followers with the power of Unseen Presence at 18-20. Especially impressive actions may also win that particular hero a power relating to the Blade's second area of power, Understand Criminal Ways. A merchant, for example, might gain Outsmart Fraudster. Eventually, it will be able to bring the characters together as a formal heroband and assume a role as their wyter - the heroquest to activate the Three Oak Glade would be a good opportunity.

Its powers are **Awareness: Understand Criminal Ways, Defence: Unseen Presence and Blessing: Unite Criminals in Noble Cause**. The strength of these powers depends on the heroes and the size of their retinue, but will probably range from 20-10W. As a weapon, its Might will grow from its initial 20, up to a maximum of 10W, and although it will not grow in size, it will becoming progressively darker and heavier, until it feels more like a broadsword and cuts like one, too.

By the way, once it begins to become known that the heroes are following in Erastor's footsteps, then they will begin to become known as the 'Nomansonsons'. The heroes may balk at this, but remind them that it is an honour. Although not objecting to their also using another name for their band - indeed, eventually it will expect that the name the Thieves' Arm be adopted - the Blade certainly would not be impressed by any especially outspoken attempts to avoid being given this mighty name!





Ohenkash Twice-Maned

Mark Galeotti

The voice from within the lion-faced helm sounded unyielding and inhuman: “I am the Law.” Then one mailed hand opened the helm, revealing a weathered face dominated by piercing blue eyes. “But the Law must balance justice with mercy, what is written with what is right. Let us talk.”

Ohenkash is a Judex, a Lunar magistrate. Although from the Dara Happan heartlands, and still a worshipper of Durbadath the lion-god, he is a sincere convert to the Lunar Way, and now has a roving commission in Dragon Pass. In the context of the story arc, he and his hero band will be the heroes’ recurring nemesis. However, he will also provide – in good Lunar fashion – a degree of balance. While he is their enemy, he will also emerge as wise, just, honest, honourable and brave.

Ohenkash Twice-Maned

Lunar Magistrate 1L3, Devotee of Durbadath the Lawman 20L (Affinities: Combat, Justice, Radiance), Honourable 15L, Fearless 10L, Wise 18L, Understand Others’ Ways 15L

For all his upright and noble bearing, Ohenkash was born to Dara Happan peasant stock near Wirrup. When the local lord began ignoring Yelm’s sacred precepts and turn from Just Despot into Lawless Tyrant, Ohenkash turned to the herocult of Durbadath the Upholder (see p18). He gathered a band of like-minded young men and harried the tyrant until they forced him to summon aid from Wirrup, claiming peasant uprisings. Ohenkash infiltrated the relieving force’s camp and confronted their commander with the truth. Yelm’s divine light burst onto the evil lord, blinding and blasting him, and on the spot Ohenkash renounced the Upholder – for his work was done – and instead devoted himself to Durbadath the Lawman.

For the past two decades he has been a magistrate first of solar and then of lunar law, his unyielding Antirian concepts of right and wrong slowly being tempered with Sedenya’s mercy. His justice, wisdom and pride won him both friends and enemies within the Imperial government. He is routinely sent to the troubled border regions of the Empire both out of choice and also thanks to the machinations of his enemies. Surrounded by his personal retinue and some formidable allies, he is now in Dragon Pass, at once a roving agent of Lunar power and a vigilant upholder of its laws.

Grim Heresis

Carmanian Swordsman 15L2, Devotee of Humakt (Carmanian; Affinities: Battle, Combat, Death)) 20L, Shadow Dancer Magic 5L, Grim 1L, Honest 20L, Loyal to Ohenkash 1L2

Grim Heresis is a wanderer who finally found a home. Soldier, sell-sword, public executioner, his was a life lived on the edge of Humakt’s dark blade, until he met Ohenkash and he found some meaning to the death which had been his life. He is still a grim and deadly figure, his scarred face hidden within his black helmet, the dull-looking but sharp-edge sword he calls Interlocutor rarely out of his hand. From his adventures he learned magics of the Shadow Dancers, including the Step Through Shadows and



Cut the Dark feats. But now he is committed to Ohenkash and through him, to enforcing a new kind of justice which is merciful when it can be, harsh when it must. Once, he had no conscience beyond his faith; then he turned to Ohenkash to be his conscience; now he is at last finding his own.



The Carmanian form of Humakt will appear in a future volume of the *Imperial Lunar Handbook* series. In the mean time, treat the relevant affinities as **Battle** (Charge of Death, Demoralise Foe, Heedless of Loss, Penetrate Line), **Combat** (Enchant Iron ritual, Execution Strike, Great Blow, Killing Frenzy, Shout of Pain, Strike of Doom) and **Death** (Fearless of Death, Hew Spirit, Stop Resurrection, Unhealing Wound). The brutally simple Secret is **Kill**.

Feel free to tweak Heresis' stats to make him a formidable challenge to the heroes - he *should* be too tough for them to face in direct combat, so by all means give him an extra mastery here or there, tougher followers or allow him to learn that Secret - it would not be fair to use it directly on the heroes, maybe, but just think of their reaction when they see him kill some bandit lowlife with a dark stare. If you choose to play up the Darth Vader parallels, that's up to you - but remember that while Heresis is a killer, he is a killer beginning to come to terms, under the influence of Ohenkash, with a conscience, as will emerge later.

Harrulf Rowdrilsson

Sairdic Dog Shaman 15^W2, Dog Spirits 8^W2 (Sample spirits include Scary Bark, Tongue of Slobber, Chase and Chase, Sniff Out Prey, Smell Fear, Mark Turf), Tracker 20^W, Unorthodox 5^W, Loyal 5^W

Ohenkash earned himself his most dangerous enemy, the Provincial Overseer, when he was called on to adjudicate the case of a disputed legacy in Mammoth Gate. The authorities had hoped to appropriate large tracts of valuable land in south-western Vanch for slave farms. All they needed was an unstable and erratic dog shaman declared Blessed by Rufelza¹ and it would be theirs. Ohenkash found the young Harrulf unpredictable, unorthodox and unkempt - but not insane. Harrulf, unwilling to become a landowner, decreed that his new lands were henceforth a wild dog preserve and Ohenkash gained both a subtle foe in Appius Luxus and an unsubtle ally in Harrulf Rowdrilsson. Harrulf has encountered the Pelandan tracker Buthur Dognose before, but their traditions are very different, and they - metaphorically - sniffed each other's backsides before going their separate ways, each convinced that *they* were the true dog-hunter.

¹ In other words insane - a holy state which bestows upon the fortunate individual blessed by Rufelza a whole array of benefits, including the need not to scabble around earning a living or, indeed, owning money or property.



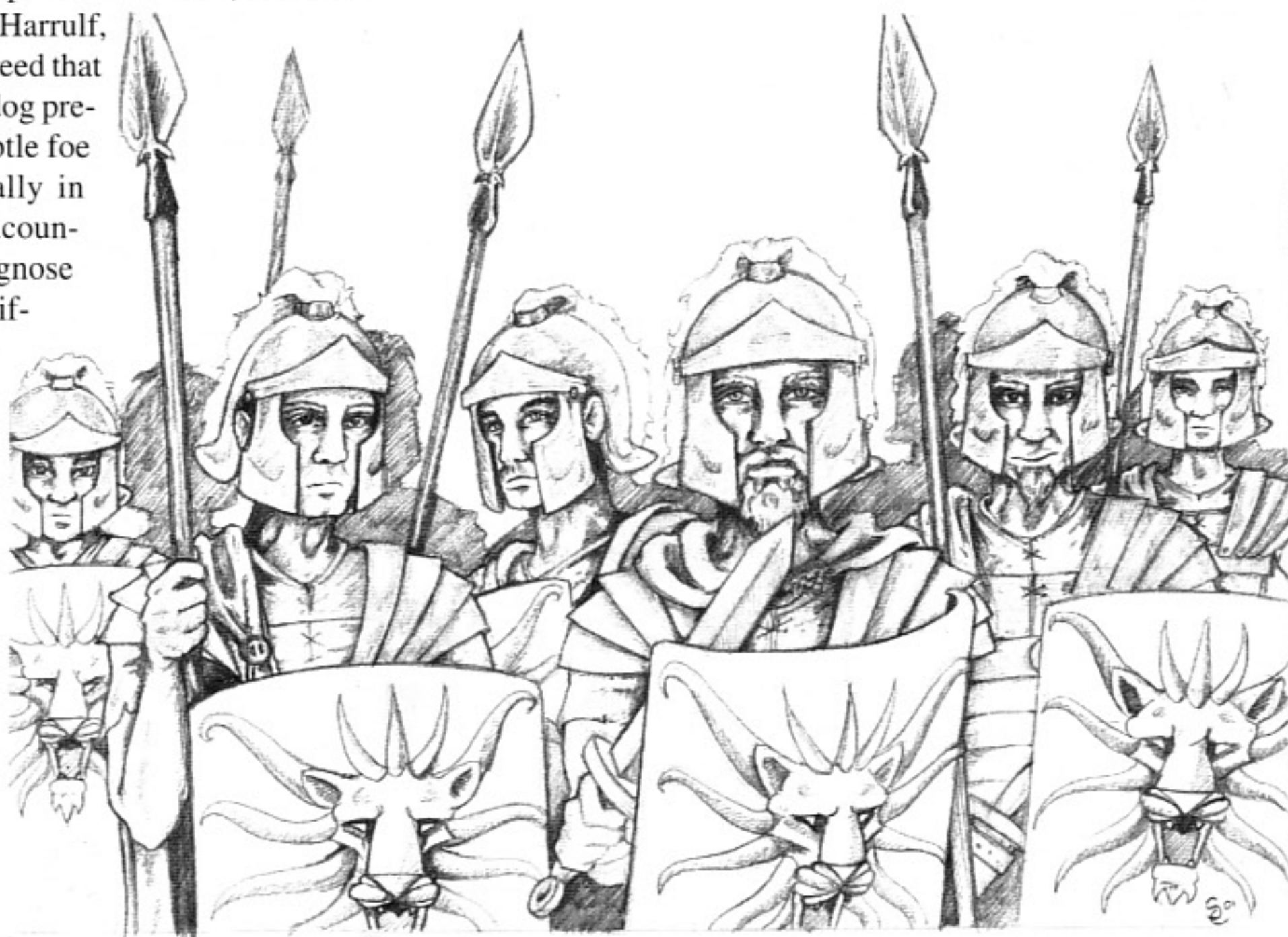
Harrulf is motivated primarily by his personal devotion to Ohenkash - he believes in what he is doing, but more because of gut senses of what is right and wrong rather than any great respect for the law as such. He has been known to turn a blind eye to petty theft or poaching by hungry commoners, for example, while he is a fury and a terror to the rich and powerful who abuse their offices. Just when people think they can understand him, though, he then hares off chasing a cat or stretches out in the courtyard for a nap in the sun. Heresis finds him completely unfathomable, but Ohenkash just smiles fondly and says "a dog who is totally trained is no longer a dog." Heresis usually then goes off in disgust for some more sword practice.

The Lion Guard

Soldier 15^W, Initiate of Durbadath 5^W, Loyal to Ohenkash 10^W, Disciplined 1^W

Ohenkash is paid a generous stipend, little of which he uses for himself, and has also been awarded lands in Vonlath and Saird. Most he spends on maintaining this personal retinue, some sixty strong. He treats them well and they respond with fierce loyalty. They wear bronze armour and helmets and wield leaf-bladed spears, straight and curved swords and weighted darts, and can fight both mounted and on foot.

They are organised in five Prides of twelve, and generally at least one Pride will accompany Ohenkash, another Heresis and a third Harrulf. The unit guardian entity, its lares, is the Empyrean Lion Banner, which grants them the powers of Heal Quickly During Daylight 20, Stand Firm 5^W and Spot Trickery 20.





Using Ohenkash

Ohenkash is another driver of the arc, a nemesis the heroes should feel is always snapping at their heels. When they visit a village, they should hear that Ohenkash has just been there, looking for them. If the heroes seem complacent, have the villagers recount how he unmasked a coven of Malia-worshippers and killed them all single-handedly before his men could arrive. If the heroes are beginning to think he's a devil, villagers will grudgingly admit that he was honest for a Lunar and knew and re-pected their ways. If they are



beginning to regard him as a bit too nice to be a threat, have them greeted by the sight of ten crucified rebels at the next cross-roads, each with a notice hung around their neck with their sentence of death, neatly surmounted by Ohenkash's lion-head seal. In short, build him up. They may never even meet him in person, but well before they do, they should have come to the conclusion that he is powerful, honourable, dangerous and complex.

His allies and troops are there to provide intermediary challenges. When the game is getting slow, perhaps someone will spot a dozen Lion Guard riding towards the heroes' hiding place. Use them to introduce unexpected problems. They send a messenger to an ally? That messenger is intercepted and arrested by Heresis. They set off on a mission? They return to find that some strange dog-shaman has visited their tula, quite literally sniffing around for them. He relieved himself on trees all around the village, and all the village alynxes are now jumpy and hostile and the elders are worried that the clan will suffer if the Lunars find out that they are harbouring rebels.

Cut scenes can often be interesting ways to end or start a session of play. At first, narrate it from a 'camera angle' in which the protagonists are not visible, perhaps just presences looking at a map of Dragon Pass, as one says that this new criminal band must be found, alerting the players that there is *someone* out there looking for them. In due course, the cut secenes can revel more of just who this nemesis is.

In short, Ohenkash and his warband have two main roles: to provide a personal challenge but also to introduce some ambiguity – they are the enemy and on the heroes' tracks, but they also prove that the Lunars are not two-dimensional baddies.

Takenegi's Miscreants

Mark Galeotti

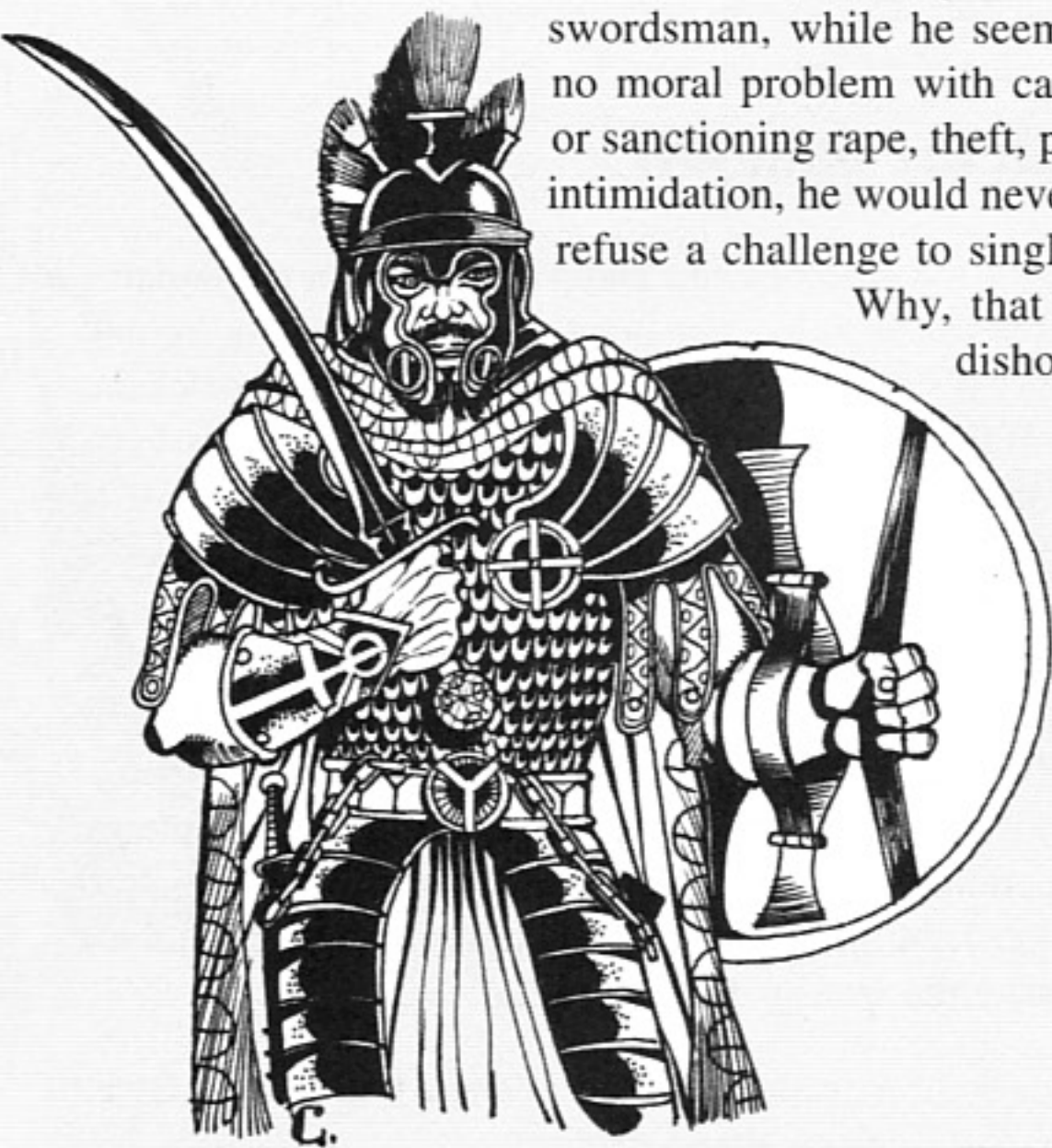
The intrusion of Empire into Dragon Pass has brought with it heroines and healers, philanthropists and philosophers. However, it has also brought the infamous and unethical, the corrupt, the criminal and the downright degenerate. Given its powers, it is perhaps inevitable that the army harbours many of these less-than-shining examples of Lunar civilisation.

There is, for example, **Wagonmaster Pachissi EmPerexos**, the Holayan quartermaster of the Red Dragoons. Amiably corrupt in all things, he will sell (almost) anything to (almost) anyone and has thus in his time provided weapons even to the Rebellion. However, in order to ensure that he can bribe his superiors, he is also keen to acquire a range of valuable curios, from suitable Sartari girls as slaves ("feisty and fresh, ready to be tamed by a real man") to Dragon Pass grave goods ("from barbarian cursing-urns to Youf artefacts, I can get the lot"). One of his best sources is...

Garanvig Lackherring – after all, while every soldier believes in his right to loot as a perk of the trade, he considers it his vocation. Garanvig is a burly Durnvoking, a brutal and brutish man with a voice like a bull being gelded and an axe so nicked and worn it looks more like a saw. No one would think to question his fighting spirit, but he is actually a base coward and a bully. His idea of a good day's work is being commanded to mount a punitive expedition. As his men battle to local fyrd, he ransacks the steads and stores, torching what he cannot take. Such is his wealth that he has even taken to lending money to impoverished officers eager to live well and run with the fast set, making himself both rich and indispensable to such men as...

Imdurin of Memkoth, who regards himself as a noble and honourable Yanafali. However, his aristocratic upbringing allows for no real belief that the shaggy-pelted, blue-painted primitives of Sartar are anything but semi-feral beasts. Given his high birth and civilising mission, it is only right and proper that he and his entourage of high-born and high-spirited bravos take the best of what poor fruits Sartar can offer. For sport, they may ride down hunters and travellers, hunt whatever they choose or defile sacred places. Of course, Imdurin is – in his own eyes – a gentleman and a

swordsman, while he seemingly has no moral problem with carrying out or sanctioning rape, theft, pillage and intimidation, he would never stoop to refuse a challenge to single combat. Why, that would be dishonourable!





When Bandits are Heroes

Mark Galeotti

Gods can wield unimaginable power, but they are also limited by their very strengths and bound by the Great Compromise. Their spirits of reprisals, their curses and their omens may help enforce their laws and dictates, but ultimately almost all regard it as the duty of their worshippers themselves to restore the rightness when wrongs have been committed.

If every time an Orlanthi broke his laws of kinship and hospitality, he was promptly speared by lightning, where would be the opportunity for the rest of his clan to affirm their own nobility by challenging, banishing or reforming him? Should he deny his people the redemptive opportunity he himself took when he carried out the Lightbringers Quest? Even Yelm understands that obedience is only a virtue when it is possible to disobey.

Of course, deities seek to encourage and reinforce their worshippers to bring the idolatrous and the criminal to justice, just as, when times are right, mortals will seek and venerate appropriate cults and heroes who can help them right what has gone wrong. Often, the wrong-doers are outsiders or those at the fringes of society: the Gagarthi outlaw or the stickpicker who, consumed with jealousy, turns Malia against his clan.

But what happens when the wrong-doer is a figure of power and authority? In such circumstances, the age-old dilemma arises: is respect for authority and the letter of the law more important than piety and respect for the spirit of the law? One outcome is the rise of very specific forms of worship, of gods and heroes who were rebels in name but driven by justice - and who either recede from view when that wrong is righted, or assume a new role.

Of course, this is relatively straightforward for people such as the Orlanthi, with their strong traditions of independence, but what of the solars? Then the figure that arises is even more clearly a rebel in the name of the old order, one who wants to return affairs to the way they were. The best-known and most popular is

Durbadath the Upholder

Durbadath the Lion God of Dara Happa is at once a nobleman's god and a commoner's. He has been elevated into the Yelmic aristocracy, yet his roots and his passions are often those of the lowest Dara Happan mud-grubber: more than once he has been described as the 'peasant's nobleman.' One reflection of this tension is his role as Upholder and Righter, the Bearer of the Three Keys and One Bright Blade, responsible for rousing the normally quiescent commonfolk into ousting or exposing a master who is no longer the Just Despot who applies Yelm's laws with undeviating firmness. So, the corrupt, the impious, the free-thinking and the egalitarian can expect some suitable figure to emerge to unite the commonry against them. Equally important, the hero must also return the peasants to their natural state of tranquil acceptance once the wrongs have been righted.

Upholder Affinity (Assert Moral Case, Challenge Deviationist, Humble Backslider, Kill Apostate, Rouse Peasant)

Durbadath the Upholder, who rebukes lords who fail to uphold Yelm's laws. Of course, there are other, less clear-cut figures, who uphold Yelm's decrees by unpleasant, even criminal means. Offenkoff the Hook Hag comes for women who don't know their place with her sharp scarring hook and her gurning rag. Then there is the bizarre Buseri herocult of Perkor-and-Kerpor, the learned scholar and his illiterate, scroll-burning brother, devoted to destroying knowledge mortals should not possess. The best comparison, though, is the rather more understated urban cult of Lem Urbifrest, the Good Citizen Who Said No, who reluctantly leads an underground resistance against a bad local government but hopes to petition the emperor for justice.

Hengkot KingBane

Hero Cult of Orlanth



The tales of Hengkot vary surprisingly from time to time, from tula to tula. Many clans claim him as their own, but the stories, while all sharing the same basic outline, never seem to have the same times, names and places. Perhaps that is the whole point: Hengkot is a hero in the shadows, ready to come to the assistance of any Heortlings when a king or chief abuses his power and thus Orlanth's trust. Some have even described him as 'Orlanth's spirit of retribution against bad kings'. His cult tends to lie dormant for generations, remembered only in tales and on occasional holy days, before becoming the focus for resistance to such a tyrant. Once the natural Orlanthi order has been returned, though, the cult will again return to the fringes.

The story is that Hengkot was an Orlanthi warrior, never the strongest, nor the cleverest, but burning with an inner passion for Justice. When a Bad King came to power, the strong thanes were wooed with honeyed words, the clever ones cowed with drawn blades, but Hengkot would not bow his head as he saw laws flouted, steads burned and families torn apart. He was seized, and for seven days and seven nights beaten, cajoled and condemned, but he would not submit. Then some carls secretly freed him and fled with him into the wilderness. He set about rebellion with a will, gathering an army from all those who would fight the Bad King, men and women, cottars, carls and thanes. In the towns and villages, his agents spread rumours of risings, in the countryside his guerrilla bands killed the Bad King's tax collectors and returned their ill-gotten gains to the people.

Eventually, as it became increasingly clear that the rebels had Orlanth on their side, the Bad King was forced to challenge Hengkot to single combat to show his worthiness to rule.




The Bad King was, of course, Bad, and so he cheated, imbuing his sword with dark magics of secret murder. Though Hengkot fought with passion and fury, the Bad King's flickering black blade finally cut him, and he was mortally wounded.

With his final breath, though, Hengkot delivered a stirring and noble rebuke to the Bad King for his impious and unjust acts, which turned his thanes against him. As one they rushed the despot and cut him to pieces, before joining in a song of mourning for the noble Hengkot, in which they pledged never to let another ruler lead them from Orlanth's path.

Entry Requirements: Be a worshipper of Orlanth.

Mundane Abilities: Guerrilla Tactics, Judge Character, Mythology of Hengkot, Rabble-Rouser, Withstand Punishment.

Affinity:  **Rebel** (Cut Through Justification, Grand Gesture, Noble Defiance, Smite Usurper, Stirring Speeches)

Secret: **Noble Death** (On dying, can carry out one automatically successful feat)

Worshippers: Varies tremendously, depending on the political situation. Under normal circumstances, Hengkot is regarded as

an important and stirring figure within Orlanthi mythology, but worshipped only by a few dissatisfied souls. Adherents will begin to flock to the cult, though, when a chief or king usurps or abuses power and the usual checks and balances do not seem to be working. As such, the imposition of Tarkalor on the throne of Sartar has done much to revive the cult.

Derkel the Straight-Edged

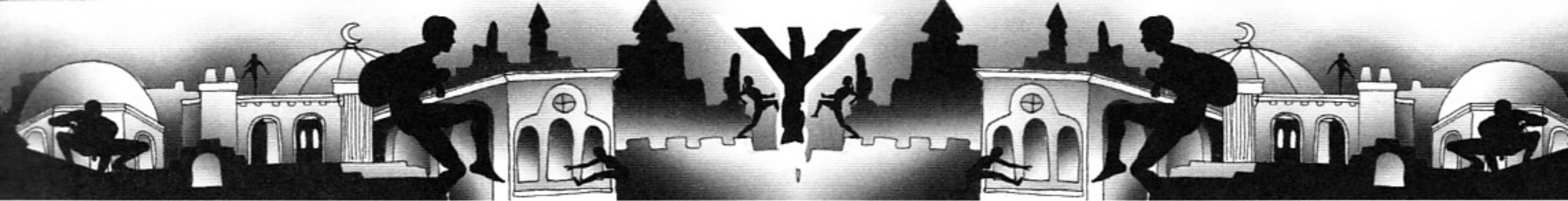
Derkel turns to you. His evident sincerity is enough to silence the cynics and take the girls' breaths away. The wind playfully ruffles his hair and darts inside his cloak, as the setting sun gleams from his shiny, even teeth. 'What ho and well-met, my comrades! Together we shall be the terror of Shepelkirt's spawn. Come, let us drink and sing and share our meagre fare and dream of a free Sartar.' Suddenly life under the unyielding Lunar sandal doesn't sound quite so bad...

Devotee of Hengkot Adventurous (Combat, Movement, Rebel) 8 \square , Heortling Warrior 5 \square , Ambush Tactics 20, Inspiring 15 \square , Painfully Earnest 15 \square , Sharp-as-the-Wind (magic sword) 8 \square .

He's a hero, no mistaking that: tall, handsome, muscular, clear gaze, wide smile, shiny eyes, enchanted blade, the lot. To many he is a trouble-maker, an innocent in a complex world. At a time when many chiefs and merchants are trying to find some way of co-existing with their Lunar occupiers, even seeing what they can get out of the situation, Derkel sees things in very simple terms. Right and Wrong, with nothing in between. The Empire has a price on his head (wealth 20 \square) since he and his followers began ambushing tax collectors, but his equally uncompromising stance has also earned him the enmity of several clan chiefs and tribal kings. He would make an inspiring and undoubtedly sincere ally for the heroes, but not necessarily the most subtle or diplomatic.

His warband, Derkel's Bondkeepers, is a dozen strong, a mix of young hotheads, a couple of refugees from Tarsh who preferred to flee to Dragon Pass rather than abandon their worship of Orlanth and a growing number of dispossessed durulz. As a result of his willingness to take in durulz, the Imperials have taken to deriding him as 'Duckle's Pondkeepers.' Much to Derkel's chagrin, the name appears to be sticking even with fellow Heortlings.





Low Lives, Street Scum & Murderers

Simon Bray

In the dark, fetid corners of Glorantha, amongst the back alleys of its glittering cities and in the shadows of its great temples dwell the rotten underbelly of society. Ne'er-dowells, miscreants and murders, who prey upon society, depriving it of wealth, freedom and life. What follows is an overview of some rather nasty individuals who may be encountered as enemies or even dubious allies.

The Blood Water Gang

This is a strange quasi-cult, based upon the whisperings of the ancient criminal entity Sajorlith, the Blood Water Bandit. Once a being associated with the seas, it became corrupted and greedy, drowning its foes, and then hoarding their treasures. During history the Jrusteli contacted Sajorlith and bound it into a great red-wood statue, and used its magic to strengthen their fleets. The statue was eventually smashed, and its pieces scattered. Many were lost, but each of the Blood Water Gang members carries a fragment of Sajorlith, which gives them unique powers and places them in direct contact with the being. The Blood Water Bandits, driven by Sajorlith, travel Glorantha seeking its pieces and will do anything to collect them. Their eventual aim is to recreate the entity, gaining great powers; some have already found ways to worship Sajorlith, gaining magic related to banditry and water. Several large pieces of Sajorlith have been found including The Right Eye, The Left Claw, The Mind and The Tooth. Others are known to exist, some in the hands of enemies, others in wild and deadly places. To fund their explorations, the Blood Water Gang are great criminal entrepreneurs and have their fingers in many pies. Here are some of the gang's most notable members.

Fyfi 'The Fish' Munro

Once just another Pavis lowlife, Fyfi is now a powerful and wealthy gangster, her wealth accrued through river piracy and smuggling, with gangs operating along the Zola Fel, Creek-Stream and Oslir. Renowned as the 'Ugliest Girl in the World', Fyfi's face is a mass of contorted scars, tattoos and broken teeth. She has great power over men, whom she intimidates with the slightest stare and the loyalty of her gang members is remarkable. Fyfi has a cunning mind, a strong sense of business and a ruthless expectation that she will get what she desires. A great sea traveller, she is extending her business into Teshnos and Wenelia. She has a strange magical affinity with water and conducts her business near coasts and rivers, for a quick getaway. Fyfi is always escorted by her



River Bandit

River bandits are a common danger along all central Genertela's great rivers, whether crocodile-worshipping fanatics along the Oslir, rebels seeking Imperial plunder on the Creek-Stream River or Durulz bandits along the Zola Fel. Typically they use ambush, attacking lightly-defended boats en masse to overwhelm the crew and steal the cargo. Others may operate alone, seeking to dupe wealthy travellers into their confidence before making their move.

Mundane Abilities: Boating, Gauge Value, Hide in Cover, Row Silently, Set Ambush, Swim Quietly, (River) Knowledge, Ranged Combat (One Skill) or Close Combat (One Skill)

Typical Personality Traits: Bloodthirsty, Reckless.

Typical Relationships: To Bandit Leader, To Fence (Almost all River Bandits have someone who buys the goods they steal.)

Magic: Any suitable river god or spirit (eg, Varnaga along the Oslir)

Living Standard: Common (Most wealth is frittered away)

Disadvantages: Wanted Criminal

Equipment: Boat, appropriate weapons, leather helmet, shield, trap, hideout.

lover-bodyguard, Idg Da Boot, a huge and potent Great Troll. She carries the Mind of Blood Water, a brain-shaped piece of wood which aids her leadership and gives her great criminal insight.

Zola Fel Riverwoman 20, Gangster 20W, Organise Crime 10W, Intimidate Men 10W, Brutal 5W, Determined 2W, Suspicious 20, Blood Waters (Animistic) Practice 3W (Sample spirits: Muddy Thinking 5W, Wash Away Magic 20, Mighty Swimmer 10W), Swim 1W2, Hold Breath 15W2, Close Combat (Trident & Net, Brawl) 15W, Criminal Insight 5W2.

Follower: Idj Da Boot 20W (Great Troll Bodyguard 7W2, Smash Things 3W2)

Kwakira the Keet

A strange and storm-tossed traveller from far Vithela, Kwakira is a keet, driven west when an Andrin invasion force destroyed his monastery. He and the last few survivors of the Order of Dah-Fi the Transformationalist, arrived in Corflu, where they were immediately arrested as Durulz Bandits. Quickly discovering Genertelan bigotry, Kwakira slew his lunar captors and fled. Through trials and tribulations, he was thrown into the clutches of the Pavis underworld. A potent magician, wielding a bizarre watery sorcery, he soon attracted the attention of the Blood Water Gang, who employed him as 'magical muscle'. His most potent magic can transform him into other creatures. Kwakira has meticulously sought out and rescued the members of his former order, killing their captors. His soul has recently become infected with a piece of the Blood Water, becoming a 'Splinter', a position much akin to a 'Made Man'. Kwakira feels strongly for duck outlaws, whom he invites into his revenue.

Vithelan Keet 20, Wizard of the Order of Dah-Fi 15W, Sailing 10W, Navigation 5W, Close Combat (Kukri, Spear Stick) 1W



Grimoires: *Book of Mutable Transformations* 20W (Sample Spells - Shapechange Self into Other Form, Translate Foreign Words), *Toh-li's Book of Pillows and Blades* 15W (Sample Spells - Conceal Blade in Air, Long-Lasting Carnal Pleasure), *Contemplations of the Tides* 15W (Sample Spells - Open Seas Ritual, Drive Away Sea Beast)

Plot Hooks

- The Blood Waters crime network could be called upon by the Sartar Rebellion to smuggle illegal plate armour and weapons. However, their price is the theft of a piece of the Blood Water Bandit from a local Lunar nobleman.
- The heroes find a strange piece of magical wood, which gives them the power to see in darkness. It is of course a piece of Sajorlith and the Blood Waters will do anything to get it back.
- The heroes could be members of the gang, hunting the world for the missing pieces of Sajorlith. However, in addition to local authorities, they must contend with a rival gang from Esrolia, the Mother's Boys. They believe that Sajorlith is in fact the Year King Husband of their villainous goddess and seek to control its powers.

Falco's Mob

Falco Tempesta

The youngest son of 'Old Man Tempesta,' one of the most powerful and influential of the Furthest crime bosses, Falco initially tried to resist the intoxicating lifestyle of his family. He enrolled in the Provincial University and studied Military Thaumaturgy, seeking eventually to join the imperial Magical College. However, Falco soon began to indulge in the excesses that only the privileged can afford. As a result, he was soon stripped of military rank and returned into his family's welcoming embrace.

Driven by hedonism and lust, Falco relished the underworld more than he dared admit. He surrounded himself with the corrupt, the perverted and

"It's the Ninth Bell, and I haven't killed anyone yet..."

the depraved and quickly joined the constant internal family battle to gain his father's approval and favour. A potent magician, devoted to Yavor, Falco formed about himself the Lightning Thieves, who used magic, murder and blackmail to make their mark amongst the gangs of the Furthest underworld. Falco resides in his own wing of the Tempesta Mansion, his rooms are covered with eccentric artworks, and drug paraphernalia litter the tables. He uses his wealth to pay for prostitutes and erotic pleasures, and there is nothing Falco enjoys more than a good Porthomekan cigar, for which he has many (often distasteful or illegal) uses. Falco also enjoys being seen in public: he knows his family's power and even the Tonsrieve is powerless to arrest him, and so Falco and his boys can be seen strutting their stuff around the plazas, jeering actors in theatres and fielding his gladiators in the arena.

Tarshite Crimelord 10W, Wealthy 1W2, Devotee of Yavor Thunderous 20W, Hedonistic 20W, Debauched 15W, Brutal 1W, Politics 5W, Combat Thaumaturgy 10W, Close Combat (Scimitar & Shield, Dagger, Brawling) 1W.

Keridor Two-Swords

Keridor is one of Falco's closest associates, always at his side. A former Imperial officer, Falco went fled the army when he was asked to lead his soldiers against Far Point Orlanthi. A strong tactician, Keridor know this would be suicide: indeed, the place where the battle was fought is now called the Ghost Gors. Keridor is still haunted by his dead comrades (and increasingly talks to the shades of the recently departed). To hide the pain he drowns himself in any drink and narcotics available, and has now a comprehensive knowledge of Furthest's drug dealers. Keridor is a vicious and competent warrior, however many mock his short stature, to their error. His assaults are particularly bloody when he cannot get his daily fix.

Holayan Thug 10W, (Ex) Soldier 13W, Devotee of the Lightning Thief (Lightning Thief, Deceit) 10W, Troubled by Past 10W, Drug Addict 5W, Violent 10W, Close Combat (Twin Swords Technique, Brawling) 5W2, Streetwise 5W, Small 12.

Tong Liu Wang

Tong is one of the few Kralori to be encountered in Tarsh. He has roamed the world beyond the Dragon Empire, believing himself polluted. Once a warrior of the Black Leopard School, Tong was seduced and corrupted by his lord's concubine. Blinded in one eye and beaten for his adultery, Tong fled his homeland, pursued by temptation and covetousness. As a devotee of Udam Bagor, the Final Judge, Tong convinced himself that he was cursed - casting himself into a personal hell, he wandered without hope or cause, through Pent and then the Lunar Empire. Finally settling amongst the detritus of Furthest, he was offered a position in Falco Tempesta's household. The atrocities that Tong witnessed within those walls confirmed his belief that he was in hell and so he served Falco with his life, his Dragon Sword-Spear and his Leaping Thunder Kick. Lately Tong has taken to removing a small piece of his opponents' skin, with which he is making a cloak, to 'shroud myself against the sins I have created and to liberate my soul!' Tong, it would seem, is quite mad.

Kralori Martial Artist 10W, Black Leopard Martial Arts 12W2 (Kicks, Strikes, Leaping Strikes, Leopard Cry), Sword-Spear 15W, Devotee of Udam Bagur, Archexarch of Hell (Judgement, Punishment, Hell) 5W, Cause Pain 20, Speak in Perplexing Mottoes 18, Superstitious 20

Plot Hooks

- Falco is always on the look out for lackeys and petty villains to do a job for him. He is wealthy and makes an excellent patron for thieves, vagabonds and murderers.
- Falco's gang has begun to use extortion and a protection racket against the citizens of your tallhouse, but they have chosen the wrong people, and you fight back (the local city guards are useless, all being in Falco's pay.)
- Keridor's military past could either haunt or redeem him. What if he were a former commander or comrade in arms? He still finds himself drawn to the Ghost Gors - some day he knows he must return, to lay old ghosts. He may well have need of local guides, or else might be encountered while on his way to this reckoning with his past and make a useful friend or dangerous enemy for the future.
- Falco has no political affiliation. He could be a useful, if dangerous contact for Sartari rebels in Tarsh. He knows who can be bribed, has ears and eyes on the street, can get hold of all sorts of goods and services - but what would he demand in return?



Independents

These unsavoury individuals can be encountered anywhere, but favour cities, preying upon the weak. They have their own kind of code of honour, although it may not be one the heroes recognise.

Mordacus – The Sewer Shaman

Silently skulking in darkness, with his witch brews and thieving hands sits this stinking spirit-talker. He speaks to the Ancient Ones, those that lived in the lands before the city of Furthest was made; he nourishes the Forgotten Children, spirits of those orphans that don't survive the winter. He serves the Sewer Ghosts and Alley Spirits, and knows all the dark ways of the underworld. With leering, jealous eyes he glares upon the towers of the nobility and seeks their downfall, stirring up the crowds to capture the passion spirits their anger and fear summons. Unseen in the moonlight, his vicious Six-Rip Staff carves at the bodies of the rich to feed his powerful spirit allies: Groaner, Muncher and Drool, while in the shadows sobs Child of Rage, his fetch and the prodigy of his tormented soul.

Tarshite Spirit-Talker 15^W, Furdacus of the Alleys Practice 10^W, Beggar 10^W, Thievery 5^W, Incite Mob 20, Concoct Witch Brew 20, Distil Poison 20, Disgusting 20, Hateful 1^W, Deranged 2^W, Find Bolthole 20, Navigate Sewers 5^W, Travel Safely in Sewer 1^W, Close Combat 3^W (Knife, Staff)

His Fetishes include Eat Anything (3x) 20, Horrid Stench (3x) 10^W, Speak with Rats (3x) 20, Surge of Filth (3x) 5^W, Murderous Blade 20. His Integrated Spirits are Unseen in Moonlight 10^W, See in Dark 5^W.

Groaner – 10^W (Tingle Spine, Horrid Moan, Mysterious Bang)

Muncher - 5^W (Hideous Slurping, Bone Chomping, Thunderous Belch)

Drool – 1^W (Disgusting Slime, Foul Smell, Slippery Surface)



Plot Hooks

↑ You seek something in the catacombs beneath the city, the only person that knows the way is the insane old shaman Mordacus. Can you trust the back stabber?

↑ The plebeians are revolting; someone is stirring up the common folk against their noble masters. It is of course the hateful Mordacus, summoning Mob Spirits.

↑ Your town is beset with plagues of huge, ravening rats. Your wyter is unable to control them, the usual rituals of cleansing have failed. For some reason, a powerful Ratking Spirit has taken offense with your town. Your spirit-talkers try in vain to fight and then talk to it, reeling back, their inner ears deafened by angry chittering. You need someone who can talk to rat spirits and, more to the point, with whom they are prepared to talk. Sadly, Mordacus seems the only choice.

Dujas the Murderer

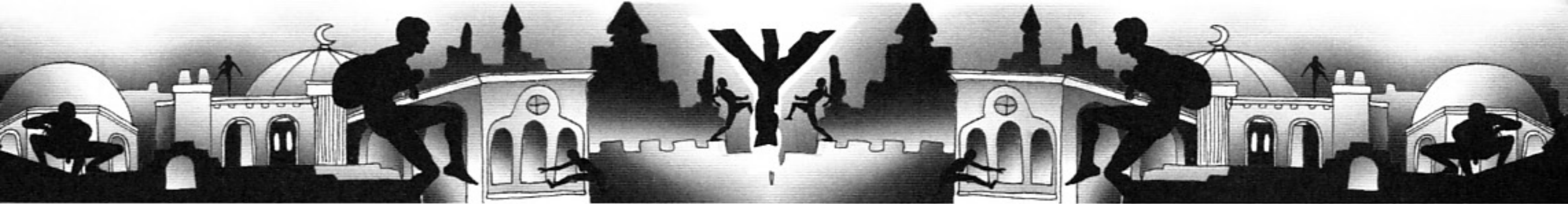
An unassuming holy man, dressed in a black habit and bearing the tools of his trade, alms bowl, prayer beads and sleeping mat. It is easy to mistake Dujas for a peaceful man, his gentle humming is alluring and irritating in the same stroke, his gaze is without guilt or guile, and it is easy to overlook those broad, strong hands and the wrists as thick as a man's neck. Yet for those who are chosen by Fjordaur, the Lord of Murder, that humming will be the last thing they hear as Dujas breaks their necks. Dujas is devoted to Murder; he does not do it for profit, only religious duty. As a transient and otherwise pleasant fellow, his murderous actions are rarely discovered until he has left a community. However, by a strange twist Dujas is protected by Imperial Law, both through religious tolerance legislation and his position as a full Imperial Citizen. He maintains a list of all those that he has killed and registers them correctly as sacrificial victims. Occasionally, Dujas may be convinced to murder a selected target, but only if he believes that the candidate is worthy to be embraced by his god.

Devotee of Fjordaur (Arms of Death, Voice of the Deceiver, Moon Dancer) 20^W, Appear Unassuming 10^W, Holy Man 5^W, Know Legal Rights 5^W, Hum Comforting Tune 10^W, Dedicated 20^W, Strong Hands 1^W2, Close Combat 10^W2 (Strangle Silently).

Plot Hooks

↑ You invite a friendly holy man into your household. The next morning he is gone, and your parents are dead. If you are an Imperial citizen, do you try to take vengeance (and find yourself his next victim) or take legal action (and face being labelled prejudiced!). If you are an Orlanthi, will the satisfaction of revenge outweigh the risks to the rest of your family if you kill an Imperial Citizen? And why did he kill them? Did your parents have a dark and guilty secret?


↑ You need someone dead and Dujas would be a fine executioner. But he can be neither bought nor suborned. How can you make it his religious duty to carry out your killing?



Lonergan the Pretender

Ian Thomson

Lonergan is a characterful wanderer of Dragon Pass. He can be introduced as a passing figure, or the heroes could choose to try and bring him into their heroband, perhaps as a scout or spy.

 Lonergan is by turns an entertainer, a guide, a thief and a wanderer.

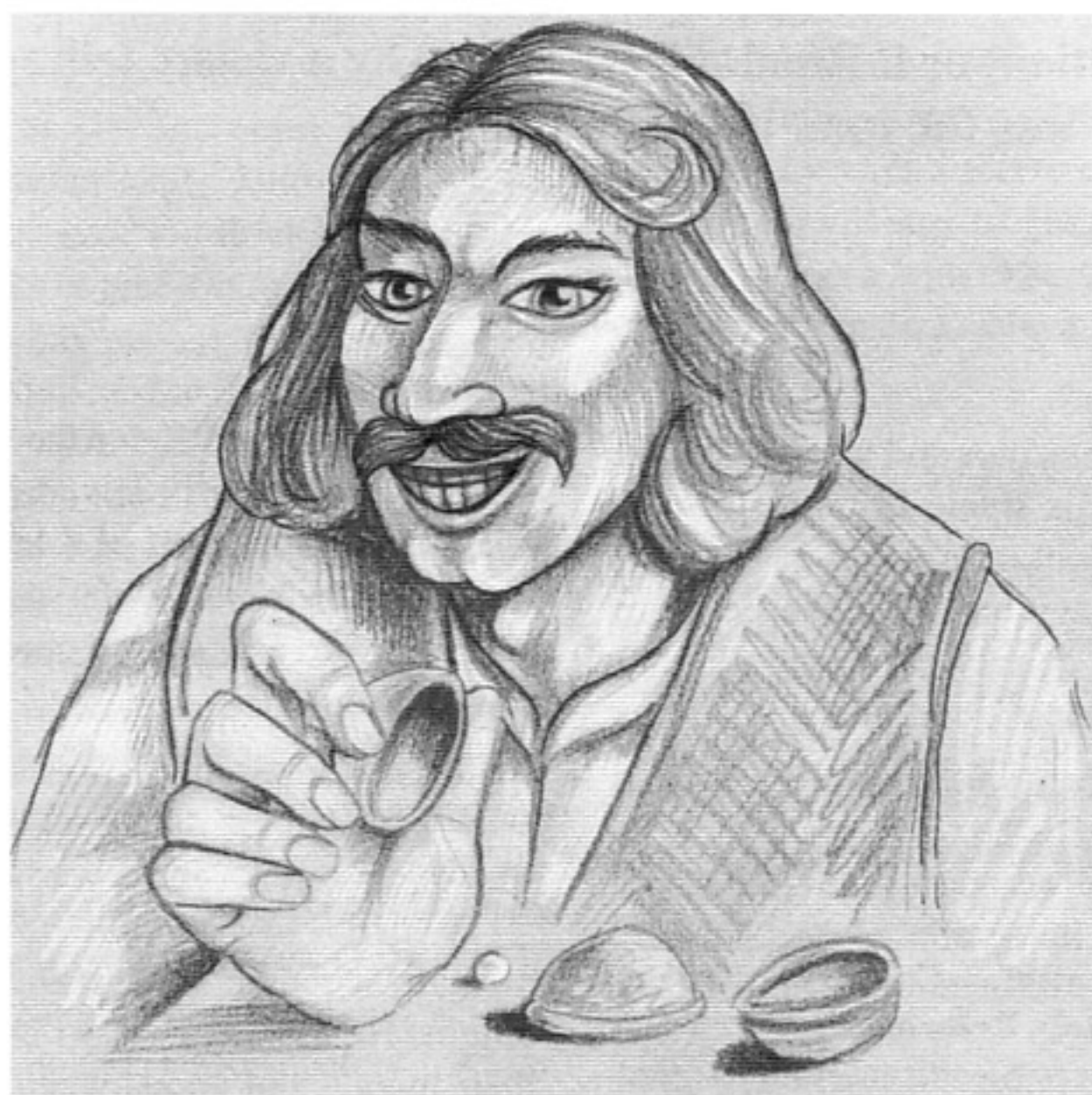
Around 30, of medium height and build, he has brown shoulder length hair, and sports a fine moustache. Dressed as a nondescript traveller, whilst clearly poor he is not apparently a beggar. He has a lute (which, by-the-by, conceals a trigger-activated blade), carries a sturdy spear and shield and appears well-fed and in good spirits.

Alongside his performances, Lonergan is skilled at such tricks as the “which skullbush pod is the pebble under” con, and the “whilst you watch this distracting bauble, my other hand is relieving you of your money pouch” manoeuvre. Despite such criminal tendencies, Lonergan is a cheery fellow with his own code, and will not rob or betray any companions of the road.

His abilities can be a great boon to those able to overlook his nefarious nature. On the trail, he takes a few coppers here and there, and happily receives payment in food and lodging for an evening’s storytelling or his full fire-breathing, juggling, wise-cracking routine. In large settlements, Lonergan comes into his element, lining his secret pockets with trinkets and loose change.

After leaving Pavis (smuggled out by Griselda for a hefty fee), he wandered Sartar, making as easy a living as possible. He was part of Dashwood’s Travelling Troupe for a while, leaving amicably after they realised his career path did not match their own. (Fortunately Donandari tend to stick together and Lonergan never tricked, or stole from, them.)

He recently resigned as ‘native guide’ from a Sartar branch of the Ibex Moon Travel Agency. Whilst initially this sinecure seemed a way of getting easy money from the Lunars whilst learning their language and customs, eventually it resulted in far too many unexpected dangers. Lonergan (known as ‘Coram the Tracker’) fleeced considerable funds from a Lunar official who was using the Ibex Moon to guide him about Sartar incognito. Lonergan felt it best to move on before his group returned to base and unfortunate questions were raised.



Lonergan is likely to be encountered on the road, now a totally different person from the Ibex Moon guide. (His ability to alter his voice and posture is incredible, and his knowledge of natural dyes and clothing alteration techniques equally impressive.) Lonergan’s only common identifiers are his profession as a Donandari entertainer (which he sometimes hides) and his fondness for the Pavic reed pipes (he is never without a set). When first met, he poses as a friendly Heortling bard, eager to travel the world “in search of adventure with such fine fellows as yourselves.” This might even be the truth, just not the whole truth.

Mercario Devotee 6W, Street Entertainer 8W, Actor 18W, Charming 9W, Irreverent 3W. Affinities: Street Entertainer 18W, Entertaining Music 4W (improvised feats include Evoke Emotions [-4], Make Small Objects Move [-3], Make Person Dance [-6]), Entrancement 9W (improvised feats include Create Trust [-4], Eastern Isles Rope Trick [-7], Throw Voice [-3], Vocal Sound Effects [-3]). The last two affinities are from Donandar. The cult of Mercario is in *The Masks of Pavis* and also is also scheduled to appear in the forthcoming *HeroQuest* rules.

From the Tablets of Ohenkash, Judex

...On Puppeteers

I have listened to Orlanthi bagpipes without flinching. I have spied on the rites of the Hydra Hills Deliveranti without fleeing. I have listened patiently to local Sartari bush-lawyers argue endless cases over odal land without resorting to fustigation. But I still think the Puppeteer Troupe perhaps the most disturbing sight I have yet seen in Dragon Pass. To be sure, the common folk flock to be diverted by their flummery, but not only is their subtle propaganda seditious but I cannot help but feel that wherever they stop, there will be an upsurge in petty lawlessness and disorder. Some may be harmless, high jinks and petty thievery. But when peasants feel they can mock a Lunar Judex and call him ‘pussy-face’ or even a troop of Imperial soldiers appear with their nether-windings tied to their spears like pennants, then there is a lack of respect for the majesty of Law and Empire which I find distressing. But none of this is as tormenting as the Puppeteers’ most recent additions, Chongo and Tar the Mimes. Mimes. I still haven’t found them explicitly proscribed in the *Sixteen Hundred and Forty Seven Sinful Vocations*, but I continue to look...



Three from the West

Jamie 'Trosky' Revell

Bandits and outlaws are hardly unique to the Orlanthi or Lunars. Even the sorcerous nations of the far West have their outcasts and rogues. These three draw on work for the forthcoming Loskalmi books from Issaries, Inc. Two could even be introduced into the story arc, if Gordrick wandered far in search of plunder (or fleeing retribution) or if Rhodni were visited by a vision, telling him there was injustice at work in Dragon Pass and he was the man to combat it...

Sir Laciban

Robber Knight of Retrint

A tall, dark-haired man with long mustachios and wearing bronze plate armour reinforced with iron. His shield bears his coat of arms: a black serpent on a white background beneath a red wavy bar. At home he wears dark coloured courtly clothing, although not in perfect condition or the very latest fashion.



Loskalmi, Cavalry Knight, Hrestoli Reformed Church (lay member). Significant Abilities: Cad-dish 3W, Crossbow 20, Devilishly Handsome 15, Devise Fiendish Plan 15, Envious 16, Escape in Nick of Time 1W, Intimidate 14, Joust 19, Lance 5W, Lecherous 12, Loskalmi Etiquette 12, Ride Horse 8W, Sword & Shield Fighting 9W, Villainous Laugh 1W

Magic: Normally none. He does at least pay lip service to the Church, so he would be able to gain the benefits of the basic blessings in The Abiding Book, should anyone wish to give him any.

Followers: Niviss Treedman (manservant 1W, obsequious 17) is Sir Laciban's squire and flunky, and is often employed to do his dirty work.

Retrint, the region of the Janube valley immediately upriver of Sog City, has no unified government, yet is under the military protection of Sog (it serves as an agricultural hinterland for the vast urban population) so that it has not been conquered by a foreign power since the Imperial Age. This lack of organised authority allows bandits and other unsavoury types to flourish – so long as they do not extend their activities to riverine piracy and threaten Sog's main trade routes. Nonetheless, most inhabitants are law abiding, and local village rulers make at least some attempt to uphold law and order. Sir Laciban is one of the exceptions for which the region is so famous.

Sir Laciban's father was the manorial lord for a medium-sized village. His mother, however, was merely a pretty peasant girl who happened to catch the lord's eye. As soon as she became pregnant, she was abandoned and left to bring her son up as a member of the peasant class. He grew up with a hatred of the hereditary rulers of Retrint, and of knights in general, while at

the same time lusting for the wealth and status denied him by his illegitimate birth. His anger and envy only grew stronger when his mother died of a fever when he was thirteen, while the lord's legitimate wife survived because her husband was able to afford a wizard to cure her condition.

At the age of twenty, Laciban murdered his father and burnt down the manor house, escaping with a bundle of loot and a warhorse. Since then he has managed to build up his possessions, seize control of a small, isolated, village and has taken to calling himself a knight. He ventures out to challenge passers-by and to seize their money and goods when he can. He is no fool, however, and avoids challenging large and well-armed parties, although woe betide the solitary knight who falls into one of his ambushes. Sir Laciban remains jealous of all those richer than himself and is perpetually scheming to increase his wealth by unscrupulous means. He pays no attention to the rules of chivalry, and often supplements his simple highway robbery with kidnapping for ransom and other villainous activities. He is always seeking new means of furthering his ambitions, and so can be encountered by heroes in circumstances which call for a clever and sophisticated villain.

Mwuhahahahahaha!

Gordrick Plodson

Brigand Leader

A tall, thin man with battered features, long straggly blond hair, blue eyes and week-old stubble. He wears a leather jack, heavy cloth trews and a dented bronze kettle helmet.

Loskalmi, Crossbowman, Former Farmer. Significant Abilities: Dis-illusioned 15, Forage 15, Intimidate 18, Keen-Eyed 5W, Know Nevs Highlands 16, Look Authoritative 19, Quick Reflexes 20, Set Ambush 18, Scrounge 20, Shepherd 16, Shortbow 14, Sword & Shield Combat 1W, Tactics 12, Unscrupulous 16

Magic: None. As a recusant from the Church, Gordrick is unable to gain any benefit from even the most basic of blessings.



Followers: A band of six surly brigands (Spear Combat 17, Intimidate 13) who are even more pitiful than he is. Most are farmer-class fugitives from justice.

Gordrick Plodson was born in the sheep-farming country of Agria, the northwestern province of Loskalm. His parents were farmers and he was expected to continue in the family profession but, like many young men, he was fired with enthusiasm when he first saw the Army recruiters making their patriotic pitch at the local country fair. He resolved to gain promotion to the soldier class, the better to serve his country and enjoy exciting adventures in foreign lands. Unfortunately, being somewhat lazy, Gordrick was not a particularly able farmer, and skill at a farmer class profession was a prerequisite for military enlistment.

At first, the Army sensibly rejected Gordrick. As the threat from the Kingdom of War grew, however, some recruiting officers became more desperate. On his third attempt to enlist, Gordrick was recruited to the Nevs provincial Army, which has traditionally drawn recruits from neighbouring provinces to make up for its low population.

Exposed to the daily drill and exercise of the Army, Gordrick soon decided it was no better than life on the farm. Only now he also had to follow the orders of knights and sergeants who all seemed to have things better than he did. Unfortunately for him, while the Army had been eager for new recruits, it could afford a much stricter attitude when it came to promotion, and Gordrick remained as a common crossbowman. There was little he could do about his situation – until his unit went up against the Kingdom of War. Seeing the few friends he had die around him, and terrified of the bloodthirsty ferocity of his foes, Gordrick fled the battlefield and went into hiding. With no useful skills except the fighting he had learned in the Army, he has managed to bully a few similarly desperate souls into following him, stealing sheep and cattle from farms and waylaying travellers. Merely a lawless brigand and cutthroat, he has long ago abandoned all of the ideals that most Loskalmi hold dear.

Sir Rhodni the Green and his Merry Men

A slim man of medium height, with long curly brown hair, blue eyes and a constant cheery grin. He usually dresses in a green tunic and tights, although he has a full suit of bronze plate armour stashed away at his camp.

Loskalmi, Military Officer (Scout), St Talor (liturgist), Former Woodsman and Military Scout. Significant Abilities: Acrobatics 15, Archery 11W, Camouflage 8W, Climb Trees 16, Cheerful 3W, Compose Cheery Song 14, Forest Survival 4W, Inspire Followers 18, Know Local Forest 7W, Laugh At Own Jokes 20, Make Unfunny Joke 19, Move Silently 3W, Play Lute 6, Ride Horse 16, Scout Terrain 6W, Set Traps 20, Singing 16, Sword Fighting 10W, Travel Without Trace 1W

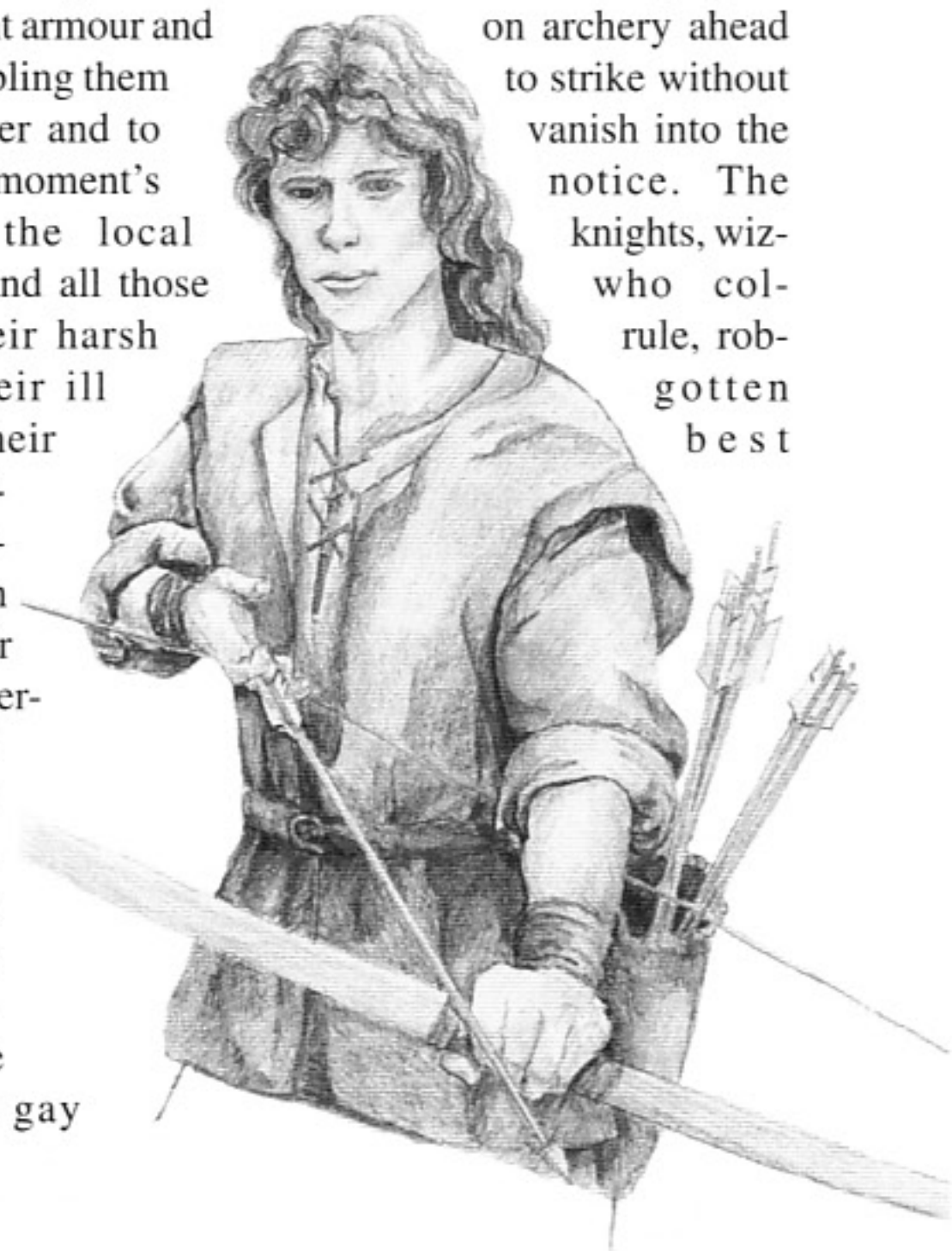
Magic: Access to all the appropriate blessings in The Abiding Book and The Life of St Talor.

Followers: The Merry Men, most of whom are followers of St Talor (camouflage 3W, woodsman 19, laugh at Rhodni's jokes 15), but who also include a Kyrian (military healer 3W, forest survival 19), a renegade Rathori (strong 3W, quarterstaff fighting 19) and an Antamagi rabble-rousing anarchist (Sorcerer 3W, Antamagi magic 19).

Sir Rhodni is a Loskalmi knight raised from the ranks. The child of farmer class parents in the wilds of Ease province, he joined the army as a scout, the military profession where he could put his forestry skills to the best use. When he was eventually knighted, he opted to remain in his unit as an officer, rather than join the cavalry. His easy-going but chivalrous nature led him to join the knightly Order of St Talor, the Laughing Warrior. Sir Rhodni fulfils Talor's rules for a joyous life to the hilt; he is always ready with a merry quip, laughs in the face of danger and sings happy songs to keep his followers entertained. He positively bounces with cheery vitality, entirely oblivious to the fact that neither his jokes (nor his lute playing) are actually much to laugh about.

A few years ago, Sir Rhodni was posted to the borders of Jonatela, scouting out its interior to evaluate its potential threat in the aftermath of the Thaw. There he saw first hand the great injustices heaped upon the local peasants by their rulers, and resolved to do something about it. He took leave of errantry from the army, and ventured into Jonatela on a mission to right wrongs and bring justice to the downtrodden.

Over the years since he has gathered together a group of like minded people, almost all of them fellow followers of St Talor. Unlike the grim Jonatelans, his followers maintain the happy mien characteristic of their saint, and so have earned the nickname 'The Merry Men'. They hide out in the forests, relying on light or non-existent armour and on archery ahead of sword skill, enabling them to strike without warning from cover and to vanish into the undergrowth at a moment's notice. The band terrorise the local knights, wizards and nobles, who collaborate with their harsh rule, robbing them of their ill-gotten best loot and doing their to protect and support the local peasants. The Jonatelan peasants, for their part, regard the cheerful, singing knight in his green garb as rather strange, and wonder quite why anyone sane would want to frolic through the woodlands with gay abandon...



Note: Work on developing Loskalm is still under way, and there may be many changes to our understanding of the West before Issaries start publishing their Loskalmi books - treat the information here as indicative of current thinking, no more.



The Banes

Dave Shaw

The Banes are a degenerate family of cannibals and murderers lurking in the Woods of the Dead in eastern Far Point. They can be used as the basis for a one-night adventure or else integrated with the story arc. Either way, the heroes may first meet one of the few to have met them and survived, the trader Londar.

He wears what could have been a robe, and a battered cloth hat lies on the table next to his head, which he raises from time to time to look about with bleary, blood-shot eyes. When those eyes meet another's, ragged wet lips split wide in a vacant grin, a dry tongue flicks broken teeth, and the eyes look pointedly towards his empty flagon. He arrived four days ago and has been drunk since; he gave the innkeep a gold ring and told him to serve him till it was spent. It is spent. What has he left? He has a story: a tale of infamy – and of more gold than a mule could carry.

“My name is Londar,” he begins in a cracked voice, “I’ve tried before to tell this tale, but no one believes.” He gestures vaguely with his crusted hand, and takes another sip of ale, the cup gripped between both palms. His eyes well with memories and he continues.

Londar's Tale

My name is Londar. I am or was a trader. Anyhow, I bought nine kegs of Kalbron's finest Stormbreath ale, probably the best ale in the known world. Kalbron's brewery as you may well know is in Jonstown, and my plan was to ship it to the Far Place, make myself a fine profit, and buy some wool for the return trip. The trip started well enough. I had three mules, three thralls and two guards. The road from Jonstown to Herongreen is a good one, and all went well to Herongreen. There, I paid my toll, found stables for my mules, tipped Hahgrim and Tarkal (the guards) to keep them keen, and went in search of some decent lodgings. There's a widow, Tanilin Helginsdottir, who lives just outside the town. For a small fee you can get a good meal and a bed and be assured of a peaceful night. Anyway off I goes towards my lodging, when out of the dark steps two young men, knives drawn, one at my throat and one at my ledger, so to speak. Too scared to move am I, but for a rustle of my lips in a swift prayer. The tallest

of them, a fierce-looking brute, demanded my money-pouch, but as my hand went to it, I thought my prayers had been answered. A man stepped up behind them, reached out both hands and hauled them off.

I am a trader not a fighter, so I took this opportunity to throw myself to the floor and press my hands over my head. There was the sounds of a scuffle, a short scream, and a deep, slow drawl told me I could get up now. I staggered to my feet and thanked my saviour. Tall and handsome he was, hardly sweating from his exertions but bleeding from the mouth where a blow must have landed.

“My name is Bane “ he said “ Angor Bane, and I believe you owe me a drink.”

A drink was the least I owed him, so around I turned and headed off to Cog's to pay my debt and rid myself of the awful shaking in my legs. I bought him a drink and one led to another and before I knew it, I was asleep under the table with half the other patrons of the place.

Come sunrise, I was not fit to travel, but after dipping my head in a water butt, I finally made my way to the stables to organise my cargo. The effort proved too much, and I had to make a hasty trip to Eural's throne to sacrifice the remainder of last night's over-indulgence. On my green-faced return, I encountered my saviour, munching on an apple and seeming none the worse for wear, despite the amount of ale I had bought him in gratitude. (Though I must confess, my gratitude was a little less that morning.)

Angor asked me if I was in good health, and I did, I admit, mention my worry that I wouldn't be fit to travel until later in the day, and that this posed a problem as I might have difficulty making it to Alone before dark on that difficult road. He smiled: “no problem there, friend,” he told me. “I'm going that way to see my folks. It gets dark, you sure would be welcome to stay over for supper.”

Reassured, I rested until the hammers behind my eyes stilled and finally got my modest caravan ready to travel. I gave a prayer to Harst the Reeve and off we set. I walked in front of the first mule with Angor, who proved quite an interesting companion, once I had accustomed myself to his slow drawl, and the slightly irritating way in which he almost giggled at his own jokes, an affliction I hadn't recalled from last night.

It was Earth Season: bright yet clear, the slight frost of the night had long gone and the track was dry and firm underfoot. Birds sang in the clear air, Orlanth cast his breath upon us to cool our exertions, and as we made good progress I felt much cheered and began to hope we might make it to Alone before dark. Then things started to go wrong.





Two of the mules went lame. Nothing seemed wrong with them, but their feet became so sore they could only hobble. The loads I redistributed; with much grumbling, even the guards ended up as bearers. Bundles burst, ropes snapped, and right by the dark forbidding Woods of the Dead what I had feared happened. It began to get dark.

Angor became more excited as time passed and the darkness closed in. "My folks live 'round here, we'll be with my folks soon," he kept repeating and then "You'll stay for dinner won't you?"

At this he laughed long and loud, and out of the trees burst a shambling host of misshapen creatures who gibbered and howled, crawled before Angor and roughly took us prisoner.

In the centre of that Gods cursed wood, there is a shrine, and such a shrine. Moonlight glints wetly off the dark ichor that drips down the side, dark insects feed at its base, worms and grubs seethe in slick liquid and skulls stared mockingly with vacant eyes.

One of the hunched men led the caravan into a gaping maw in the side of the hill behind the altar. Darkness swallowed them. I and my two guards are bound to a tree and the accursed Angor kneels down next to me, his eyes flashing in the moonlight. "You'll like this," he whispers. I shudder as he licks my ear. "Watch." He grins a wicked grin and stands before the altar, arms raised. Bestial men and women, clad in rags marched out from beneath the hill. Many are deformed, and few show signs of human intelligence. They joined with their brethren around the altar and Angor Bane began to speak.

"Here is our history, hear of the Banes." The wild men crouched, swaying, and howled at the end of each phrase. "Chased by the wicked horse people, our tribe's father fled with his chosen wife. Fled across the dry lands he did, ever chased by the wicked ones. He came at last with his wife in child, to these our sacred woods, and made a prayer to the hungry spirits in the trees. The spirits came and in a great feasting slew the men on horses, and our father was free." At this, the howling got louder and Bane paused until he had quiet again. "Mother's time came and she birthed twins, me and your sister. Touched by the dark spirits of the woods we were and strong we grew and quickly, and when she came of age, our much loved sister, devoured her in her hunger." At this a chant grew, whispered in quiet awe. "Sister slither, Sister slither, Sister slither." Bane held his hand out for quiet. "In loneliness and grief, Father pricked his skin on the black rock, and spoke to the whispering ones of the woods. In their love, they sent a woman along the path of providing, and she became the mother of all the clan. Father, alas, has died and his spirit has mingled with the woods, but on nights of bounty such as this, he comes forth to feed as he always did and always will."

The shuffling tribe, gained their feet, and began chanting a name: "Brolgor, BROLGOR." A cloud hid the moon and when it moved on, in the pale light stood a spirit-talker, clad in a hood of flayed skin, the head of hair placed over his own, the arms wrapped



around his shoulders. His ears were pierced all round; pushed through were small bones. A larger one rested in his nose and his staff of authority was a yellowed thighbone. He bore some resemblance to Angor, but also seemed somehow a true creature of the wilds and the darks.

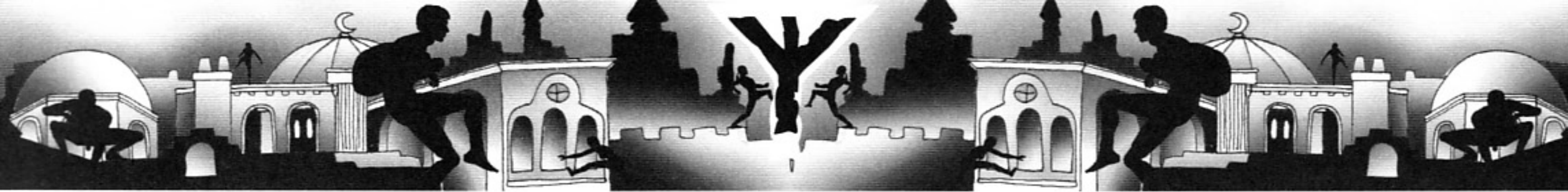
He began to chant, hopping and crawling around the altar, the ichor on the floor covered him; he rolled with the worms and the maggots calling out in strange tongues. Darkness covered the clearing, and a thick grey mist formed slowly over the altar. From the mist slowly formed the shape of their awful totem. At a signal from his half brother, Angor appeared to stand before us. With a malicious smile that chilled my skin, he reached past me to pick up Tarkal. Tarkal the Brave, a veteran warrior, trembled and wept as he was dragged whimpering to that terrible stone. He was held down by brutes, head resting upon the altar as

the mist swirled and formed, taking on a physical shape. I saw tentacles first, reaching and flapping through the fog, great clawed feet hopped and scratched, fangs and a long lashing tongue appeared briefly and ragged bat wings moved the air in slow rhythm. At a crescendo of noise, there was a crack and a scream, a gout of thick blood washed the altar and the apparition was gone. Gone too was Tarkal's head.

As the totem vanished, the brutish throng around the clearing fell upon the body, ripping and tearing, fighting for the choicest parts, leaving nought but split bones. The horrifying cannibal tribe lay with one another, howling and gibbering. I shut my eyes and remember no more 'till rough hands hauled me upright and dragged me underground as Elmal began to climb from the ground.

The horror outside was nothing compared to this grim lair. Inside were all the members of the tribe (about thirty in all). Limbs hung from sharp hooks in the roof of the cave, refuse littered the floor along with an assortment of weapons and tools they clearly had no use for, things I believe taken from captives like myself. I was searched and all my valuables taken, except for a small clay amulet I wore around my wrist, which I managed to convince them was a love token from home. They giggled at me and said they would have it later anyway. At the back of the cave were two passages leading off to darkness; one had a crude door across it, we were pushed down the other. The first thing that I saw when we reached the smaller cave at the end the passage was the pile of treasure on the floor: gold and silver from other travellers no doubt. The second thing I saw was my caravan and goods, albeit missing a mule and a slave.

After we were pushed into this trove, we were left alone. We had set off on Fireday, now I reckoned we were in Wildday. The amulet they had left was actually magical, and on Godsdays each week it could turn into a small rubble runner. Thus my plan was simple, yet based on chance. If we could last the day, tomorrow I could free myself from these bonds, and if the family of cannibals drank all the ale tonight, we should be able to escape.



The day passed slowly. Hahgrim and I managed to shuffle our way behind the thralls, in the hope that the food at the front of the shelf would be used first. Indeed, one was later dragged off, screaming, followed by a mule, apparently to feed Sister Slither. We had no idea of the time in that black hole, so we judged it to be the day's close when the other thrall was taken, his heels digging tracks in the dirt on the cave floor. Poor Gehr. He'd been my thrall since I started trading nine summers ago, but still rather him than me. After a time the noise from the other cave grew in volume, and fighting began. Thank the Gods, things seemed to be going our way. The noise lessened again after a time, and I thought it must be getting late. Unwilling to lose a moment, I began saying the small charm that changed my amulet. How many times I said it I don't know, until at last, dry mouthed, I felt the glow of magic behind and my rubble runner stirred. Following my instructions, it began to gnaw at the bonds that bound my wrist. Oh, the agony! If it hadn't been for the numbness in my hands I would have surely cried out. At last my hands came loose; ignoring the pain, I picked up a discarded blade and cut Hahgrim free.

He took the blade from me and led the way. Not wishing to leave all that treasure but too afraid to touch the pile for fear of making noise, I took a large gold ring and hurried after. We picked our way through the dark of the main cave, moving slowly, stepping over sleeping bodies. Hahgrim silently killed the solitary guard dozing in the cave mouth, and then, suddenly free, we ran. We ran and we ran, heading through the trees in the direction Hahgrim said the road was. We stumbled upon the road and turned for Alone. Short of wind and thirsty, on we ran, our pace slowing until we heard the skin-creeping sounds of the chase somewhere behind us.

We knew it was almost sunrise and that we were not far from Alone; our hope was to keep going and try for the sanctuary of the town walls.

We both nearly made it. Elmal crept over the rim of the world, as the sounds of the chase got closer. We were one bend in the road from sighting Alone when our pursuers got too near. The lead Bane could be heard panting when Hahgrim turned and took him with his knife. As the brute fell, Hahgrim gasped at me to go on. I ran. Hahgrim the Stout spent his life to buy me the time to reach sight of the town. The shambling Banes behind me wouldn't show themselves to the town so I made good my escape.

At this Londar begins unwrapping the dirty bandages from around his hands with his teeth. He holds his mutilated hands out for inspection. "Next time," he smiles, a mad glint in his eye. "I'll have a brighter rubble runner; that one took my thumbs."

The Banes

The Banes are a degenerate extended family warped by dark magic and darker practices, ranging from such outwardly-normal members as Angor to the inhuman monsters which are Brolgor and Sister Slither. The majority of the Banes are about 30 twisted brutes (Frenzied Attack 17, Gorge on Flesh 20, Terrifying 17) who will generally only act as howling, slaving followers to the named family members.

Angor Bane

Sneaky Fighter 20W, Unexpectedly Tough 10W, Appear Trustworthy 18W, Grip on Sanity 12

Bone Bane

The Bane's shaman is half human, half...of the darkness of the woods. His powers are largely devoted to summoning and appeasing Brolgor and Sister Slither., but if the Narrator chooses, he may also control some Fear, Hatred and Violence spirits.

Bane Spirit-Talker 20, Terrify 15W, Whip Banes into Frenzy 10W

Brolgor

The progenitor of the Banes is now a shadow-shrouded composite of ancient, feral spirits of the wood and fragments of previous sacrifices, held together by the mindless malevolence of the wood and Brolgor Bane's own vicious determination to survive.

Might 20W, Clawing, Biting, Flailing Attack 10W^3, Shadowy Aura ^7, Terrifying Appearance 15W, Lust for Sacrifice 5W

Sister Slither

Sister Slither, the 'wife' the wood gave Brolgor, is a ragged spirit, equivalent to a Suberiad (*Anaxial's Roster*, pp222-223), albeit a denizen of dark woods rather than caves.

Might 5W, Claws 18^1, Hide in Shadow 18W, Curse with Nightmares 10W, Fly on Shadows 20W, Chill Heart 10W

The Banes are provided as an example of the kind of outlaw who cannot be recruited, reasoned with, or redeemed. Their role within the Arc is to provide an opportunity for a macabre adventure, some action and also to leave the heroes in the possession of some substantial booty to further their cause. The assembled treasure of the Banes is worth perhaps as much as 10W3. Narrators can also use this as an opportunity for an unexpected closing scene:

You stumble from the cave, desperate for Orlanth's breath to cleanse your lungs of its sick taint, arms laden with booty, triumph in your hearts. Only to stumble to a halt in horror. Before you, in neatly-ordered ranks as if on parade, stand a score armoured warriors of Shepelkirt, sunlight glittering on levelled spears. Before then, on a mighty grey warhorse, sits a figure sheathed in death-iron, naked blade in his hand. His stillness is as implacable as death.

His voice booms from behind the dark face-plate of his helm. "Yesterday you were my and my lord's quarry. Tomorrow, you shall be again. But today - today, you have done something that needed to be done, a service to honour, so today, you live."

With that, before your astonished eyes, he wheels his horse and begins to lead his soldiers from their perfect ambush. He stops a moment and half turns. His flat voice appears for a moment animated with something, perhaps even a wry humour.

"My lord is teaching me the difference between Justice and Law." And they are gone.

ORLANTH IS DEAD!

Sartar Rising, part 2

Winds stop. Air thins. Magic fails. Winter begins, out of season.
You expect to hear the news any time now, but you already know the truth:
Whitewall has fallen. The old world is over.
“Where will you be when the Hero Wars begin?”

Orlanth is Dead! begins the Sartar Campaign and the Hero Wars with an epic conflict against the Lunar Empire. As winter deepens and spring fails to come, the rebellion begins in southern Sartar at the supernatural struggle later known as the Battle of Iceland. The end of the world is not just for great heroes and famous leaders, for it encompasses everyone in its deadly embrace. During the days of doom and the final battle, ordinary Orlanathi tribesmen have a chance to begin their own epic careers—if they survive!

Selected Contents

Welcome to the Hero Wars — Notes for running a game as part of the *Sartar Rising* campaign series.

The Sartar Campaign — Includes a Hero Wars Timeline, details about Kallyr Starbrow, and Solving the Mystery of Argrath.

Your Clan — Discover the mythical history of your ancestors using the Clan Questionnaire.

Heortling Warfare — Vingkot's Muster, Battle Magic, Two-Roll Contests, and other narrator notes on running Heortling battles.

Narrator Resources — Statistics for important Lunar foes and eight great leaders of the rebellion, including Kallyr Starbrow, Minaryth Purple, King Broyan, and the Sun Dome Templars. Includes a magic keyword for Yelmadio.

Orlanth is Dead! — A campaign outline based on the Heortling Sacred Calendar, detailing the events that occur from the fall of Whitewall to the Battle of Iceland.

The Battle of Iceland — The epic battle against the Lunars that will break the Endless Winter or seal the fate of the Orlanathi.

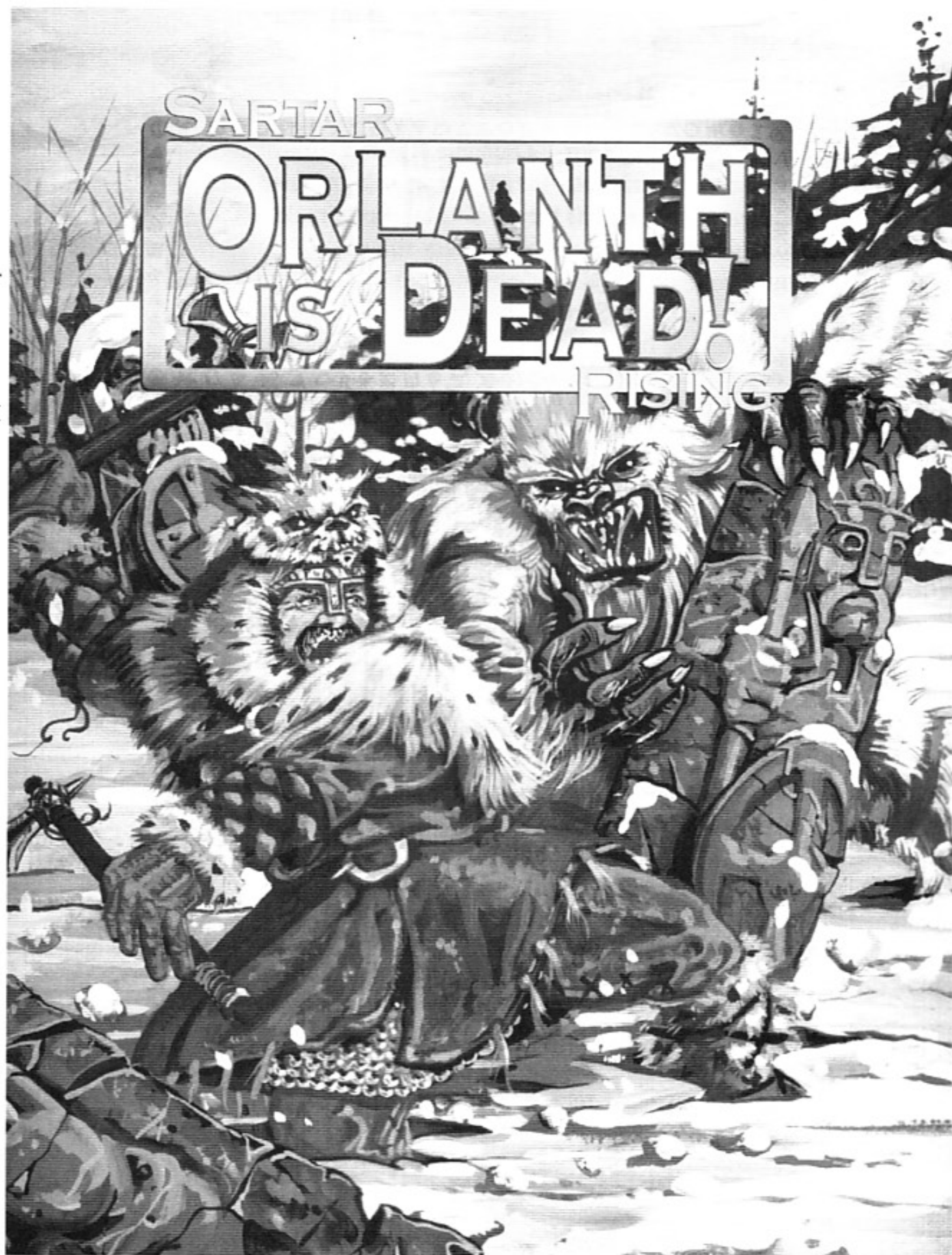
Orlanth is Dead! is the second volume of the *Sartar Rising* campaign series.

For more information about Glorantha go to:

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The Neep Spawn

Simon Bray

‘Neep Troll-Killer was a trollkin of superior qualities, the only of his kind during this period. Such sports, with much higher health, intelligence, and power than usual, occasionally occurred but were generally slain while young, so to prevent trouble when they got older. Neep evidently went unnoticed, and escaped to Dragon Pass where he was befriended by the cult of Geo. He grew up to hate all trolls who misused their weaker kin, and trollkin everywhere often followed him rather than their own tribe. He was known for his skill at making trollbane weapons. He worshiped the god Humakt. He was fond of bright-coloured clothes, and had a reputation among humans as being a seducer of dark troll women. He never drank liquor. He liked humans, but disliked elves, whom he thought were a bigoted lot.’ – From *Famous Dark Trolls of Dragon Pass*, © Issaries Inc.

Neep is rarely seen by those seeking to use his mercenaries, preferring to make contact through his lieutenants and network of friends. He is surprisingly charismatic for a trollkin, well groomed and versed in human customs. His peculiar dress code makes him stand out from his ragged kin, and his bravery shines through in his speech and mannerisms. Neep fears neither uznor man, and will stand toe-to-toe with Sartari chieftains and berserker Great Trolls without fear or falter. He is known to be a devotee of Humakt and has learned the secrets of forging Trollbane weapons from Inginew himself.

Neep demands strange prices for his hire, including rare fabrics, weird foodstuffs and the kidnapping of trollish women.

Neep Troll-Killer

Enlo Hero 15^W, Devotee of Humakt 10^W (Efrodar Blackhands subcult: Death, Honour, Battle Command; special Forge Trollbane Weapons feat 20^W), Hate Trolls 1^W2, Dislike Aldryami 20, Brave 10^W. Close Combat (Sword & Shield) 1^W2, Small 12, Endure Hardship 1^W, March Long Distances 10^W, Move in Silence 15^W, Stand out in crowd 5^W, Appear Impressive 20, Shout Orders 5^W, Dodge Melee Weapons 10^W, Endurance 5^W, Darksense 5^W, Tactics 10^W, Understand Enemy Tactics 10^W, Lead Troops 15^W, Inspire Trollkin 5^W2, Sense Ambush 10^W, Human Custom 1^W, Know Terrain 20, Spot Uz Weakness 5^W, Haggle 20, Seduce Uz Women 5^W, Incite Trollkin Rebellion 10^W, Bizarre Clothes 20.

Uz Eater – Magical Trollbane Shortsword 10^W,.



Ugly Kaz

The ugliest trollkin in the world, the spawn of a Great Troll and a Cave Troll, whose grotesque features are sufficient to chase his foes off the battlefield. Ugly Kaz serves as one of Neep’s lieutenants leading a gang of similarly ugly trollkin, nick named the ‘Buck Tooth Bunch’

Enlo Warrior 13^W, Lead Troops 5^W, Ugly 20^W.

The Four Friends

These four trollkin all joined mutually unfriendly fighting cults and then left them to fight together. How they survived the retribution of their various gods is unknown although one derogatory (and now dead) scholar commented that there was no retribution, because the gods all denied that an enlo had ever followed them in the first place.

Bikaz – Dour and brooding. Enlo Warrior 20, Apostate Humakti 20, Close Combat (Broadsword & Shortsword) 5^W, Detect Lie 17, Speak Sartarite 15

Kostab – Contemplative and thoughtful. Enlo Warriress 20, Apostate Yanafali 20, Close Combat (Long Spear) 10^W, Tactics 20, Speak New Pelorian 12.

Kwolif – Irritable and aggressive. Enlo Warrior 1^W, Apostate Zorak Zorani 20, Close Combat (Mace & Shield) 10^W, Brew Poison 13.

Tsaktoz – Vicious and vengeful. Enlo Warriress 1^W, Apostate Babeester Gori 20, Close Combat (Axe & Shield) 5^W, Stay Awake 20, Earthtongue 16.



The hubbub inside the crude hostelry was, if anything, all too normal, as everyone did their best to pretend that there was nothing unusual about the short form sitting at his ease in the corner, one paw holding a jack of what looks suspiciously like milk, the other absently tapping on the wide brim of his hat. From its shadows, the fire shot glints off dark eyes and the short stumps of vestigial fangs. As you approach, Neep waves a hand airily, inviting you to sit. There is none of the cringing timidity or slack-jawed stupidity you associate with enlo, just a sharp intelligence and a sense of manic energy struggling to be unleashed. 'I heard you, yes. We hear lots, lots. Now you want our help. We can help. We glad to help big, big hero men like you.' Was that a hint of mockery? 'But we got price, yes? No money-stuff, no, no. You can get me chance to fight big bastard uz, yes? You can get us some nice cows and sheep for eats, yes? Oh yes, Neep's got one last, itty-bitty price.' He leant forward, his wide mouth splitting into a too-many-toothed grin. 'Neep needs wooman, yes?' He kissed the air with obscene relish. 'Fine, fine, uz woman.' Oh boy.

Nose-Biter's Feet

Nose-Biter is a famous magical weapon. Forged in ages past by a hero of Babeester Gor, it was used on several heroquests. The weapon became possessed of its own life force, and became an independent creature. Nose-Biter has the power to dominate those of weak wills or intellects and use them to wield it. At present it is wielded by a trollkin known only as 'Feet'. Nose-Biter conveys all the personality of a devoted Babeester Gor, including a hatred for men, a compulsion to defend the earth and a vengeful streak a mile wide. Nose-Biter likes its present 'Feet' and will do everything to keep her alive, if she dies then Nose-Biter will try and dominate another being (preferably female). Nose-Biter treats the 'Feet' as a follower for game purposes, using its skills to augment Nose-Biter, not the other way around.

Close Combat 1W2 (Axe ^7), Lightning Fast Attack 20, Devotee of Babeester Gor (Blood Beer, Combat, Sacred Revenge) 1W2, Earth Avenger Secret 10W, Heal 'Feet' Feat 10W, Dominate 'Feet' 5W, Extremely Tough 10W, Spot Weakness in Defence 20, Stay Awake 20W, Track Foe 10W.

Follower – 'Feet' 5W (Doggedly Loyal 13W, Tough 7W)

Special Equipment – Nose-Biter is decorated with a large amount of gaudy or grisly trophies and ornaments including an Energy Canteen that adds 20 AP to magical contests.

Doc Shock

Doc Shock was originally a warrior enlo of the Sazdorf tribe. During the battle of the Wooden Sword he was wounded and healed by a White Healer of Chalana Arroy. He was so touched by her kindness that he followed her back to her temple and was initiated into her faith, after many years of vigilant work. His name derives from the time an Orlanth Thunderous cultist mistook him for an enemy and called a lightning bolt down on the hapless fellow, leaving him slightly crisped. Doc Shock leads the Neep Spawn auxiliaries, who rush about the battlefield healing the fallen.

Enlo 20, First Aid 10W, Find Healing Herbs 1W, Field Surgery 10W, Initiate of Ferace the Wild Healer (Calm Fear, Heal Wounds, Travel Safely) 15W.

Tin Pan Ollie

A former kitchen slave in a Tarshite noble house, Tin Pan dressed from head to toe in armour fashioned from a vast array of kitchen utensils. He acts as quartermaster and lieutenant for the band. He leads a gang of heavily armoured trollkin known as the 'Pan Bang Gang'.

Enlo Warrior 10W, Initiate of Argan Argar (Sticker the Spearkin subcult: Exchange with Others, Son of Night, Spearkin) 20, Close Combat (Meat Cleaver & Skewers) 13W, Lead Troops 5W, Gauge Food Quality 20, Cook 5W.

Slamstone the Morokanth

Slamstone is a huge Morokanth brave of great strength, but little brains. He and several of his kin were exiled from Prax for offending the priestesses of the Paps. Slamstone is followed by 10 Morokanth, all as stupid as he is. Neep uses Slamstone's gang as shock troopers, against both uz and humans.

Morokanth Warrior 10W, Dark Eater Animist Practice 20, Close Combat (Maul or Claws) 15W, Ambush 1W, Large 20, Strong 5W, Stupid 15, Integrated Spirits: Run in Darkness 20, Crushing Darkness 15, Muffle Sound in Dark 20.

Lanky Pigstench

Lanky Pigstench was originally an ordinary trollkin worker belonging to the Sazdorf Tribe. While excavating a new section of the Haunted Ruins he came across a strange Mostali machine. Being of unusually curious disposition he messed with several levers and gears. Several moments later he staggered back to his work gang, now six feet tall, and covered in fluorescent green stripes. His Uz overlords immediately cast him out into the wilds. He wandered Dagori Inkarth, until a gang of woodlouse-worshipping enlo took him in. Adopted and trained by the clan shaman, he is now a shaman in his own right. Lanky is a good friend and ally of the Neep Spawn.

Enlo Shaman 10W, Gorakiki Tradition (Chickchiku Woodlouse Mother aspect) 19W, (Sample spirits: Roll into Ball, Eat Compost, Exoskeleton, Fit into Crack), Tall 17, Weird Appearance 20, Ride Giant Woodlouse 20, Insect Care 20, Weird Shamanic Behaviour 5W, Curious 1W.





The Neep Spawn Heroband

Vengeance and liberation are the driving power behind the Neep Spawn. Too long have Enlo suffered at the claws and teeth of the uz oppressors. We shall not be shackled by their brutality, we shall not fear their anger and we shall not be consumed by their hunger. We bite back at the belly that eats us, drive our spears into the mouth that chews us and break the hands that crush us. Enlo should be free, be they Food, Warrior or Value! Emancipation for the masses! Liberate the Slaves!

Neep Trollbane's famous rallying speech, before the battle of Enlo Kick Uz.

The Neep Spawn are the followers of Neep Troll-Killer. They are a product of the Hero Wars, an organised band of liberated trollkin and unusual mercenaries who sell their skills to anyone seeking to fight trolls. No uz tribe will admit to Neep Troll-Killer's lineage, but they often claim that only their enemies could have spawned such an abomination. The Spawn are despised by all sane trolls, and they seek to destroy them at every opportunity.

Form: Trollkin Mercenary band

Cultural Context: Neep Spawn are all outcasts from uz society, they have united together to fight against their former oppressors.

Ideology: Neep Spawn sell their services to anyone who wants to fight trolls.

Look and Feel: A rag-tag conglomeration of unusually brave and heroic trollkin, with strange abilities and backgrounds.

Purpose: To fight trolls, to be free.

Headquarters: The Neep Spawn are constantly on the move, usually found in Sartar or Western Dagori Inkarth. To contact Neepspawn, patrons must first contact one of Neep's 'Friends' through any Geo's barman in Sartar, or by leaving special foodstuffs at the entrance to Long Bone Barrow, near the Skull Ruins in Northern Sartar.

Reactions: Hated and loathed by almost all sensible Uz.

Resources

Leader: Neep Trollbane, an exceptional enlo and renowned troll killer.

Renowned Members: Ugly Kaz, the Four Friends, Nose-Biter, Doc Shock, Lanky Pig Stench, Tin Pan Olly and Slamstone the Morokanth.

Membership: Around 300 trollkin and 50 or so other creatures at any time, although this varies with breeding seasons and internal conflicts.

Other Contacts: Neep Spawn is well known to all uz-hating Sartari clans. Their greatest ally is the cult of Geo, which offers its members hospitality and safety in times of need. Neep Spawn are on good terms with the Jabug Trollkin Flyers and the rebellious Munchroom enlo.

Organisation

Despite outward appearances, the Neep Spawn are well organised. Neep has a strong grasp of both uz and human tactics, but most importantly he is acutely aware of his own unit's flaws and weaknesses, and how to compensate for them. Neep leads the main body of the band, while his subordinates co-ordinate special units, which are used to great effect.



Membership Keyword

Membership Requirements: Enlo or friend to enlo, hating trolls and refusing their rule. The applicant may be put through a series of tests to ensure their bravery and loyalty to the Neep Spawn ideals.

Abilities: Close Combat (Spear & Shield), Fight in Formation, Neep Spawn Tactics, Rally Friend..

Typical Personality Traits: Surprisingly Courageous.

Magic: Although not compulsory, several members of the band follow Humakt.

Guardian Being: Hand Biter

Hand Biter is a strange Dehori that follows the Spawn everywhere. It first appeared when Neep turned upon his former master and has been near to him ever since. As Neep's army grew stronger, so Hand Biter grew in size and strength. Neep often leaves the band to talk secretly with the guardian. When he returns from such discussions he seems to possess a renewed vigour for his fight. Enlo call Hand Biter 'Comforter' as his dark aura protects them from Yelm's rays.

Method: Manifest

Form: Hand Biter appears as a huge trollkin shaped void of inky blackness, its only features are two dull red eyes and its white fangs.

Membership Requirements: Hand Biter is used as part of the initiation into the band; trollkin must face the entity in a number of tests of loyalty and bravery.

Awareness Function: Sense Uz Ambush 10W

Blessing Function: Shield Enlo from Sun 15W

Defense Function: Help Enlo Overcome Fear 10W



The Unbalanced

Shannon Appelcline

The Unbalanced can be used in any case as an unusual encounter in Dragon Pass. However, within the Thieves' Arm arc, they could be an interesting enemy or reluctant ally. Their knowledge of the ways of the wood could be a valuable asset as scouts or in an ambush, if the heroes can think of some way to recruit or hire them. However, their enemies might also engage the Unbalanced against them...

At the centre of Aldryami philosophy is the idea of the balance. They believe that there are two forces — The Grower and The Taker — which both operate within the world. Neither force is good nor bad; each is simply a counter to the other. If the two



Raníllia's green-eyed gaze is cold, level, inhuman. His voice is a hoarse whisper, like a winter's wind through the bare branches of a dead forest. 'We know what you want. What can a Little Taker offer us?'

operate in tandem, and neither too much is Taken nor too much is Grown, then the entire world of Glorantha continues to bloom. However, if either force rises to ascendance, then the entire world begins to wilt. Such was the case when the Grower cracked the Sky Dome at the end of the Green Age, allowing Oblivion to enter the world for the first time.

The Unbalanced believe that the Aldryami understanding of balance is incorrect. They do acknowledge the forces of the Grower and the Taker, but they see them as fierce adversaries, with the Taker being an awful enemy to the Aldryami. Ironically, however, the Unbalanced have come to believe that the only way to bring back the Green Age — which was the Age of the Grower — is to take on the facade of the Taker in this world. They wish to create through destruction.

Most of the Unbalanced say that they have come to the group through a dream or a vision. They claim that while they were meditating with the Aldryami — experiencing the lives of the other elves of their wood — that they discovered a secret path that led far from the normal routes. Here they claim to have met She Who Is Two in One — She who Took to Grow, and She who was one of the two children of Aldrya born at the Dawn. The Unbalanced claim that She put them on their path, telling them it was the only way that the Green Age would ever be found again.

Upon waking from these dreams, members of the Unbalanced have a sure knowledge of how to contract their brethren, which are scattered across all of Glorantha. Due to their unorthodox beliefs, the Unbalanced are largely cut off from Aldryami society—and even from Aldrya herself. After all, the Unbalanced are bandits, no matter how much they speak of higher, loftier goals. They seek those items that will help them in the inevitable war against the forces of the Taker. They believe trolls and humans are the two greatest followers of the Taker, and thus particularly target them.

Most frequently the Unbalanced raid for weapons of war and armour. They also quite frequently raid for seeds, much to the consternation of farmers. Money is of some use to them, but the Unbalanced are rarely interested in other items of value, such as gems or jewellery, because the ideas of bartering and sale are quite alien to them.

The Unbalanced are quite frequently willing to engage in raids with other bandits who are more interested in valuable items, splitting the proceeds. However, they occasionally turn on their "allies" — when they believe that they can wipe out an enclave of powerful Takers.



The Unbalanced in Dragon Pass

Dreams and visions seem to draw together Unbalanced Aldryami all across Glorantha. There is a notable gathering of at least twenty in Dragon Pass. They rarely act as one unit, more frequently breaking up into smaller groups for maximum efficiency.

The Unbalanced of Dragon Pass particularly hate the trolls of the Holy Country and the Beast Riders of Prax and thus have been known to work with Sartarites, Lunars, and Esrolians alike. They do not interact socially with the Aldryami of either Arstola or the Stinking Forest, though they have been known to pass some of their ill-gotten goods on to both of these communities.

They recognise each other by a hand signal that involves making a half circle in the area with the right little finger, then shaking the head once quickly. They have also occasionally been known to etch a circle made of two arrows — with a horizontal line across them — into wood near a robbery or other crime.

Ranillia Uzeater

The leader of the Unbalanced of Dragon Pass is Ranillia Uzeater, who is said to understand the enemy because he has the heart of a troll. He is cold, calculating, and uncaring of the misery that he causes.

Weapons & Armour: Petrified Bark Armour ^5, Iron Greatsword of She Who is Two in One 10W3^6, Elf Bow 18W2^4

Significant Abilities: Acute Senses 18W2, Be Invisible in Forest 2W3, Cruel 10W3, Dream of She Who is Two in One 10W, Eat Anything 2W, Geography of Aldryami Forests in Genertela 10W2, Interpret Dreams of She Who is Two in One 18, Make Long-range Plans 4W3, Myths of the Green Age 18, Plant Lore 2W, Sense Trolls 2W2, Set Ambushes 4W2, Stay Awake 10W, Terrify with Song of Death 10W2

The Unbalanced Aldryami of Dragon Pass

Hard Bark Armour ^3, Elf Bow 5W^4, Two-handed Spear 2W^4, Acute Senses 2W, Be Invisible in Forest 10W, Ambush 5W, Terrify with Song of Death 2W

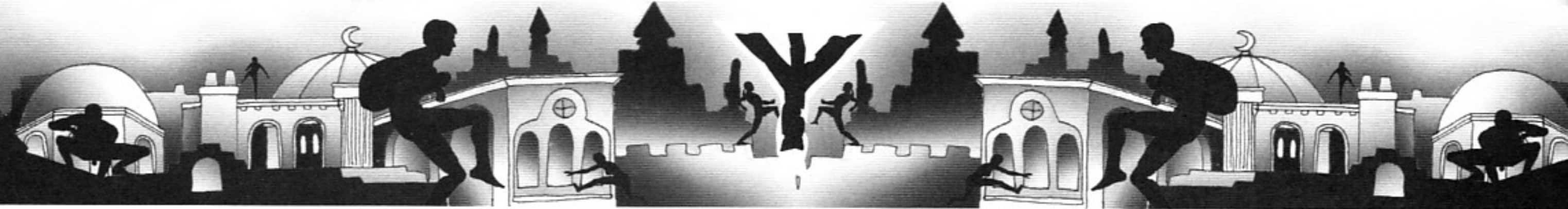
From the Tablets of Ohenkash, Judex

The Thief-Takers and Seven Compacts of Elz Ast

Until Our Father understands the value of a standardised, centrally-managed agency to uphold His laws, we are left with a bewildering range of local responses. In most places, this is little more than the heavy-handed law-enforcement of the local garrison, but there are cities whose culture and wealth allows or requires more sophisticated instruments. I regard the skills and dedication of the Thief-Takers of Elz Ast to be second to none. This thriving mercantile city is a veritable honey-pot for every kind of criminal, malcontent, huckster, hoax-artist, bagman, cargo-snatcher and open-ear. Appreciating this, the great mercantile Associations together have enacted the formation of this fine body of men and women, skilled prosecutors and apprehensionists all. What distinguished them from their counterparts in other cities is their commitment to what they regard as 'scientific apprehensionism'. To this extent, it is no surprise how many of those who eventually come to wear the green tabard of the Thief-Taker and work from their elegantly spacious Kirtle Manse, were educated at the Faculty of Logic of the city's Irippi Ontor College or its Eyzaali counterpart, the Particulate Halls. However, they need their every resource, for against them are ranged the subtle and powerful forces of the Seven Compacts, the main criminal associations of the city. Claiming to be descended from ancient Birinite noble clans, they affect a code of honour and lengthy and grandiloquent titles. In my brief time at the Kirtle Manse, I even apprehended a common protection racketeer who was known as the Most Illustrious Preceptor of the Art of Urgent Coercion. Even had he not deserved to have been nailed to Deshkorogos' Tree for his crimes against the people, I would have been compelled to give him the same sentence for his bombastic presumption.

The Catburglars of Nochet

There are many shadowcats in the large cities of Esrolia, a smaller, more varied subspecies than those found in the forested hills of Dragon Pass. The Esrolians commonly call them 'alleycats,' but Esrolian women seem to love the verminous creatures, so much so that a few even give the cat-god Yinkin some worship (a practice strongly frowned upon by their priestesses), and, especially in Rhigos, make up their faces to resemble a cat's. After all, Yinkin's cult has existed in urban Esrolia for a long time. In Palangio's time, most Yinkini were driven from the cities, seeking refuge in the hills, some left Dragon Pass and settled in Nochet, for the region had been infested with cats since the Godtime. Thus, Yinkin's cult survived, not least because in matriarchal Esrolia, Yinkin can be either a male or female god. The cult remained small, but, like cats themselves, found itself niches in which to survive. It has gained a secondary but useful role by bringing entertainment for rich, unmarried women. Supported by their strong reputation as lovers, some Yinkini keep the most decadent Esrolian women company, or just work as servants or genuine courtiers. However, others turned to catburglary, using their skills to plunder the riches of the cities. As such they excel in second-story work, espionage, blackmail and other scurvy arts. Thus the cats of Nochet are fondled by women and kicked in the butt by men. When we bring the light of Our Goddess to these cities, I look forward to unleashing our Sairdic dog soldiers on the lot of them. (Jerome Blondel)



The PargAddi Imperial Hunter Corps Regiment

Martin Laurie

Ohenkash looked up from the reports. Praxian raiders spotted to the east; the Quivini clans all but openly in revolt; unenlightened chaos trickling from Snakepipe Hollow; his men had three alleged rapists under guard, but their commanding officer was demanding their immediate release, claiming the supremacy of military order over civil law. He sighed. Much as he disliked the thought, he needed both to abandon for the moment his pursuit of this particular group of Sartari bandits and also prove his willingness to use terror when necessary. He turned to his aide. 'Unleash the PargAddi.'

Formed by Parg Illisi during the second year of his brutal Empty Conquest of Eol in 2/30 (1331), the unit was originally a raiding group recruited from Parg's most aggressive and wilderness-capable penal troops. Their secret name is the 'Unforgiven' but in Imperial Hunter Corps correspondence they are the 'PargAddi', meaning literally 'Sticks of Parg'. Among themselves, in casual conversation, they are the 'Beaters'. During the Empty Conquest and since, the PargAddi have carved a bloody name for themselves in countless actions, assaults, atrocities and unheard-of wars fought in the Empire and beyond, or sometimes even in the very centre of its teeming cities.

The unit was formed along the lines of the famous Elevens of Alkoth by Parg's command. Initially there were three Elevenths (of 11 Elevens of 11 soldiers each) in the regiment, but casualties and the effects of prolonged peace have often reduced this to one or two Elevenths with support Elevens attached. Currently, the unit has one Eleventh and two Elevens of support troops. The first of the latter contains magical support troops and priests. The second contains the regiment's command group, which includes the unit commander, the PargAdarch, his 4 Adarchs, who serve as task force commanders of multiple Elevens and the regimental priests. Each Eleven has an integral Irdexmot, or magical support soldier, and is commanded by a Kastari with 9 soldiers under him. The Grand Irdexmot and High Kastari are the senior non-Adarchs of the unit, the former commanding

the support Eleven and the latter being in the PargAdarch's Eleven as prime disciplinarian and troop trainer. Each Eleven tends to have a specialism in one form of warfare or another. One might be cavalry, another light infantry or heavily armoured assault troops. All Elevens are adept at fighting in unusual circumstances and in terrible conditions. There are no weak links in the PargAddi.

Parg Landwaster

The cult of Parg is a demon cult that has a place in most demonic deities as a shared subcult. Deshkorgos, Bijiif, Shargash, Natha or any other Imperial deity with underworld connections can have Parg as a subcult. All the regiment worship Parg, mostly as initiates, but usually have a prime deity. Typically only the regimental priests worship him as a devotee.

Affinity: **Landwaster** (Burn Land, Desecrate ritual, Impale Foe, Order Atrocity, Skull Pyramid ritual, Spread Terror)

Typical Statistics

Beater

Close combat 10W (Varies hugely, usually several skills), at least 4 skills such as Hunting, Strong, Courageous, Tracking, Fast 5W, Initiate of Landwaster 18 and two other affinities of a combat or underworld deity 20-3W. Weapons and armour at ^4 or more.

Kastari

Add 1 mastery to all skills; add skills in Command at 10W.

Irdexmot

As Beater, but a devotee or the equivalent with 2 masteries in at least three affinities or grimoires.

Adarch

Devotee of Landwaster 15W, Close Combat 10W2+, Command & Tactics 15W





Hooglon the Giant Sneak Thief

Simon Bray



At thirty feet in height, Hooglon is the most unlikely sneak thief in all Glorantha, and yet he is (literally) hugely successful at his crimes. He is rarely seen by humans: during the day, Hooglon sleeps within a deep cave known as the Rumbling Hole, for his snoring thunders and echoes from within. Local legend blames the noises on angry draconic monsters, which keeps most people away. At night, Hooglon travels under the cover of his great black cloak, which shrouds him in a magical darkness – Hooglon boasts to his friends that Dame Darkness gave him the cloak and that it was once her kerchief, won as a favour when he defended her honour. Other giants laugh at this, but cannot deny its powers. Hooglon sneaks into villages and towns at night and steals livestock, ale and anything else that takes his fancy. Sometimes to acquire what he desires he will lift up the roof of a houses, or even carry away a whole chicken coop. Hooglon is incredibly silent at his tasks, and so strange are his thefts, that when the are spotted the onlooker is so stupefied at the sight of a stead roof hovering in the air or a prize cow apparently flying out of the stalls that they doubt their sanity before they dare call an alarm. The only sign of Hooglon’s activities are his huge footprints, and maybe the occasional roof replaced at the wrong angle. Very few dare track down such a beast and even fewer are willing to enter the dragon-haunted ‘Rumbling Hole’. When Hooglon get his booty home, he invariably eats it – in the case of the chickens, coop and all!

Close Combat 8W (Fist ^3, Tree Trunk ^8), Contrary 10W, Large 2W2, Ranged Combat 20 (Thrown Rock ^4), Short-tempered 10, Slow-witted 8, Smell Blood 18, Strong 2W2, Tough 12W, Terrifying Snoring 20, Sneak Silently 10W, Lift Booty Quietly 1W.

Cloak of Dame Darkness (Shroud in Darkness 20W) the cloak is Large 18W; it cannot be cut up or it loses its magic. Anyone witnessing Hooglon’s thefts must resist a Stupefying Sight 20 (Clever -3, Ignore Distraction, Vigilant -3, Unshakeable)

Unleash the PargAddi!

Three Elevens are assigned to eliminating the heroes, led *Adarch* Hullarch the Joyous. The *Adarch* unleashes the Ninth Eleven to track the heroes to their lair and identify their normal routes of travel. The *Adarch* sets up ambush on the most travelled route in good cover. The Ninth will attack them from the ground pinning them in place while the other two mounted Elevens charge down the trail from cover ahead and behind the heroes. The *Adarch* does not want to see his men take heavy losses and so will order a disciplined withdrawal if the fighting is too fierce (around 5 of the PargAddi go down). The *Adarch* himself loves a good fight and will lead the attack, aiming for the leader or toughest looking foes. All the PargAddi will be augmented, usually adding +4 to skill or +^8. If this is too serious a challenge for the heroes, they may come across one of the cavalry Elevens on the road, perhaps led by the *Adarch*.

Adarch Hullarch the Joyous

Laughing Devotee of Grevlar and ex-gladiator Champion of the Glamour arena.

Close Combat 3W3 (Sword FoeSlicer ^6 +10 to skill when augmenting with this weapon, iron mail ^7), Leadership 4W2, Tactics 12W, Intimidate 16W, Fearless 19W, Strong 14W, Fast 13W. Grevlar affinities: Challenge 3W2 (Aura of Invincibility, Command Respect, Discern Foe’s Tactics, Fear no Adversity, Shame Foe into Single Combat); Heroism 5W2 (Barbaric Rage, Flickering Speed, Hands of Stone, Mighty Strike, Obdurate hardiness, Penetrate Defence); Secret: Indomitable Will 6W (Acts as a counter against all magical attacks giving ¼ of its value to enhance all relevant physical and mental skills.)

Ninth Eleventh

Kastori Borrik Chaostracker

Close combat 18W (Sword & Net), Devotee of Jajagappa and Parg 17W, Track Anything 12W. A tough warrior from Saird who joined the Empire after the defeat of his clan in a bloody revolt. He has a 4 war dogs as followers (+100 AP).

Irdexmot Leda Muddaughter. Devotee of Natha and Parg 6W2, Close Combat 7W, Fierce 7W. Once a Weeder now a killer; she doesn’t regret the change.

Eight Beaters, all Jajaloring hunters with a pack of 23 war hounds between them (+20 AP per hound).

Sixth Eleventh

Kastori Sir Aegar the Apostate

Close combat 15W (Lance & Shield, Sword & Shield), Landwaster Initiate 19, Charge fearlessly 12W (augments his Lance attack). An ex-Rokari captured at Jansholm, currently seeking a faith.

Eight Beaters: 3 Tarshites, 2 Rokari, 1 Aeolian, 2 Carmanian, all heavy cavalry.

Third Eleventh

Kastori Churangar Arrowrain

Animist Warrior of Jordan (spirits include Terrifying War Whoop 10W and Arrow-in-the-Eye 15W), Close combat 2W, Horse Archer 5W2, Ride 6W2. A Grazer outlaw who joined the Empire, he was once a follower of the previous king of the Grazelands, though he keeps that a secret.

Seven Beaters: 4 ex-Grazers, 1 Char-un, 2 Pentans, all horse archers.



The Oakhearts

Mark Galeotti



Dorhelm sits by the firepit, a bent and weary-looking old man, a slight tremor in the hand which grasps his eating knife. Is this the man on whom your hopes will rest? Then he lifts his head, and eyes undimmed by age flicker across you. Unconsciously, you stiffen, young warriors, scarcely initiated, before the clan chieftain again, for all your exploits and finery. A wintry smile twists his thin lips, but the eyes betray humour and humanity - and pride. Perhaps those hopes will have the chance to root themselves and bloom, after all...

We have chosen to place the heroes' future sanctuary in the tula of a generic clan, so that each Narrator can place them wherever fits his or her game. They would work especially well within the Free Tribes, but can be placed almost anywhere, with appropriate implications in each case:

Free Tribes

Aranwyth: King Ilgalad seeks to strike a balance in all things - will he turn a blind eye to the Thieves' Arm as a force counter-balancing increasing Lunar pressure, or instead regard them as a destabilising influence?

Cinsina: Would the presence of the Thieves' Arm provide a weapon in the hands of upstart Ivar Quickstep, allowing him to call in the Lunars to depose Queen Ivartha?

Lismelder: The Thieves' Arm could become a veritable 'underground railroad' for durulz fleeing the bounty on their beaks.

Sambari: Since the bloody suppression of the Firebull Rebellion, opinions have become polarised. Will the Thieves' Arm be shunned lest it bring renewed Imperial retaliation or else given covert support by clan and tribal authorities seeking revenge?

Torkani: As outsiders close to the uz, the Torkani might have a particular affinity with heroes who themselves work in the shadows.

Enslaved Tribes

Balkoth: Such a poor people may welcome whatever plunder the Thieves' Arm may bring - but the temptation to earn a Lunar reward might be all the more tempting.

Balmyr, Colymar, Enstalos, Lokaem: Tribes ruled by Lunar allies are dangerous places for the Thieves' Arm. The Oakhearts (or at least their leaders) might be prepared to provide access to the Grove, but only on conditions of absolute secrecy.

Culbrea: King Ranulf would be an interesting patron - while maintaining his façade of servility towards the Empire, he is a friend of Rebellion.

Kheldon: Trying to raise the Thieves' Arm amongst these cursed, lethargic people would be a challenge--but the opportunities to encounter Kallyr, their former queen, that much greater.

Malani: Is there room for the Thieves' Arm amongst such maniacs?

See *Barbarian Adventures* pp 4-11 for more information on these tribes.

The Oakheart clan is a relatively small one, with around 750 members scattered across a dozen steads. It has particular relationships with Finovan and Odayla, and is known for the skill of its hunt-

ers and raiders. Other clans sometimes call it the 'thieves' clan', but the Oakhearts have also been staunch in their generosity and honour, so this is more the grumbles of those bested in cattle raids.

Key figures within the Oakhearts are the chieftain, **Dorhelm Wintermane** (Chieftain 1W2, Judicious 16W, Inner Strength 10W), the Lawspeaker, **Igarning the Whistler** (Andrin Lawspeaker 10W, Reach Ageement 8W, Whistle Up Wind 5W), the best hunter, **Longshanks Engarnos** (Odaylan Master Hunter 3W2, Fast Walker 20W, Competitive 8W), **Natalina Goosedancer** (Roitina Ceremonialist 18W, Know What's Going On 15W) and **Brisk Jerene** the horse-breeder (Elmal-Redalda Horsewoman 17W, Canny Trader 10W, Disconcertingly Bossy 7W). The Oakhearts are also one of the few clans with a shrine to Ailrene the Little Sister Borrower. Young **Kerene** is only sixteen, but already is a devotee of this small cult (Ailrene Borrower 5W, Winsome 5W, Nosy 8W).

The Oakhearts neither vaunt nor hide their association with Erastor, but the presence of the Three Oak Glade on their tula is a secret known largely only to members of the Ring.

Ailrene the Little Sister Borrower

Simon Bray & Mark Galeotti

Ailrene's is an unusual, even unique cult, for it is related to that of Asrelia and Ty Kora Tek. Just as they are the Giver and Taker, Ailrene is the Borrower. She tends to be worshipped by young women, most of whom later turn to Ernalda, perhaps later worshipping Asrelia and Ty Kora Tek after their child-bearing days are over. A very few remain worshippers of Ailrene up to that point. She is the petty goddess of Small Takings and Fortuitous Givings. In many ways, she is licensed to thief, because she can also be relied upon to find or have whatever may be needed at some crucial moment. A Borrower must have a keen sense of what to take and what not - never the last chicken or the special pot - and also what is needed when. Often, what she can produce after a rummage through her hoard of random 'borrowings' is not what people think they need but she will be proved right in the end.

Mundane Abilities: Hoarder, Know How Far to Go, Look Innocent, Mythology of Ailrene, Palm Item, Spot Opportunity.

Affinity: **Borrower** (Now You See It, Now You Don't, Wasn't Me, Will This Do?)



Raveena Ghost-Dance-Thief

Simon Bray

It was from Torkan's fold that Raveena escaped, a true black sheep. Born and raised to be a powerful God-Talker by her family, she rejected the godi's life-path and sought her own, finding her own spirits to guide her. With a beauty that shines and a cruel wit that gleams, Raveena has found new pleasures in life: Men. Unlike the tales from the Loom House, Raveena knows the truth about men, and has learned to manipulate them to her ends. It is Raveena's common ruse to pretend to be the helpless victim of an attack (even cutting herself). She then seeks the aid of a group of men (shepherds, soldiers, weaponthanes) and once within their presence she uses her enchanting singing voice, smouldering gaze and skills as a dancer to entrance them, a magical effect that finally culminates in her revealing her magically tattooed leg. So captivating is this sight that the men forget everything. The next morning they awake, robbed, stripped and foolish. Few Heortlings dare confess to encountering Raveena, for fear of wifely retribution. Amongst the Lunars she is like an alluring myth, whispered of at night amongst lonely guards.

Heortling Spirit Talker 10W, Kolating Tradition (Dariza the Seductive Breeze Practice) 20W, Close Combat (Dagger) 18, Dancing 1W2, Acting 15W, Manipulate Men 10W, Thievery 15W, Beautiful 12W, Singing 5W **Integrated Spirits:** Enchanting Voice 10W, Smouldering Gaze 18W, Seductive Movement 8W, Twist Like the Wind 5W, Fly Away on Breeze 20, Induce Slumber 15W. **Fetishes:** Heal Wounds 5W (x3), Draw Attention 7W (x3), Induce Pity 20 (x3), Forget 10W (x3), Run Like Wind 5W (x3). **Fetch:** Rose Lips 1W2.

Tribal Leg 1W2 – The tattoos on Raveena's leg are all fetishes, but more than that, the sight of the leg is so beautiful that all who can see it are affected by Raveena's charms, removing the multiple target modifier for her magic.

Edrald's Torc

Neil Smith

A 'one night wonder' adventure cameo: jewellery, intrigue, kidnap and gifting...

One day, while the heroes are resting in the Two Bull tula, the Leaping Fox Troupe arrives. They are a 15-strong band of wandering entertainers and tinkers. Their leader, Koreng Sidemouth, is a (rather bad) skald who carries news of events as far away as Whitewall and Alda Chur. The Troupe includes other entertainers, mainly of the Low variety: jugglers, prestidigitators, puppeteers, and the like. They are welcomed to the Two Bull tula as a refreshing break in the monotony of stead life. As well as entertaining, various troupe members perform odd jobs around the tula and chieftain's stead (sharpening knives, chopping logs, keeping children out of their parents' hair with tall stories). They become friendly with many Two Bull folk, and especially the heroes. Despite all this, the Leaping Fox Troupe are still strangers and are therefore not trusted by the people of the clan.

A few days after the Troupe arrives, Kernunnic Longbrow (the Two Bull chief) discovers that someone has taken Edrald's Torc, an extremely valuable family heirloom. The Leaping Fox are immediately blamed for the theft, and the weaponthanes move to arrest as many of them as possible. They successfully capture Koreng Sidemouth, but the remainder of the Troupe escape into the forests surrounding the chieftain's stead. Under interrogation, Koreng maintains his innocence and insists that he knows nothing about the disappearance of the Torc. The Lawspeaker and Humakti Champion both listen carefully to his words, and neither can prove him to be a liar. Bowing to popular opinion in the stead, Kernunnic regards this as a technicality and insists that the Leaping Fox Troupe are responsible: Koreng Sidemouth will be tried for the theft of the Torc as the man responsible for the Leaping Foxes.

The heroes should take up Koreng's cause. They may be motivated by their friendship with Koreng and other members of the Leaping Fox Troupe, their innate sense of the nobility of Justice, or something as prosaic as the promise of money from the Troupe. Everyone in the clan knows the history and value of Edrald's Torc. As the heroes investigate affairs in and around the stead, several facts turn up:

- ☐ Several members of the Leaping Fox Troupe have seen the Torc: Kernunnic often wears it.
- ☐ The loss of Edrald's Torc is embarrassing and has caused Kernunnic's standing in the clan to decrease.
- ☐ One of the loudest voices calling for the arrest of Koreng Sidemouth was Fantarl Longbeard's, Kernunnic's brother.
- ☐ Some Leaping Fox members were sleeping in Kernunnic's longhouse the night before the theft, but were heard to be moving around after midnight.
- ☐ There is little love lost between Kernunnic and Fantarl. Fantarl has sought the chieftainship on many occasions.
- ☐ There was an argument in the Leaping Fox's wagons at daybreak the morning the theft was discovered.
- ☐ A number of clansmen are dissatisfied with Kernunnic's liberal leadership style.
- ☐ When Koreng was arrested, Fantarl's questioning was uncharacteristically precise and pointed.
- ☐ Fantarl has commented that, had he been chieftain, the Leaping Fox Troupe would never have been allowed in the tula.



- ❑ Fantarl seems to have been avoiding the Lawspeaker and Humakti weaponthanes since the Torc was stolen.
- ❑ Many of the comments belittling Kernunnic have originated with Fantarl.
- ❑ Fantarl has tried before to undermine Kernunnic.
- ❑ Fantarl is overheard discussing the torc with his weaponthane cronies. "Getting rid of that torc was brilliant!" one says. Fantarl replies, "Now I can get rid of that fop, my brother."

Dramatic tension will best served if the clues are discovered in roughly this order. Following the clues, the heroes should realise that Fantarl is behind the theft, and is attempting to blame the Leaping Foxes for it. They should amass enough evidence to confront him, either in private or publicly at the clan moot. After they make this decision but before they carry it out, the Leaping Fox Troupe make their final bid for a resolution. Koreng Sidemouth's sons, young and hot-headed, have grown impatient and have snatched Rana, Kernunnic's seven-year-old daughter! She is taken while she is playing, and Insterid, her tearful playmate, runs back to the stead with a message from the Leaping Fox Troupe: Rana will be returned to the Two Bull clan in return for Koreng's freedom.

This news puts the clan in turmoil. Kernunnic is distraught; Fantarl seizes the initiative and organises the weaponthanes to hunt down the Leaping Fox Troupe and free Rana, regardless of how many Leaping Fox members are killed in the process. This is, of course, illegal and dishonourable, but Fantarl argues that the situation is desperate and beyond legal niceties.

How the heroes deal with this situation is up to them. They may try to argue the clan out of such a precipitous action, perhaps stressing the danger Rana would be in during such a raid. They may argue for, and possibly agree to undertake, negotiations between the Leaping Fox Troupe and the Two Bull clan. They may take the opportunity to denounce Fantarl Longbeard as a power-grabbing despot. They may directly fight the Two Bull weaponthanes. They may snatch Koreng Sidemouth and get the Leaping Fox to flee before they can be attacked. They may, perhaps unwittingly, precipitate a coup attempt by Fantarl. The heroes' perceived closeness to the Leaping Fox will affect how much influence they have over the Two Bull clan: if they are deemed to be sympathetic to the Leaping Fox, their word will carry less weight. However the heroes resolve this problem, stress the tension and the rapidly changing nature of the situation. Tempers are high, and bloodshed is little more than a cross word away.

The most probable outcome is for Koreng Sidemouth and Rana to return to their respective homes, for the Leaping Fox Troupe to be declared outlaw, and for the heroes to be unwelcome in Two Bull's tula. In any case, the heroes should be with the Leaping Fox Troupe as they leave Two Bull lands. Koreng, and the whole Troupe, are very grateful to the heroes for rescuing Koreng and resolving the situation. Just as the heroes and the Troupe part ways, Koreng says he would like to express his gratitude. He promises the Leaping Fox will assist the heroes however they can in the future. He cements this pact with a small gift: a large, ornate, golden torc...

Dramatis Personae

Koreng Sidemouth: Leader of the Leaping Fox Troupe. Skald 15, Control Leaping Fox Troupe 20, Know Current Affairs 13, Spin Tall Tale 18.

Kernunnic Longbrow: Fairly liberal Chieftain of the Two Bull. Chieftain 6, Devotee of Dar the Leader 8, Let People Have Their Say 18, Consider New Ideas 2.

Fantarl Longbeard: Kernunnic's conservative and resentful elder brother. Warleader 8, Devotee of Starkval 3, Obstinate 10, Ambitious 18.



Kardala Eight-Knives

Simon Bray

Dropped from a Stickpicker's womb, in a Boldhome slum, during the middle of winter, Kardala has a lot to be bitter about. As a teenager she watched her father enslaved and her mother killed for the pleasure of Lunar invaders. Kardala hides amongst the crowds, and watches for her prey with haunting eyes: fat lunar dilettantes. Her pretty face and sweet smile soon lure them near; with a beckoning finger they are drawn into the narrow streets; with struggle, but no scream their bodies are dropped with her deadly blades and their precious wealth is stripped and quickly distributed amongst Boldhome's poor. This is not secret murder; this is the holy war of a Vingan, a war that has taken Kardala beyond her lowly class, and gained honour from the Rebellion's leaders. Kardala has a high ransom upon her head, but she is loved too much to find a betrayer.

Heortling Warrior 15, Devotee of Vinga Desemborth (Combat, Movement, Stealth) 10, Close Combat (Knives, Shortswords) 18, Ranged Combat (Thrown Knife) 12, Hate Lunars 5, Bitter 20, Vengeful 5, Beautiful 5, Haunting Eyes 20, Boldhome Knowledge 10, Spot Easy Mark 4, Find Safe House 5, Well Loved 20, Rebellion Contacts 7, Friends in Boldhome 10, Hide in Shadows 10, Move Silently 10, Appear Unobtrusive 5, (Disadvantages) Low Born 20, Wanted Criminal 5.



Silver Bear Cave

Thom Baguley

This short scenario could be part of the Thieves' War arc or run as a vignette of clan life in Dragon Pass. It assumes the heroes include an Odaylan, Yinkini or hunter but can be adapted to other settings. The original scenario ran with an (unrelated) sub-plot and took a single session to resolve.

Scene 1: Out hunting

One or more heroes are out hunting one morning and hear a scrambling through the forest. Kelfrin, a young hunter (Initiate of Odayla 15, Hunter 13, Naive 15) rushes headlong into them. He blurts out a story about finding a silver-furred bear cub in a snare. He tried to free it, but was interrupted by a group of disreputable looking Orlanthi. They chased him off and took the cub. Kelfrin believes they intend to make money off the cub (either by selling it or using it to entertain Lunar soldiers at the local fort).

Knowledge of Silver Bears (Mythology of Odayla, Mythology of Thunder Brothers -3 or similar vs. 12). Marginal success: Silver bears are sacred to Odayla. Further degrees of success: Lunar priests would probably pay a great deal for the bear.

Tracking the Men (Tracking vs. 14) Any success: They track the men and catch up with them before they reach Clearwine (or whichever is the nearest Lunar garrison).

Scene 2: Returning the cub

As the Lawspeaker whispers in his ear, Dorhelm turns to you with deliberate ceremony: "you ask much of us, but we know little of you. Can you respect our ways and our gods? Odayla is special to the Oakheart clan. Return us our totem."

Depending on the level of success at tracking the heroes should catch up with the men before they reach Clearwine. (If not, improvise some encounters with Lunar guards and Heortling townfolk. What if the heroes have a price on their head? Unless the heroes are very incompetent they should head off the outlaws before they sell the cub – or at least before some middleman sells it on to a slimy Etyries merchant). A good tracking outcome will let the heroes head off the men before they stray too far from clan hunting grounds. A marginal result will give the men with the cub time to prepare for an encounter. For a beginning party, there will be two outlaws for every hero. For a tougher outlaw band make them and their leader Gagarthi and raise close combat.

If pressed, they claim to be from the Tongartling clan of the Balmyr. In reality, they are Finovani outlaws. Astute heroes may see through this flimsy claim (based on their appearance, manner or evasive remarks). They will fight if necessary, or flee if obviously outclassed. The heroes may attempt to appeal to the outlaws' better natures. Sadly, the finer Orlanthi virtues are almost non-existent among them. They are more likely to be swayed by



threats or bribes. They are not stupid, though, and not above threatening to kill the cub: "Better a pelt than nothing" (a tactic they will almost certainly fall back on if a fight goes badly).

Bargain for the Cub (Bargain, Intimidate -5 or similar vs. 5W). Modify bargain by up to +10 for very generous offers (3+ cows) and -10 for poor offers (unsupported threats and so on). They'll ask for 4 cows, but will settle for 2. They might go to one cow or less if clearly outclassed!).

Scene 3: Free at last

Once the cub has been rescued the heroes should think to free it near where it was first caught (Kelfrin can supply this suggestion if necessary). Clever players may also think to follow the cub (either to make sure it is safe, or out of curiosity). Doing so should lead them to Silver Bear Cave (see below). Otherwise they will return home to boast of their piety (and mourn any lost wealth).

That night, Odayla sends a dream of a cave deep in a forest, beneath a waterfall. Feel free to improvise long dream sequences with forest creatures, mighty trees, roaring water and so on. On waking, they are clutching a token from the dream (a pebble from the river, a pine cone from the forest or a tuft of silvery fur). Any initiates of Odayla recognise the forest surroundings (near the clan hunting grounds), but not the cave.

Finding the cave is difficult, but Odayla will aid them if they try. It requires defeating a resistance of 5W2 in an extended contest. Rituals can aid the quest (following the cub gives +20; using a dream token gives +10). Suitable skills for finding the cave might include Hunting, Tracking, Mythology of Odayla depending on



the method they employ. Modifiers: +10 to devotees of Odayla, +5 to initiates or devotees of other hunter gods.

Silver Bear Cave

An Odaylan finding the cave realises it is sacred to Odayla (and a place on the Hero Plane where access to the God Plane is easier). It can be found again by those who have been there before automatically on Odayla's high holy day by an initiate or on any Odaylan holy day by a devotee (who can also lead Storm pantheon initiates there). The first time they find the cave, Odaylan initiates are blessed with a vision (become devotee at -1 HP cost, and +1HP to any Odaylan mundane ability). Devotees gain a new feat for the **Hunt** affinity, Discover Lair. Thunder Brothers can pay HP to gain a stand-alone feat of their choice at 12. Others may gain the relationship Friend to Odayla at 12 for 1HP.

Longshanks Engarnos even grunts a greeting as he enters your stead unannounced. With a stiff movement redolent of ritual, he slammed a fine bone knife into the pillar by the door and proceeded to hang from it three plump rabbits, two haunches of elk and a bag of what smelled like spiced honeycombs. He spits a blessing into your fireplace and then leaves. For all the roughness of his ways, you recognise this as the signal honour it is.

Rewards: Apart from the obvious rewards, characters should be awarded 1-2 hero points for taking part and a targeted award for each (a relationship, tracking or bargaining as appropriate). Remember to decrease the wealth of those who paid for the cub's return.

Plot Hooks

Who were the men? What if the heroes never realise that these rather dubious men might not be from the Balmyri? How would they react on meeting other Balmyri from the Tongartling clan? How would the Tongartlings react at being called impious, disrespectful, or mercenary? Feuds, raids and legal disputes should ensue.

If persuaded to part with the cub voluntarily, the outlaws may learn how much the Lunars would have paid – up to 20-30 cows – and return to seek vengeance as part of a larger and nastier band. Alternatively, they might reform and try and join the Thieves' Arm.

What is the significance of Silver Bear Cave? This is deliberately left vague. Such sanctuaries are rare and mark important magical resources for the heroes. The Lunars would love to find such place. Odaylan godi and devotees from other clans would want access to it and the magical feat it provides. What will happen when the cub is full-grown? Does it have some future role in the hero wars?

Outlaws

They will augment close combat with Fierce and charge weaker foes. Against stronger foes, they augment armour edges with Tough, throw javelins and withdraw if things going badly. Spear & Shield 15^3; Leather armour & shields ^2; Throw Javelin 13; Fierce 17; Disrespectful 13; Tough 13; Running 18. Affinities: Combat 13, Movement, 13, Raiding 13 (apply a penalty of -3 in addition to the normal improvisation penalty because of their impiety, for a total of -6).

Erryn Horn-Shiner

The outlaw leader is a surly, mean-minded individual distinguished from his fellows by being a little tougher and more cunning. He will instruct at least one of his men to watch his back in combat (acting as a follower) and make sure that the cub is well guarded by another (who will hang back from any combat). Spear & shield 19^3; Metal Armour & Shield ^4; Throw Javelin 13; Cunning 19; Disrespectful 15; Intimidate 17; Tough 15; Running 18, Bargain 17. Affinities: Combat 19, Movement, 17, Raiding 13 (apply a penalty at -3 in addition to the normal improvisation penalty because of impiety, for a total of -6). He and his gang are not tough - they are typical petty bandits. However, the Narrator is free to increase their skills, give Erryn some special power or introduce some sneakiness (maybe the gang is actually double the size it seemed and the rest are awaiting in ambush?) to even out the odds and ensure exciting play.

From the Tablets of Ohenkash, Judex

The 'Mountaineers' of Nochet

Of course, the way Orlanthi clans raid, intimidate and extort from their neighbours is testament to the essentially barbaric and criminal nature of their society, even if in most cases this reflects the ignorance and prejudice in which they are raised rather than outright evil. After all, as the Blessed Sedenya Herself said, 'the traditions of dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the minds of the living.' But this is not yet a protection racket; not quite. However, take Orlanthi away from their own rough-and-ready laws and the beast within can emerge, and nowhere does this seem more evident than Nochet. This moderately civilised city has become a haven for a growing number of Sartari 'refugees' – mostly rebels and bandits fleeing Imperial justice. It is hardly surprising that they have quickly become feared protection racketeers and criminal enforcers. After all, they have a fearsome reputation, they care little for local laws and the networks of kinship, customary law and bloodprice, which confined them at home, have little bearing in Nochet. Indeed, the irony is that after the first few incidents, they rarely have to draw blade or shed blood, so terrible is their reputation. Thus, these 'mountaineers' – it is commonly believed in Nochet that Sartar is a land entirely of mountains, which makes we wonder why they think Dragon Pass is called a pass – are on the one hand the most vicious and bloodthirsty racketeers of the city, but on the other are responsible for the fewest killings.



The Taming of Valind

Wesley Quadros

Based on an episode by Martin Laurie

The Myth

There was a thane named Sordal, the son of Sordal the Elder who was the son of Gleeful-Steif who had married a vixen called Goldmane. Now Sordal resided at Steifsstead that lay within sight of Elmal's House in the shadow of Aedin's Wall. Now it came to be that Elmal brought the news to Orlanth of Sordal's death at the hands of Vadrus. Orlanth grew wroth. He called the Thunder Brothers to him and girt himself for Humakt's Dance. He had a pyre built and set Sordal's body upon it before he set out to bring justice to his brother.

Humakt blocked his passage saying, "Brother mine, severed we may be but you cannot slay Vadrus. That kinslaying would bring horror upon us all." "Am I not Orlanthandrin," the Storm Lord replied, "who created the Law Staff and know all of our laws?" Humakt nodded when Orlanth recited the laws on kinslaying and stepped from his path. "You are just."

At the edge of Steifsstead, Kolat called to his brother. "How will you find our brother's stead?" "Am I not Ormalaya who can track any prey?" replied Orlanth pointing to Vadrus' tracks. Kolat nodded thoughtfully. "There are those among Vadrus' band who are of my world," he said. "They are of the spirit world." "They will be free to join you once Vadrus' hold is removed." Kolat smiled at his brother. "You are indeed generous."

Orlanth rode into the Broken Cow hills. There was a bellow of rage, followed by a sudden scream and Eurmal raced into view with Urox pounding along the trail behind him. "Ish is gunna git ya thosh time 'Rmal!" shouted the drunken warrior. "Orlanth," cried the trickster, "save me!" "Am I not Orlanthdar who brought peace to the Storm Tribe?" Orlanth stepped before his brother and said, "Urox, would it not be better to fight the Predark than to thrash the fool?" Urox blinked and the clouds cleared from his eyes. "Chaos!" he cried. "You are wise my brother." With that Urox finished his tankard and charged off to find something else to fight.

Orlanth led his band out of the hills and came upon Brastalos standing before a hulking foreigner. She stood staring down several clansmen who waved spears at her companion. "Orlanth," she called. "This is my kin Engizi to whom you granted safe passage." Orlanth greeted the sea warlord properly. "Unfortunately," continued Brastalos, "none here can speak with him and learn of his peaceful intent here." "Am I not Harst who can speak with anyone?" asked Orlanth. He then taught the clansmen how to speak to Engizi. They were the Tertoni and were the first of the Storm Tribe to worship the River. "You are as honourable as your sister has said," said Engizi.

And now Orlanth passed over the River and fared into the far north until he stood before Fjustrata, Vadrus' gate-keeper. "You will not pass me by Orlanth," the ice-giant grated. "Am I not Hedkoranth who can smash any barrier?" With that Orlanth chased the gate-keeper onto the glacier with a glowing thunder stone and shattered him.

So Orlanth finally passed into Vadrus' winter stead and confronted his brother before the assembled Vadrudi. "Have you come to meet me in single combat?" asked Vadrus.

"Am I not Starkval who will face any foe?" was Orlanth's response. And so they fought and Orlanth defeated his brother and banished him from the Storm Tribe. Orlanth accepted Valind as a Thunder Brother – though they both understood that he would be a restless one.

The Quest

The Taming of Valind is a heroquest that chieftains or their proxies can perform when faced with bandit attacks. Heroes usually perform the quest to oust particularly effective bandit chiefs or to help return a group of bandits to the community. Occasionally, this quest has been performed to gain the support of a bandit group.

Requirements

The quester must **know the myth** of How Orlanth Tamed Valind, requiring a simple roll against Myths of Orlanth, Myths of the Thunder Brothers or Heortling Myths (-5). The quester needs to **decide who will benefit** from their quest (himself, his clan or his heroband) and **take companions** with him who can fulfil all of the roles required in the different stations and to aid him in the battle at the end. A slain thane – or the biggest bull in the herd as a **sacrifice**. A **great funeral pyre**.

Scene 1 – A Pyre

The quest begins with the slain thane, or the sacrificial bull, being burned on a funeral pyre. The quest leader must swear an oath to bring Vadrus to justice and then cross to the God Time.

Cross to the Storm Realm (10W3): Myths of Orlanth, Myths of the Thunder Brothers, Heortling Myths (-10)

When the heroes arrive in the Storm Realm they will be standing before Sordal's funeral pyre and will be surrounded by his wailing family.

Characterising the Foe

Many hero quests are done to force an opponent into a mythical position that is disadvantageous to him. If the heroes are carrying out the quest because of the raids of the Broken Hill Bandits, they need to show that the Thrut Torc-Cleaver is Vadrus if they want him to be drawn into the myth. They can do this by relating the bandit's actions, his manner of dress or speech, his skills or anything else to those of Vadrus.



Dorhelm looks down on the bloodied bodies, his tears spent, his anger now cooled to a resolution as tight as the grip on his spear haft. He looks to you: “this is the work of the Broken Hill Bandits. We tolerated them, for many once were kin, but since Thrut brought his Vadrudish ways, they have become savage beasts. No more. This. I pledge - kill them, send them fleeing our lands, even tame them, and in the name of the Oakhearts, Erastor’s hidden glade is yours.” A half-turn away, then a sudden thought: “speak with Frithorf.”

For example: “Thrut is Vadrus! Does he not wear a horned helm, just like Vadrus? Does he not ride out of the Howler to attack at night, just like Vadrus? Does he not lead a band of outlaws, just like Vadrus?”

Cast Thrut as Vadrus (1W): Myths of Orlanth, Myths of the Thunder Brothers

Frithorf? The old Skovaran? What could she know? When you reach her, though, she seems to know already why you are here. A sudden flurry of movement and her puppets dance, speaking the words her twisted mouth no longer can shape, and before you plays out a myth you had half-forgotten, the tale of how Orlanth defeated Vadrus and brought Valind into the Storm Tribe.

Scene 2 – Humakt’s Objections

Humakt addresses Orlanth and objects to him going off to fight Vadrus. He will say that it is kinslaying and is the source of evil. Orlanth of course created the laws and knows this. The heroes need to convince Humakt that they will act justly and that they will not slay Vadrus.

Argue what is Right with Humakt (3W2): Heortling Laws, Clan Law, Tribal Law, Just (+10), Heortling Myths (-10)

If the heroes cannot convince Humakt, then he withdraws his support of the heroes’ leadership. The heroes suffer -2 to any relationship or leadership ability until they have satisfied the Death God that they are indeed Just – this result lasts even after the quest is over.

Scene 3 – Kolat’s Worries

Kolat asks the heroes how they will find Vadrus.

Find Vadrus’ Trail (13W): Track, Hunt (-3), Perceptive (-5), Wilderness Survival (-6)

Once the trail is found Kolat will ask about some of the Vadrudi who are spirits rather than daimones and ask for command of them for himself. Failure to find the trail means that the heroes have to stumble on into the north without a clear goal in mind.

Scene 4 – The Brawn and the Buffoon

There are many ways that Orlanth can stop Urox from pounding Eurmial into the next season. He can wrestle him down, he can command him to leave Eurmial alone, or perhaps he carries Eurmial away with magic.

Wrestle Urox (3W3): Wrestle, Close Combat (-5), Strong (-10)

Command Urox (19W2): Silencing Bellow, Orate (-2), Intimidate Follow

Whisk Eurmial Away (14W): Lift Object with Winds, Travel Anywhere in Sight

Failure to save Eurmial means that Urox beats him and then leaves to find more beer. The heroes have earned the enmity of the Trickster. How this disapproval manifests is up to the Narrator – be creative!

Scene 5 - Visitors

Orlanth needs to convince the hostile clansmen to honour his oath to Engizi and then teach them how to speak with him.

Convince Clansmen (7W2): Orate, Negotiate (-5), Debate (-5)

Teach Clansmen (2W2): Teach, Communicate with Strangers, Be Understood, Orate (-5)

If the heroes fail here then there will be a brawl after they leave.

Scene 6 – Brother Mine

The heroes need to get past Vadrus’ gate-keeper to enter the Winter Stead.

Fjustrata the Gate-Keeper

As Himthur (*Anaxial’s Roster*, p153) but +10 to each ability.

Once inside the palisade Vadrus and his Vadrudi confront Orlanth. Orlanth is honour-bound to accept the challenge to single combat.

Vadrus the Wild Wind

If the quest has drawn a particular target in to be Vadrus, use that person’s abilities with a +10 bonus. Close Combat (Warhammer & Shield) 19W2, Wild Storm Magic 15W2. ‘Rhino’ the Warhammer ^9, ‘Touch Me!’ Armour ^9

After the first round of combat the Vadrudi all attack Orlanth in a typical, Vadrudi, betrayal. There are as many Vadrudi as Orlanth has followers but no less than three.

Vadrudi Warrior

Ferocious 15W, Close Combat 5W2, Wild Storm magic 5W2. Ice Spear ^7, Grey Armour ^7

Unless the heroes previously stated that they were prepared for treachery, the Vadrudi get one attack on Orlanth before the Thunder Brothers can intervene. If Orlanth kills Vadrus rather than just subduing him, then the quest fails.



Aftermath

If successful, the quest will result in:

- WP The leader of the specified bandit group being ousted for some reason – assuming that the leader was successfully drawn into the quest.
- WP A local bandit group, or some members of the group, moving to build a better relationship with the community.
- WP The quest beneficiary gaining a follower relationship with the leader of the specified bandit group.

The strength of the relationship is equal to the final carryover for the quest.

The Broken Hill Bandits

For the past few years the local clans have been suffering some minor bandit raids from the wild lands around Broken Hill. The raids were annoying but not very serious, a cow here, a couple of sheep there, and the trap-lines plundered. This past season that all changed. An outlawed weaponthane from the Kitori rode through the tula and disappeared into the wilds. Thrut Torc-Cleaver was his name and evil was his visage. Since that time the bandit raids have grown both more frequent and have now turned deadly. Three shepherds have died in the last season and two hunters are missing. Expeditions organised by the chief have found nothing but valindi and gagarthi runes carved into warding sticks. There are twenty bandits with 8 women and children in their camp.

Hunter 7W, Bow or Javelin 15W, Spear 8W, Initiate of Ormalaya 17

Warrior 7W, Spear & Shield 16W, Initiate of Valind 17

Thrut Torc-Cleaver

Thrut was the son of the chief of the Black Amber clan of the Kitori. When he refused to pay weregeld for a man slaying his mother outlawed him. He wandered across Sartar and settled in the Broken Hill wilds last season. His Kitori blood makes him the largest and toughest man in the wilds; he used those attributes to replace Heimgal as leader of the band and to take Heimgal’s woman.

Weaponthane 18W, Axe & Shield 6W2, Devotee of Valind (North Wind, Snowstorm 2W2, Winter King) 15W, Terrorise Follower 8W, Tall 9W

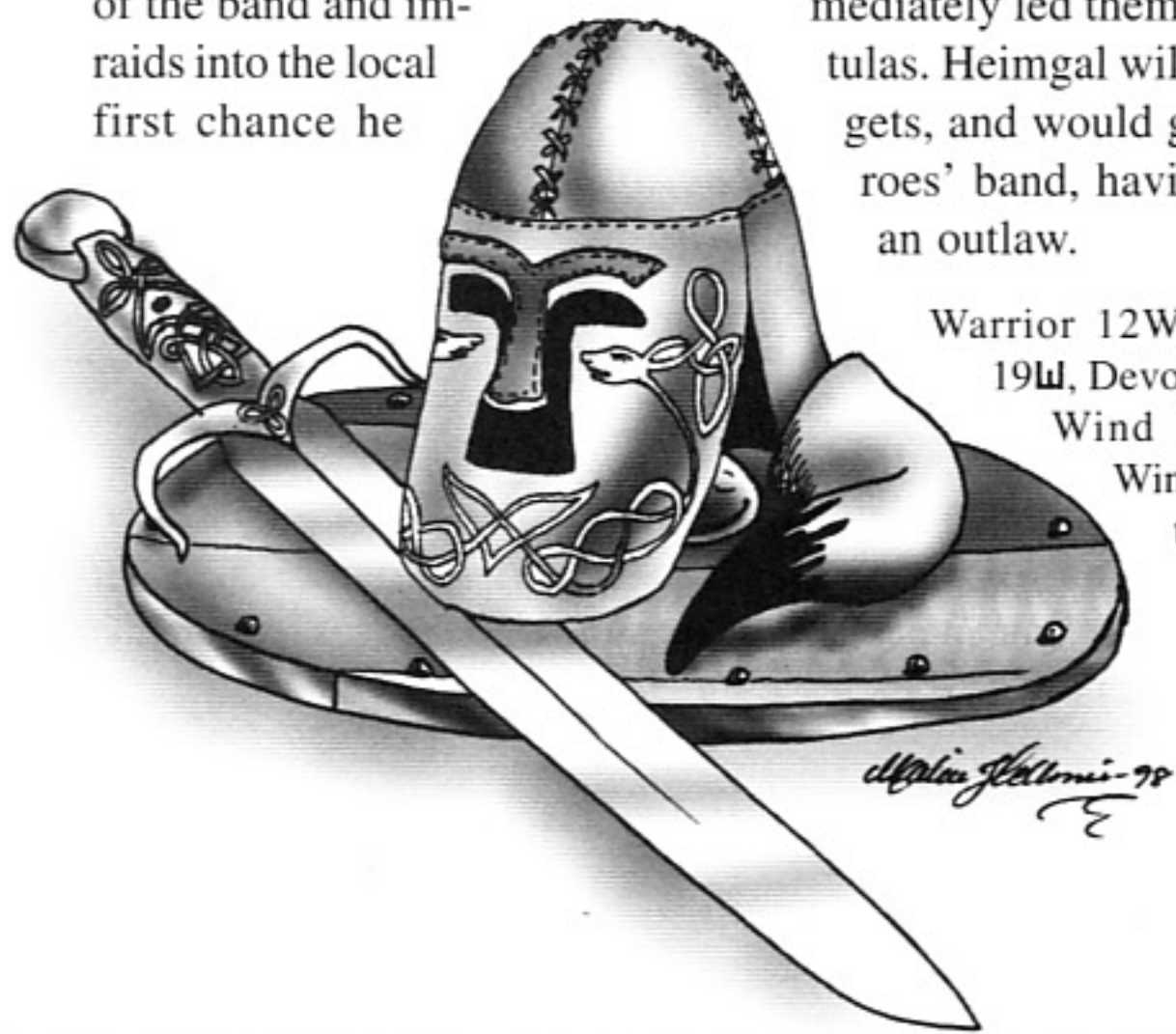
Heimgal the Wary

Heimgal is a man trapped by circumstance and forced into outlawry. He has been trying to keep alive and little more than that since. He had kept his band’s raiding to a minimum, only takingn what they need. Thrut has changed everything.

of the band and im-
raids into the local
first chance he

He took Heimgal’s place as the leader
mediately led them in several bloody
tulas. Heimgal will depose Thrut the
gets, and would gladly join the he-
roes’ band, having tired of life as
an outlaw.

Warrior 12W, Sword & Shield
19W, Devotee of Valind (North
Wind 19W, Snowstorm,
Winter King) 11W, Cau-
tious 4W



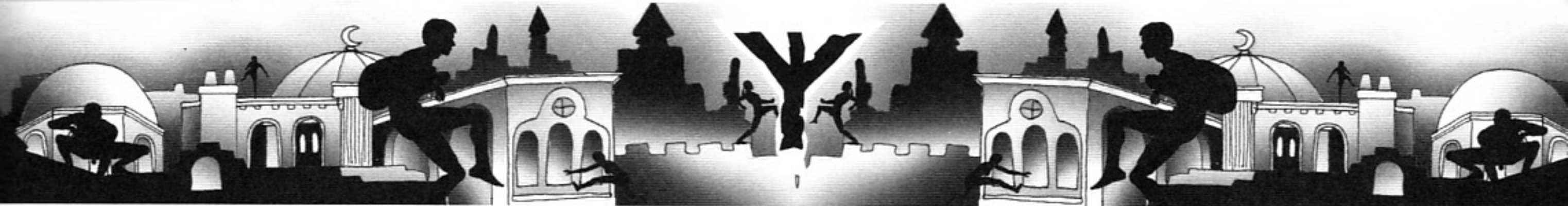
Uisu Who Ate His
Tattoos

Mark Galeotti



Born in the highlands of distant Aggar, Uisu was a clan warrior of hon-our and note, his blade as deadly as the spirits of wind and storm he could wield. He had little to do with the Turn- ing Moon, but in time his dreams became troubled. Stark visions of a unified, civilised, homogenised future, in which the woods had been felled to make way for fields, in which the hills had been levelled to build cities and in which the unruly soul of Man had been tamed. Kolat spoken to him one night, and he stumbled, half-fevered, half-terrified, to a barren, rocky hill upon which he danced the Seven Sword Dance, partnered by spirits of the winds, with lightning blades snapping at his heels and thunder rumbling to his beat. He spent the next seven days and seven nights dancing, and each night one more of the clan tattoos which had for years marked him for what and who he was, shrunk into him and dis- appeared. With the disappearance of the last tattoo, the blazing of his clan, he knew he was no longer their kin but had been accepted into something else. Driven by his dreams and visions, he fought, stole, hunted and marched south and east until he came to Dragon Pass. The visions now grow intense, but unclear. There is a dragon in the earth, a star shedding tears of iron, a child with an eagle’s talon and a stone table washed in blood. He now wanders the Pass, taking a sheep here where he must, ambushing some fat Lunar when he can. He awaits something, something called Purpose.

Aggari Warrior 18W, Swordsman 1W2, Dedicated Practitioner of the Kiren Sparrowhawk Practice of Kolat 18W, Driven 10W, Visions 20. Integrated Spirits: Whirling Leap 20, Smell Foe on Wind 20, Leap on the Wind 1W, Heal in Rain 20, Dodge Lightning 1W, Blow Away Arrow 18, Do Without Food 20.



The Sandals of Darkness

Simon Phipp

The Oakheart clan godf brings the heroes to the glade. ‘Behold!’ It’s an impressive place, to be sure, with three ancient oaks standing around the glade, like tree gods surrounded by a lesser servants and attendants: smaller trees, dense hawthorn bushes and murder-green holly. But faced with the absolute confidence of the whole clan that they will understand its power and what will make it such a perfect refuge for them, none of the heroes is able to admit their ignorance in the brief moment before, with the satisfied air of one who has just presented the greatest of gifts, the godf departs. Now what? Then Blade chuckles in that irritating, knowing way it has. ‘You do not know how to awaken the full powers of the Glade? Orlanth gained the powers of Hidden Action through a heroquest – are you not heroes to do the same?’

When Orlanth was wooing Ernalda, he searched for a gift that would impress her. Overhearing one of her servants saying that she needed a new pair of shoes, Orlanth thought of the Sandals of Darkness worn by Kyger Litor. He went to his brothers for help. “Raise an army and march into Hell” said Humakt. “Fill your lungs with air and fight the Troll Mother for that is all you need” said Storm Bull. “Why bother with gifts, just take the Queen with force and make her your own” said Vadrus.

Orlanth could not agree with any of these suggestions so he asked Yinkin, for help. “I will go with you,” he said, but Orlanth refused saying that he should remain home and guard his family. “Then take my Keen Smell to be your guide” said Yinkin. Orlanth thanked him but said that he would bump into walls and not see his enemies in the Darkness. “No problem, take my Darksight as well” said Yinkin, and he lent Orlanth his senses.

Thus prepared, Orlanth set off for the World Mountain and entered the staircase that led down to Hell. He descended to the Underworld and through the Waters, smelling the cold vapours and musty odours that drifted up from below. He was plagued by insects as he entered Hell and had to summon a mighty wind to blow them away. He reached the bottom of the staircase and wandered through the Kingdoms of the Trolls trying to find Kyger Litor.

At last he saw two trolls sitting and talking, gesturing to a faraway mountain. Orlanth used the winds to bring their words to him and heard them talking about the Troll Mother who lived in the mountain. Orlanth took heart at this and headed off for the Dark Mountain where he found a deep, dark cavern filled with the unmistakable odour of Kyger Litor herself. He descended deeper and deeper, guided by the strong scent until he found him-



self in a dark cavern with what appeared an empty couch in the centre. Orlanth approached the couch and saw the impression of a huge form lying on the couch but could not see the person herself. Carefully, Orlanth made his way to the foot of the couch and found the feet there. Holding his breath, Orlanth unlaced the sandals and removed them one by one. As he removed the second sandal, the sleeping form of Kyger Litor appeared and the room was filled with snoring. The second sandal cried out “Hey, who are you and what are you doing?” Orlanth replied “I am Orlanth and you will obey me” and quickly fastened the sandals on his own feet where they shrank to his size. Orlanth disappeared.

At that moment, two giant trolls were passing. Seeing Orlanth talking to the sandals and disappearing, they charged in and began swinging their clubs around the room, trying to bash him wherever he hid. Orlanth danced and jumped but could not evade the trolls so he skipped behind one and showed himself to the other. The troll swung his club as hard as he could as Orlanth slipped into the shadows and ducked out of the way. The club slammed into the other troll’s leg, where Orlanth’s head would have been, and smashed it into pieces. Orlanth slipped past and ran as fast as he could from the mountain, over the plains and up the staircase to the surface and did not stop running until he reached home.

Orlanth returned Yinkin’s Darksight and Keen Smell and thanked him for his help, offering to repay him some day. He set out for the Queen’s Court and gave her the Sandals in person. Smiling gently, she said “We thank you for the kind gift and we bid you to wear them for us and, when you wear them, to think of us.” In that way, she declined the gift without offending Orlanth for she could see what a proud and handsome young man he was.

This myth is based on the story ‘How Orlanth Won Ernalda’s Attention’ by Martin R Crim as told in *The RuneQuest Con Compendium*.





The Sandals of Darkness Heroquest

Jeff Kyer

The following Quest is used to get access to the Sandals of Darkness, one of the Four Magic Weapons. In the context of the Thieves' Arm arc, it can also activate the powers of the Three Oak Glade. In all cases the suggested tests are an example of the sort of contests involved. Clever or foolish heroes may use other abilities to succeed in their quest. Entering the heroplane is conducted normally: the usual Otherworld Barrier of 10W3 must be overcome. If the heroes are seeking to activate the Glade, they may receive communal support from the Oakheart clan, depending on their relations with them. Carryover at each stage is standard unless otherwise noted.

Station 1: Search for a Gift

Upon entering the heroplane, the Quester finds himself just outside Ernalda's Loom House, listening to the conversations within. Determining the most appropriate gift requires the hero either overhear the servants or overcome their loyalty to their mistress with his charm. No Orlanthi would be so crass as to actually ask Ernalda what she wants, as she doesn't know who he is yet.

Overhear Servants without Being Noticed

Appropriate Abilities: Listen, Eavesdrop (+3), Sneak (-7), Wind Affinity
Resistance: 15W

Any Victory: The hero discovers the Queen wants nice shoes. Higher levels indicating how well the hero interprets the vague rumours without starting a scandal about a scruffy godling lurking in the corridors. Carryover +1 per level of Victory.

Any Defeat: The hero goes to find the sandals of Darkness but the Queen really wants flowers or honey-cakes to brighten her day. Carryover -1 per level of Defeat.

Question a Servant

Appropriate Abilities: Charming, Handsome (-2), Seduction (+5)
Resistance: 10W

Any Victory: As above. Seducing a servant reduces the level of success in Station 6 by one. One shouldn't seduce serving girls if you're wooing the mistress.

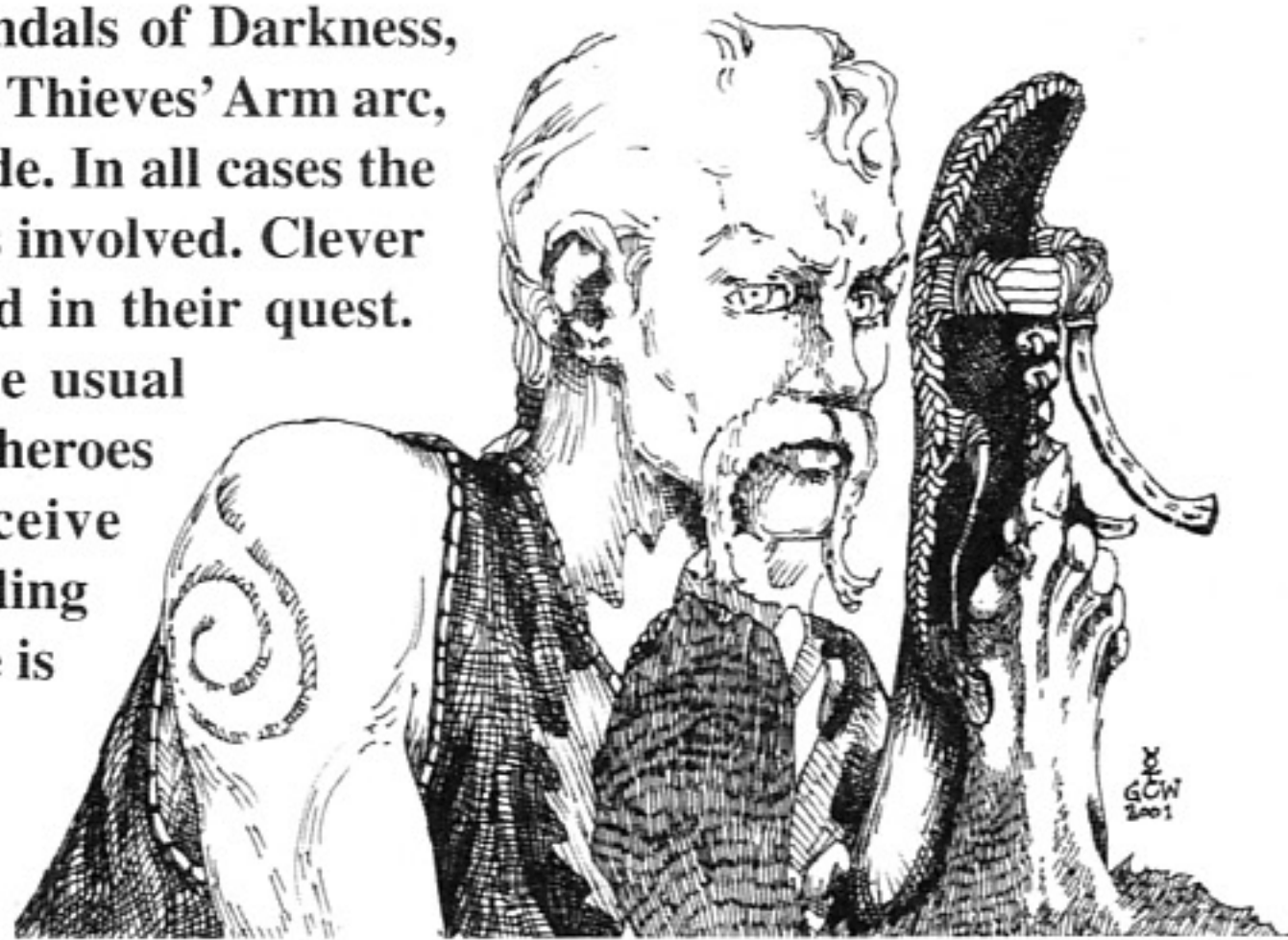
Any Defeat: As above. Failure to seduce reduces the success by two. Ernalda does not tolerate inept suitors.

Station 2: Request For Aid

The hero can only request the aid of one of the brothers, choosing after he has heard them out. The type of aid will determine the nature of the conflict with Kyger Litor. Test the hero's relevant ability to gain that brother's assistance.

Humakt: Close Combat, Leadership, some warrior-related relationship. Humakt and his Einherjar accompany the hero into the Underworld and fight the Trolls.

Urox: Brave, Strong or Wrestling. Urox breathes strength into the hero. Gain +20 on Close Combat for the rest of the heroquest.



Vadrus: Reckless, Violent or Close Combat. Kidnap Ernalda and carry her off instead

Yinkin: Clever, Stealth, family-type relationship or loyalty. Yinkin lends the hero his Stealth and Track Affinities (at the same level as the hero's best Orlanth affinity)

Each brother has a Reluctance to help of 10W2 that must be overcome. Success determines the form of the struggle and assistance given in the Underworld. Following the advice of Vadrus results in a rather different heroquest. If the hero fails here, the quest ends.

Station 3: Journey Through Hell

The narrator is free to improvise a few encounters in the underworld. None should be terribly challenging, especially if he has Humakt or Storm Bull with him. Yinkin's stealth allows him to evade encounters he does not wish to experience. To find the Troll Mother's lair, he must eavesdrop on the trolls or track them with scent back to Dark Mountain (easier to do if he's overheard the trolls).

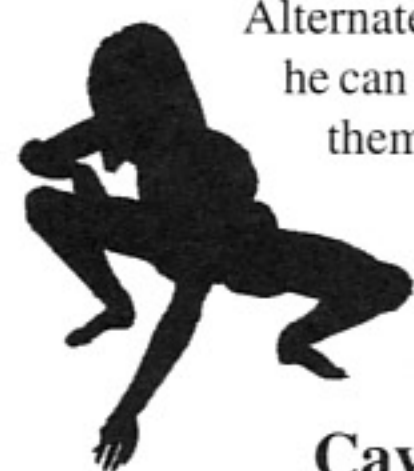
Overhear Trolls

Appropriate Abilities: Hear Words on the Wind, Eavesdrop (-10), Sneak (-7), Wind Affinity (-3)
Resistance: 15W

Any Defeat: The hero ends up fighting two powerful trolls who notice the eavesdropper (Troll and Magic keywords tough enough to challenge the hero - usually about 10W2).

Track By Scent

Appropriate Abilities: Tracking (-6), Track By Scent, Underworld Geography (-10) If he overheard the trolls, +20 bonus.
Resistance: 10W2



Alternately, if he has Humakt's army or Urox's strength, he can simply beat the answer out of the trolls or pursue them back to Dark Mountain. Sometimes violence is the best option!

Station 4: In the Troll Mother's Cavern

Sneaking to the Troll Mother's couch and taking her sandals is difficult. The hero must use his new-found Stealth to make away with the sandals. There are two parts to the contest: getting the sandals off the sleeping monster and then escaping without ending up in her belly. This is a Quest Challenge. The hero must pit an appropriate affinity or magical ability such as Stealth, Thief or Raiding. If successful, the hero receives the Sandals of Darkness Feat at the level of the wagered affinity or ability.

Slip the Sandals off the Troll Mother

Appropriate Abilities: Pick Pockets, Sleight of Hand, Stealth affinity (-3)

Resistance: 10W3

Any victory: The hero steals the sandals before the Troll Mother awakens. He can slip them on and slip away into the Darkness before she can strike.

Any defeat or Tie: The Mother wakes before the sandals can be stolen. He loses the wagered ability, and can either flee or fight her – if he is able to bring her to a Major Defeat or worse, he can still take the Sandals (and the feat), but does not regain the lost ability. Mother and her minions have Fight Intruder at 10W5.

Sneak Out

Appropriate Abilities: Stealth Affinity, Sandals of Darkness, Sneak, Run Away (-10). If the hero has the Sandals, these add +20.

Resistance: 15W3

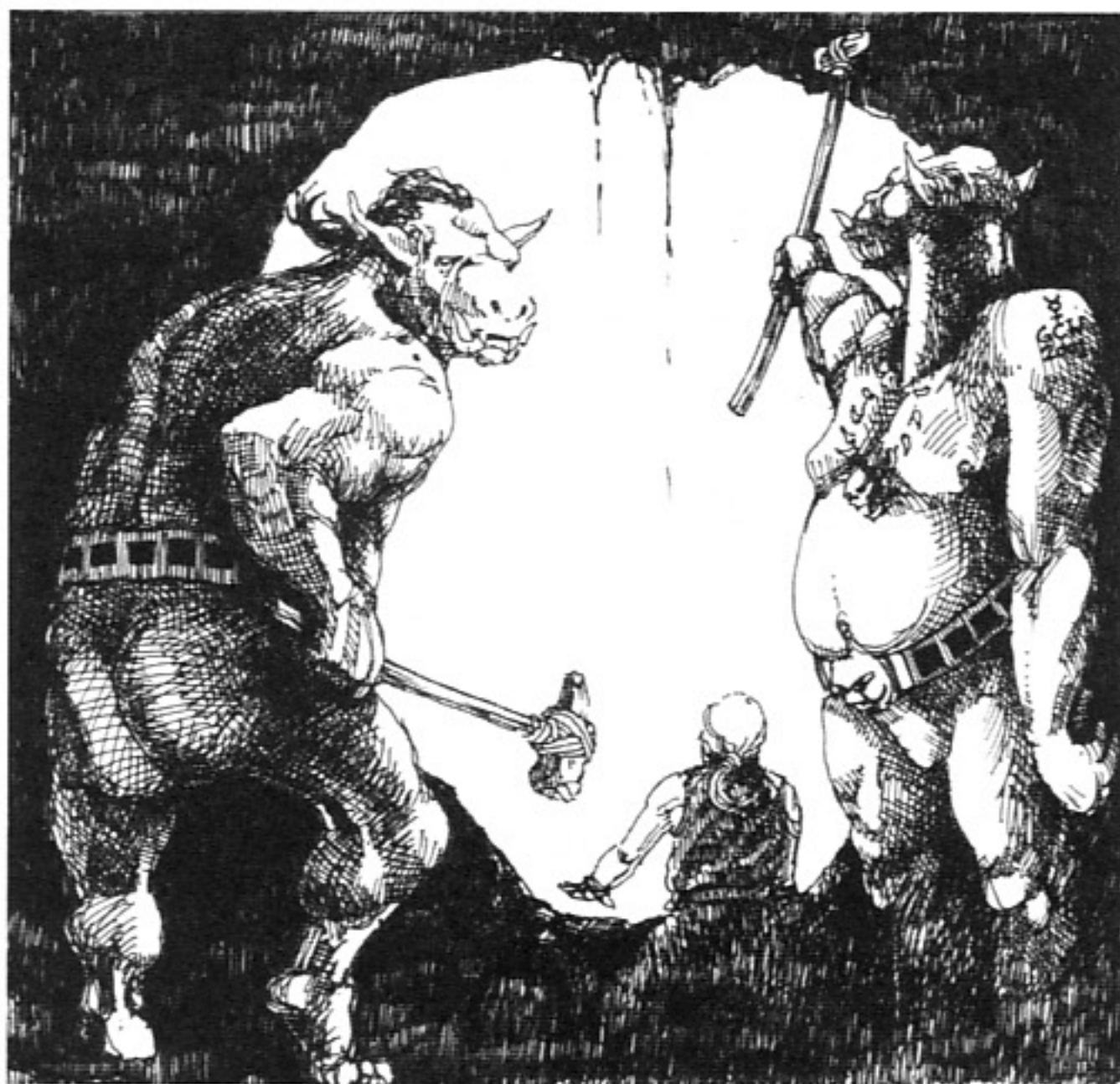
Any Victory: The Hero is able to escape from Dark Mountain.

Any Defeat: The Hero is able to escape but may be badly wounded in the process.

If the hero is using a more violent option, he will have to fight the Troll Mother and her minions from the start, at 10W5 conflict. The Carryover at this station is doubled, and overall failure means the failure of the quest

Station 5: Return to the Surface

This station is similar to the trip into the Underworld but the hero can use the Sandals to augment his Stealth. If he failed in the previous stations, he may be pursued by hungry and vengeful trolls. Without the Sandals, he must fight the now alerted denizens of the Underworld, on their home ground.



Station 6: Presenting to the Queen

Present the Gift

Appropriate Abilities: Handsome, Charming, Seduction (-5), Noble Posture, Good Manners, Poet

Resistance: 10W

Any Victory or Tie: Ernalda gives the Hero the sandals with a smile and hints she would like to see him again.

Any Defeat: Ernalda takes the sandals, leaving the Hero with nothing save her warm smile.

Station 7: Return home

After visiting the Queen, the hero should thank his brother for help – he now owes him a favour. The hero then returns to his Stead (usual resistance).

Rewards

If successful the hero has gained the Sandals of Darkness for himself or for his people. If the hero quested for himself, he gains the Sandals of Darkness feat at the level equal to the ability he wagered (do not consider support when determining the permanent level of the feat). Should he be questing for his clan or people, the wyter gains the blessing Sandals of Darkness. The level of success determines how long the wyter retains the ability.

In the context of the Thieves' Arm arc, the quest may also be used to activate the full powers of the Three Oak Glade. Not only does the Blade acquire the Sandals of Darkness blessing, but the Glade becomes a gateway into a 'short world', a kind of pocket bubble of otherworld. Treat the Glade as having the power Short World equal to the level of ability the hero wagered. Anyone who does not know the secret route from the Glade to its otherworldly counterpart must beat this ability to be aware of the route and follow it. Heroes passing into the short world disappear into leafy hidden ways and re-emerge in what looks like the Three Oak Glade, but more so: it is larger, the trees are taller, their trunks

thicker, their leaves greener, the wind cleaner, the birdsong sweeter. It is forever an hour before dusk here, and though there is no apparent boundary, if anyone tried to travel from here (except to return to the Physical World), they somehow get lost in the woods and bushes and soon end up back at the Glade.



The Furthest Shadow War

Neil Smith

Furthest background from the campaign co-narrated by Mark Galeotti and Simon Bray

In the Shadow War the Bratvar, a criminal gang in Furthest, contacts the heroes. They seek the heroes' help against another gang, the East-Side Clan, and their ally, Ohenkash Twice-Maned. In the heroes' first brush with the East-Side Clan, Ohenkash recognises the heroes and targets them along with the Bratvar. Continuing attacks by the East-Side Clan soon push the Bratvar to the verge of defeat. The heroes seek and find allies in the Furthest underworld. This turns the tide of the war. Just as the heroes are about to launch their final assault, they discover the Bratvar are pawns of Krarsht, the Chaos god. The heroes switch sides and, together with the PargAddi, defeat the Bratvar. The heroes' only reward is to be released free...if they are lucky. Ultimately, though, they will have made contacts in Imperial Tarsh, gained renown and even met JarEel, the legendary Lunar demi-goddess and heroine.

This is a brief outline of the major events in the Furthest Shadow War. As it stands, it is not a playable campaign; instead, it provides the structure for a series of connected episodes. The narrator will have to put in some work to flesh out the details. The outline is presented in a very linear fashion, but this belies its dynamic structure. The story hinges on the two Plot Twists and the Midpoint. As long as these scenes are present, the dramatic tension will remain. Within this structure, there is great flexibility: scenes can be added and dropped as necessary. Above all, the narrator should ensure that the heroes take the lead in most, if not all, the action.

The city of Furthest is detailed in the first issue of *The Unspoken Word*, *Tarsh in Flames*. For readers who do not have this work, the main article is available on The Unspoken Word's website @ <http://www.celtic-webs.com/theunspokenword>.

Act 1: Furthest Away

Scene 1: Did The Earth Move For You?

Early one morning, the heroes are going about their day-to-day tasks in their glade when they notice a patch of ground is starting to shake, slip, and collapse. A small tunnel, around 1.5m across, opens at the bottom of a rise near their houses. A small man pushes out through the clods of earth that collapsed on him, looks around at the heroes, and grins. "Hello!" he calls. "Are you the Nomansonsons? I'm Mikhail Long-Tongue, from Furthest. I'd like your help."

After he brushes himself down and downs several large ales ("Thirsty work, this tunnelling, y'know"), Mikhail is happy to explain his presence in the glade. He is a repre-

Dramatis Personae

Olvir Maransson: Chaos-Tainted Bratvar Leader.
Mikhail Long-Tongue: Credible Bratvar Emissary.
Orldag Kulbrastson: Leader of the East-Side Clan.
Oirec of Oiroiroi: Disloyal Second in Command of the East-Side Clan.
Iron Nails: Hardened Leader of the Big End Boys.
Porrdrig Two-Guesses: Credulous Leader of the Cadoric.
Old Man Tempesta: Leader of the Tempestas; a wily old bird.
Ohenkash Twice-Maned: Upright Lunar Magistrate.
JarEel: Razor-Sharp Lunar Heroine.
Bolin Bullroarer: Corrupt Tonsrrieve of Furthest.
Captain Larius: Ineffective Leader of the 2nd Tarsh Shieldwall regiment, who make up the bulk of Furthest's 'police.' Largely ignored by everyone.

sentative of the Bratvar gang of Furthest. He has heard that the heroes will offer assistance in return for promises of future loyalty. He has a problem that another Furthest gang, the East-Side Clan, is making inroads in the Bratvar tula, and they want the heroes' help in redressing this imbalance. The East-Side Clan are able to do this because of their seeming alliance with the new Lunar magistrate, a certain Ohenkash Twice-Maned.

Mikhail asks the heroes for assistance in defeating the East-Side Clan and expelling Ohenkash (who is too efficient for good business). If the heroes accept his offer (which they should), Mikhail promises to act as the heroes' ally in Tarsh and to put the Bratvar's widespread network of informers at the heroes' disposal. If asked, Mikhail explains his tunnelling prowess as major, unrepeatable feat achieved by Olvir Maransson, the Bratvar's leader.

The Blade is unprecedentedly hesitant. "I feel nothing wrong with this Long-Tongue, and the chance to win allies in Shepelkirt's bosom is one we cannot afford to pass up. But still... Let us remember that he who raids the beehive can as easily taste stings as sweetness."



The Gangs of Furthest

A typical gang has about 30 full members and as many as 50 part-timers, affiliates, allies, etc.

Bratvar. A Tarshite household-gang, linked to Bagnot-based slave-traders (many of their enemies end up as 'mute eunuch' slaves in the slave markets). They dominate the north-east of the city, with a headquarters behind the Grand Theatre, but suddenly have shown serious ambition and started expanding. They now number perhaps 60 full members.

Cadoric. Immigrants from Kostaddi, who survive largely by playing the other gangs off and not expanding beyond the Central Market, which they keep secure for a price. Every stall-holder and trader pays the 'Cadoric Handful' and in return their heavies deal with thieves and pickpurses in brutally efficient manner. The prostitutes, entertainers, fortune-tellers and puppeteers who frequent the area also pay them off.

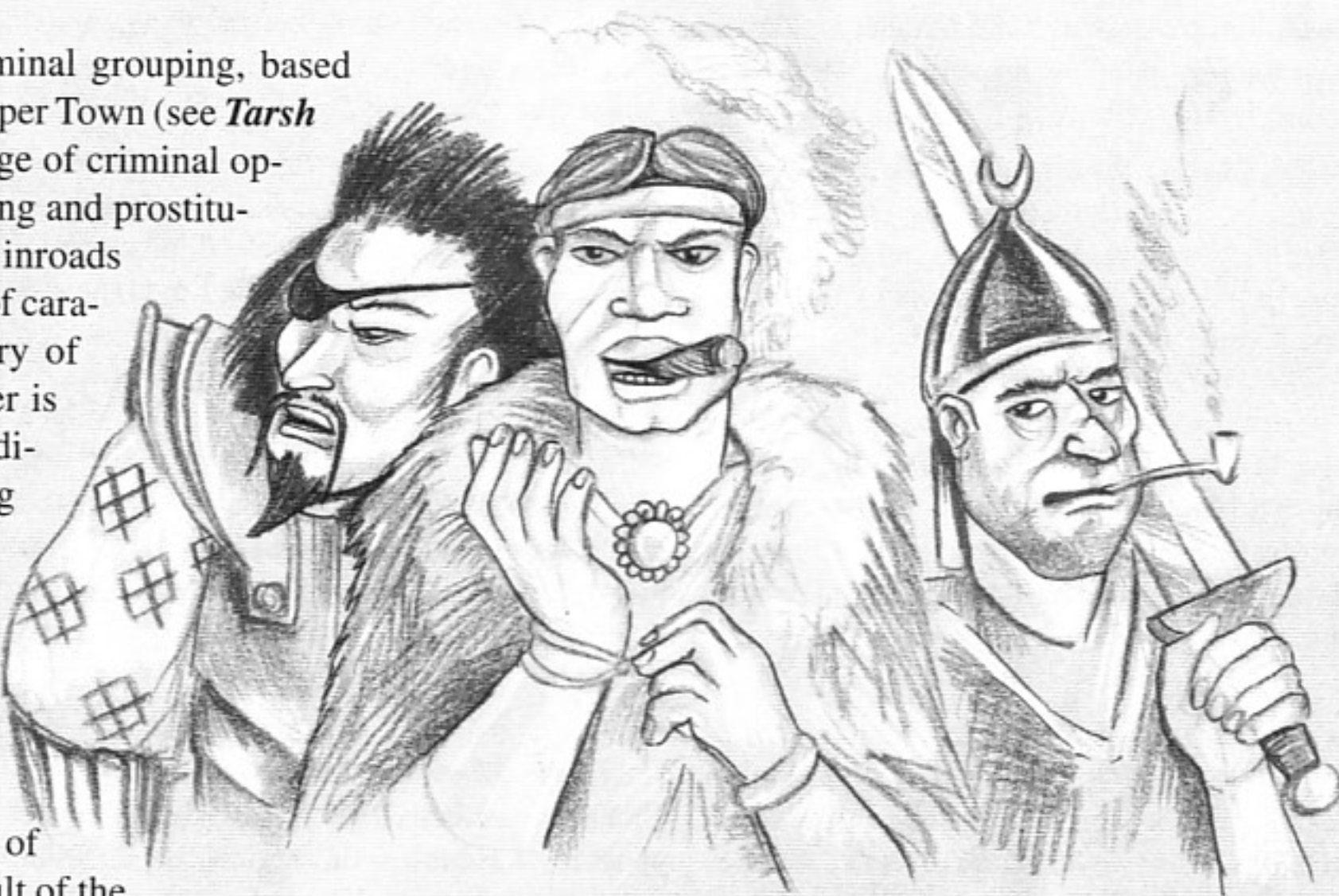
East-Side Clan. A relatively small but up-and-coming gang, largely working out of the East Market and recruited from amongst younger men coming to Furthest for work and then finding themselves exploited. They concentrate not so much on staples such as protection and vice, but theft and smuggling.

Old Fellows. A gang, largely of Tarshite ex-soldiers with Lunar connections, who dominate the port-side region, relying on corruption and racketeering (as well as some hazia trafficking). They have good relations with the Tonsrrieve's representatives and do their best to keep the port area 'quiet.'

Quiet Thunder. An Orlanthi grouping, originally founded more as a revolutionary group but increasingly sliding into simple crime, despite the efforts of some within the gang. Its main power base is in the poor and often condemned Orlanthi slums of the west side of the city. See pp58-59.

Tempestas. A traditional, family-based criminal grouping, based near the University but also strong in Copper Town (see *Tarsh in Flames* p45). They handle a wide range of criminal operations, especially protection racketeering and prostitution, although they have not yet made inroads into drugs. They also control a company of caravan guards, Handil's Fyrd, but are wary of making the link too obvious. Their wyter is the Lightning Thief, who steals and redirects the lightning and moves with arcing leap. (See picture to right and also p21.)

Of the numerous petty street gangs with aspirations to more serious crime, the **Big End Boys** and the **Bastard Twins** are the most serious. The former is a men-only gang with a nasty reputation for racketeering and leg-breaking. With the forcible transfer of many of the city's poor into rented tallhouses as a result of the



Grand Project city works programme, they are picking up more and more work for unscrupulous landlords. The latter is a little more sophisticated, running illegal gambling rings, loansharking and fencing operations. **Dorvan's Clan** is a loose grouping of professional beggars (who also sometimes act as informants and lookouts), who collaborate to control the most lucrative 'pitches'.

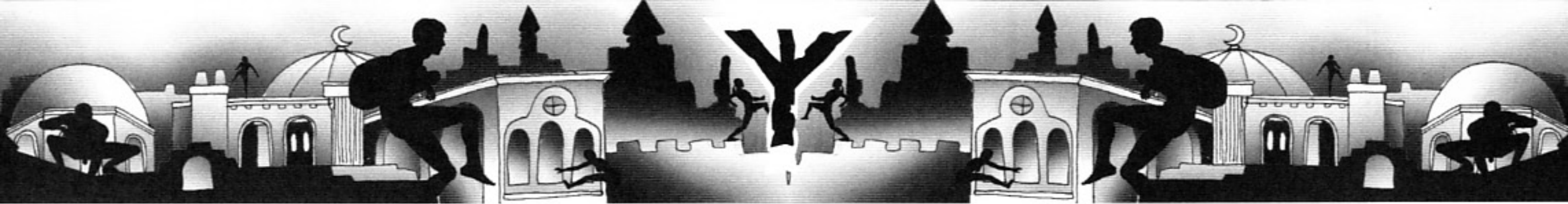
Scene 2: Life and Death in Furthest

Crawling through the tunnels takes both forever and no time at all. The heroes emerge in a cellar in the Bratvar's headquarters. Once in Furthest, the heroes will become involved in day-to-day gang life in the city. The narrator should set up a few scenes showing typical gang activities, such as:

- Buying a tallhouse then chopping out sections of the main beams to weaken them. The gang will get the (inflated) insurance money when it collapses.
- Loan-sharking some money to local shopkeepers and tenants.
- Breaking the stock, valuables, and legs of the loan recipients when they can't afford to pay.
- Sneaking into the city goods smuggled by the slave caravans from Bagnot.
- Visiting establishments to demand protection money (the House of Fragrant Oblivion, overleaf, would be an 'interesting' target for the heroes).

All these activities should take place against a backdrop of tension between the Bratvar and the East-Side Clan. Some loan-sharkees pay up with money loaned by the East-Side Gang. East-Siders beat up some Bratvar members. Meanwhile, Ohenkash's Lion Guards and the Tonsrrieve's men patrol the streets constantly - the heroes might be outraged to see crimes committed by other gangs ignored in favour of efforts to trap and suppress the Bratvar. Olvir will suggest either that the corrupt Tonsrrieve has Ohenkash in his pocket or rlese that it is because the Bratvar are 'Old Tarsh' and opposed to the Lunar Way.

After a few days in Furthest, the Bratvar score a minor coup. They capture a lieutenant in the East-Side Clan. A 'court' is soon convened in the Bratvar's safe-house and the now-beaten lieutenant stands trial for various offences against the Bratvar. After some more beating, he is found guilty and sentenced to slavery. The prisoner is strapped down in the middle of the 'courtroom', stripped and castrated. His mouth is wedged open and his tongue sliced out, the wound cauterised by a red-hot poker. The victim is then taken to a slave caravan soon departing for Bagnot.



The House of Fragrant Oblivion

Peter Metcalfe

The House of Fragrant Oblivion is an example of a typical Teshnan Solfi temple abroad. It exists so that foreigners can befoul the sacred rites of Solf by their participation. Since Solf is the god of the polluted fire, this pollution is good. Solf is primarily worshipped here through the consumption of drugs. Other forms of Somash worship are not viable: suicide is literally a dead end while local crime gangs get upset if the house engages in prostitution. The House was established in Karse shortly after the Opening with the aid of an unscrupulous merchant prince, then moved to Furthest (off the Maize) once Fazzur conquered Karse and the owners felt it would be far more profitable in a decadent empire than a seedy port.

The ground floor is dominated by a large room full of stuffy vapors. The only lights come from dim braziers that power the hookahs. The patrons recline in various states of intoxication upon grubby couches. Dazed temple staff wander from brazier to brazier, inhaling from vacant hookahs to check that the fumes are the correct strength and refilling if need be. The basement is divided into a large warehouse for supplies and a smaller office for the Melib overseer, while the top floor contains a few squalid rooms that may be rented, no questions asked.

Jashtapses, Keeper of the House. Due to repeated abuses of his mortal frame (the most notorious being when he spent ten minutes face down in a pool of his own vomit before being turned over), Jashtapses is rather slow. In his waking hours, he endlessly recites the Solfic Chant. Drooling Imbecile 1W, Initiate of Solf 10W, Chant Solf's Name 5W, Consume Opium 15W

Flenshan, Melib Observer. Since Prince Harstar of Melib controls all traffic between Teshnos and Karse, and thence the Empire, the House surrenders control over its finances to an Observer from Melib. She notes how much opium has been used and how much duty the Solfi must pay to Harstar. In practice, he diverts most of the income (after the Vadeli has had his due) to Harstar's coffers, forcing the Solfi of Teshnos to bail out the House time and again. They care not, for Solf's favor is worth more than any worldly goods. As an Ashurtan, a race of angelic outcasts from heaven, Flenshan desires the destruction of the Cosmos so that existence will no longer pain her. Death is no release for his kind are reincarnated with full knowledge of their loss. Failing that, he obtains relief inflicting her agony upon others. Everything he owns has caused pain either in its making or acquisition. Flenshan knows who Mandadidi is and blackmails him into bringing her down-and-outs (or even captive heroes) to torture. Angelic Beauty 1W2, Credo of Pain (Cause Indescribable Agony, Create Item of Suffering, Find Weakness, Revive Victim) 15W, Close Combat (Needle of Woe ^3) 10W, Scribecraft 5W

Mandadidi, Atyari Infiltrator: Although supposedly one of the Temple staff, Mandadidi worships the Black Flame (known to the Orlanthi as Atyar). His life-flame is totally black but his colleagues are too drugged to notice this. He is in Tarsh at the behest of Than Ulbar to make contact with fellow Atyari there (Treack Markhor supposedly was born in this region). Mandadidi prowls Furthest at night trying to find any hint of burning Black Flames. He carries a small Black Light with him (which emits a purple light that only Atyari can see) and wields a garrote. Initiate of Atyar (Beheaded, Knowledge) 10W, Garrote 15W, Hide and Sneak 5W, See by Darklight 1W

Temple Staff: There are ten or so temple staff. They are too stupefied to have much of a personality or even to answer questions about their god. They are fit only for menial duties. Initiate of Solf 10W, Stupefied 15W, Clean Mess 6, Administer Drugs 12, Chant Monotonously 5W

Goonda Bouncers: Since the temple staff are incapable, order is kept in the House by a pair of surly orangutan-like goonda bouncers. They spend their time drinking and stealing from patrons. When a fight develops, they spring into action with their wooden clubs, eager to crack the heads of anybody in the vicinity. Close Combat (Wooden Club ^4) 15W, Drink to Excess 10W, Rob Patron 5W, Berserk Fury 1W

Syrull the Copromancer, Vadeli Spy: Syrull is one of the copromancers, a breed of Vadeli sorcerers notorious for their mastery over bodily wastes. Syrull lurks here, spying on the Empire for the Admiral of the Excremental Sea. Because of the foul odor of his magics, twin censers outside his room spew potent fragrances in a valiant attempt to mask the smell. The staff hate refilling the censers. Entering Syrull's room is hazardous. Inside is a vast tub filled to the brim with stinking hot excrement. Syrull and other Brown Vadeli find the atmosphere relaxing but everybody else chokes and gags. Syrull spies by means of his stool pigeons: he has lovingly crafted these disgusting birds from human stools. They can only do simple tasks, such as fly to the Victory Square and return, but Syrull can determine what has happened in their vicinity through his copromancy. Should Syrull be accosted in his room, he has a Golem for protection. This is not cold stone like the Jolanti but moist, brown and warm (Fist 20W^4, Moist Resilience ^6, Revolting Odour 20). Because it has been animated from Syrull's wastes, it will instinctively obey his wishes without any need for a control spell. Should the Golem prove insufficient to deal with intruder, then Syrull can escape via the Loathsome Gate at the bottom of his vast tub. Should heroes desire to follow, they will emerge within the Excremental Sea, a horrid region of the Malkioni Hell. Vadeli Copromancer 2W2 (spells include Animate Human Waste, Craft Excrement, Curse with Explosive Diarrhoea), Brown Noser 20.

Scene 3: Wergild Refused

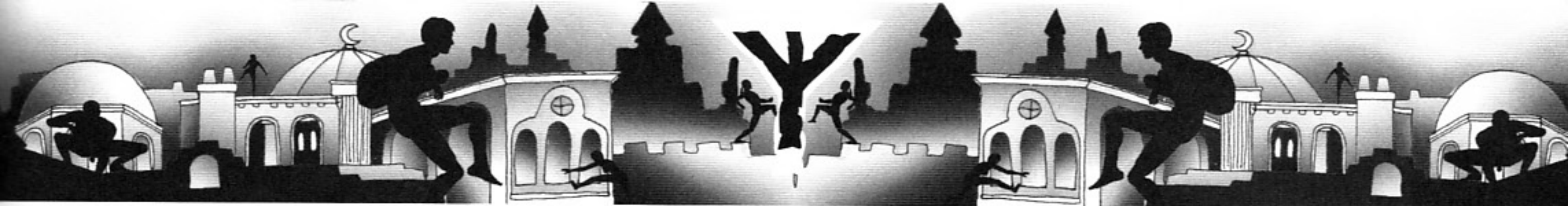
Two days later, a group of East-Side Clan members capture, beat up, and release a group of three Bratvar members. They return to the Bratvar safe-house with a message from the East-Side Clan. They are preparing to launch an attack against the Bratvar in revenge for the punishment of their lieutenant. However, they are willing to swear to Lanbril that the matter will be dropped if the Bratvar pay his substantial wergild. The Bratvar (with the heroes playing whatever part they wish) discuss the matter, but eventually decide that paying wergild would be seen as a sign of weakness. The offer is refused, but no word is sent to the East-Side Clan. Instead, the Bratvar resolve to attack the East-Side Clan for their effrontery.

Scene 4 (Plot Turn I): East-Side Fight

The Bratvar swiftly organise themselves for an assault on the East-Side Clan. The heroes are consulted for advice. Around 25 people will go on the raid, in addition to any heroes. When they get to the East-Side Clan's safe house, they find it better fortified and defended than they expected. Some rooms taken by the Bratvar, but they are unable to make much headway. More East-Side Clan members soon arrive and the assault quickly bogs down. A Lion Guard patrol is quickly on the scene and reinforcements soon arrive. They mostly concentrate on attacking the Bratvar. Ohenkash himself arrives with two Prides of Lion Guard to take charge. He spots the heroes and immediately strives to capture them. With the fight going against them, the Bratvar decide to withdraw. One Pride of Guards will pursue the heroes; let them sweat before managing to escape. The heroes will see one Bratvar member take a passer-by hostage and, with a knife at his throat, hold off some Lion Guardsmen so he can escape the scene. The heroes should come across the hostage's body soon after, his throat slit.

Act 2: The Shadow War Scene 1: Clampdown

The next day, security in the city increases. Extra guards are stationed on all the gates. These guards come from the nearby Lunar Army: they are the feared PargAddi regiment. Notices start to appear offering rewards for the capture of Bratvar members. All the heroes are mentioned by name and



termed ringleaders of the attack, with rewards larger than those on the heads of the Bratvar.

Scene 2: The Losing Battle

Pressure on the Bratvar increases. The East-Side Clan is more open in its attempts to take over Bratvar rackets. Bratvar members are shunned by civilians and attacked by East-Siders. The Lion Guard are specifically targeting the Bratvar, both directly and indirectly. Ohenkash uses Harrulf and his Durbadath magic to track down members to their homes and safehouses, which he attacks. The Bratvar are in danger of being eliminated as a significant player in Furthest. A number of other events occur in this period:

- ✦ The tallhouse bought in Act 1 collapses when the heroes are nearby. One of the tenants, a private investigator, organises bystanders to dig through the ruins, looking for his wife. One of the Bratvar gang is spotted, chased by the bystanders, caught, and crucified. The Lion Guard turn a blind eye.
- ✦ A Bratvar gang member, captured by the East-Side Clan during Act 1 Scene 4, returns to the Bratvar headquarters. He says the Lion Guard insisted he was handed over, but was released when he could not be positively identified. (He's not a plant: his story is completely true.)
- ✦ The increasing violence causes Ohenkash very reluctantly to call in PargAddi troops as police to supplement his Lion Guard. Several PargAddi soldiers take their role too seriously and kill and torture a number of civilians. Ohenkash makes a point of getting them court martialed and executed by their commanding Adarch. (Not for their actions, but for doing it without orders!)

Scene 3: Seeking Companionship

The Bratvar leadership soon realise that alone they cannot hold out. Taking a leaf from the heroes' book (hopefully at their instigation), the Bratvar decide to form alliances with other gangs to counter the combined strength of the East-Side Clan and Lion Guard. The heroes are perfect for sounding out the various gangs in the city, as they are to some extent neutral.

Cadoric have an interest in maintaining the status quo, and are willing to talk to the Bratvar.

Tempestas express an interest in discussing matters, but purely as a gambit to learn more about how weak the Bratvar really are.

Old Fellows are interested in the status quo, but are too careful of their connections to the tonsrrieve to get involved. They will pass information to Bolin, who will pass it to Ohenkash.

Find, Hate, Kill!

Martin Laurie

Unleashing the PargAddi in the city is an extreme measure. The unit has a well-deserved reputation for ruthlessness and atrocity: indeed, this is basic part of their tactical methodology. They classify three stages in an operation of this kind.

1. Find Them

The PargAdarch will first order a scouting performed of the region; his unit is filled with ex-thieves, killers and underworld types who well understand how to spot nefarious activity. Once the PargAdarch has received information as to the whereabouts of some members of the criminal group they will react with speed and utter ruthlessness. A snatch Eleven will break in to their location, usually in the early hours of the morning, and take the suspect(s) while other Elevens form a perimeter around the scene. An Adarch will be assigned to command the operation. Should anyone intervene, then they will simply be killed. The suspect will be quickly tortured by the PargAddi pain experts to reveal the location of his associates. All efforts are made to ensure that this is done as fast as possible as the information will grow old quickly.

2. Hate Us

Families of those suspected will also be taken, their women raped, their children, in some cases eaten, and all will be tortured for more information. The PargAddi will deliberately attempt to maximise the terror and hate they are creating and will swoop down on their targets again and again, repeating the manoeuvre until the pressure they are placing causes their opponents to group for mutual support and protection. Given that Tarsh is technically an ally, not a province, then even the PargAddi will not quickly move to this stage, but old habits die hard...

3. Kill them All

At this stage the PargAddi will have a viable large-scale target and will attack in force. Again, a perimeter will be formed with a shock element directed to the attack. All within the perimeter will be killed. No innocents will be recognised, whole buildings will be burnt with their occupants in them and even the animals in the area will be butchered. Any magical resistance will be attacked in force by the support Eleven. Leaders of the enemy will be captured where possible and kept for detailed interrogation. If the bulk of the organisation has been eliminated, then the PargAddi usually leave at this stage as they will have incurred the dislike of the whole city and its garrison.



Big End Boys see an opportunity to enter the big time and are eager to have the Bratvar owe them a favour.

Quiet Thunder, Bastard Twins, Dorvan's Clan can all see the writing on the wall, and refuse to get involved in the war.

Eventually, a summit is arranged. The heroes should decide whom to invite. When this is being arranged, don't forget to play up the feeling of mutual distrust and suspicion (Suspicious 8W) all the gangs have for each other. These will have to be overcome before the gangs will agree to meet. The Bath Houses are a traditional neutral ground, not least because it is difficult to conceal extensive weaponry under a towel...

Scene 4 (Midpoint) Companionship Found

Leaders (or their representatives) of various gangs will attend the summit. The potential allies will need gifts or concessions to cement their aid. How these negotiations proceed cannot be covered here, but suitable requests include an agreement to respect turf boundaries, concessions of profitable rackets or territories, promises of East-Side Clan rackets or territory, and simple gifts of treasure or slaves. There might be opportunities for the heroes to locate items that are particularly sought by certain gangs or their leaders. Eventually, one or more gangs (probably the Cadoric and Big End Boys) should agree to join the Bratvar.

The heroes should take the initiative in the negotiations. Narrators should provide suitable ratings for the negotiators (Demand Concession 10W-12W2, Accept Compromise 12W-10W2) depending on the gang and previous interactions. Inducements will increase the heroes' abilities, depending on size and suitability.

Scene 5: The Tide Turns

With allies, the heroes and the Bratvar can take the fight to the East-Side Clan. The alliance pays dividends almost immediately: the Cadoric pass the heroes a rumour that the Lion Guard will be lying in wait for a group of Bratvar members collecting some protection money. The heroes can advise the gang either not to collect the money (unpopular with the Bratvar) or to go in force. If the latter option is chosen, no attack comes and the (outnumbered) Lion Guards are seen disappearing down some back alleys.

This extra intelligence gives the Bratvar a real advantage over the next few days. They can predict where and when the East-Siders and Lion Guard will be and can take action against them. The Bratvar are also able to find some East-Side Clan hide-outs and to ambush a number of members with their trousers down (literally, in some cases). After a few days, the East-Side Clan and Lion Guard get wise to this and the intelligence dries up.

Scene 6: Attrition

The shadow war becomes still more overt and violent. Several gang members on both sides are either killed in raids and ambushes, or are captured and executed horribly. Safe houses, shops fronting rackets, and informants are identified and destroyed. The Lion Guard still actively pursue the Bratvar and the heroes. Heroes familiar with how Lunar magistrates operate will be convinced that this vendetta is not normal: vastly more time, effort, and money is being spent against the Bratvar than should be

Some Shadowy Notables of Furthest

The Narrator can use these generally to flesh out the underworld of Furthest (it's not all street thugs), but also as equalisers. If the heroes are having too easy a time, introduce these as antagonists, either separately or in alliance with others; conversely, they may be able to provide unexpected help in a fix.

Baron Balinor

'Baron'? A jumped up highwayman with an inflated ego, but he is a useful fellow to have around because he knows Tarsh very well and seems to have incredibly good luck – is it true that he really is too stupid to be caught?

Captain Baswith

One of the captains of the 2nd Tarsh Shieldwall Regiment and as corrupt as they come. When his Half-Hundred is on police duty, it's known as 'thieves' summer', because for the right price, you can literally get away with murder.

Chendara Wellwoman

An accomplished masseuse and beautician, she caters for the wives and paramours of the merchant class. Everyone finds it so easy to talk to her. No wonder she is also such an accomplished blackmailer.

ChookChak Iki-iki-iki

A hsunchen from the rare and reclusive Rat People, he is a refugee from distant lands. His knowledge of the underways is legendary.

Jamak the Pithdarian

A huge Pithdarian warrior sell-sword, who wields two great swords. Rumoured to have been hired by the Tonsrieve...

Little Snivelling

Smallest of the twelve Snivelling brothers (the sons of the late Snivel Olevson). He and his brothers are useful snitches for street-talk, and also every now and then handy as lookouts and the like.

Quickfingers Magurn

A forger and cunning linguist. Not cheap, but good at what he does.

Porgo ('Porky') Lem

It would take a special man to be more corrupt than Baswith, but Porky, his quartermaster, is such a man. You name it, he can get it – but there is a degree of rivalry with Baswith, who if he can demands also be paid off.

Somo the Smear

Back-streets herbalist and alchemist with side-lines in gossip, contraception and abortion.

'The Hoarse Whisperer'

A truly nasty man, but a useful one. This gravelly-voiced old scribe is an excellent source of gossip, but is even better at spreading lies and rumours, for malice and profit.

Umbalagos Etirz-ul-Pepemenegistos-cham-Kalamenikestes

Senior Tutor in Post-Eschatology at the Provincial University. A doddering old scholar, absent-minded, scruffy and irritating, but very learned and a surprisingly powerful sorcerer. Doesn't take bribes, oh no, but accepts cases of Loskalmi port very willingly.

Blademaster Veers

A dashing master swordsman, instructor of many noble sons and bodyguards. He also works as a well-paid occasional assassin. He has an unfortunate hazia addiction, a scandalously lower-class vice, a secret which gives some leverage – but push too hard and he could be dangerous.

Vogan Voganson

An upmarket fence, who deals largely in jewellery, curios and antiques. Moves in high circles, and every now and then hears of a suitable 'business opportunity' for a reliable burglar, kidnapper or blackmailer.



warranted. Other gangs are being ignored. But try as they might, the heroes cannot discover Ohenkash's true motive. Harrulf Rowdrilsson is increasingly seen sniffing around the scenes of various actions. As Ohenkash and the Lion Guard track the Bratvar physically, so Harrulf and his spirits track them through the Otherworld. His spirits present a particular danger to the theist Bratvar: only oddballs such as the heroes would have experience against this kind of foe.

PargAddi action in the city also increases. They are unofficially moving into the Hate Us stage of their attempts to defeat the Bratvar. The families of Bratvar members are targeted for atrocities. Rumours abound that Ohenkash is livid over these actions, and is making great efforts to prevent them. However, the PargAdarch does little against the guilty parties. Bolin Bullroarer, the Tonsrrieve, also protests at the PargAddi's actions. Everyone ignores him.

A sealed wagon arrives in the city under heavy Lunar army guard. No-one sees inside it, and no firm information on its contents can be obtained. However, rumours start to circulate that it contains some form of doomsday weapon to be used against the Bratvar. Or extra funds for the Moirasseum workers. Or new moonrocks for the Temple of Lunar Resonance.

Eventually, the heroes make a minor breakthrough. Oirec of Oiroiroi, the deputy leader of the East-Side Clan, contacts them. He is willing to sell out his boss in return for a big payoff. Oirec can (for a suitable, and perhaps depraved, price) reveal that most of the surviving East-Side Clan will be in their headquarters in a few days for a council of war. Armed with Oirec's information about the building's defences, the Bratvar should be able to mount a devastating attack and wipe out the East-Side Clan. Oirec can also confirm the close association between the East-Side Clan and the Lion Guard, saying that Ohenkash and his lieutenants are advising the East-Side Clan and co-ordinating their actions. Ohenkash is expected to attend this council in person.

Scene 7 (Plot Turn II): Meeting Mother

The heroes can plan and mount their attack on the East-Side Clan. The night before the East-Side Clan's council meeting, Olvir Maransson (the Bratvar's leader) suggests that an unexpected avenue of attack will be from underground. He explains that now they know the layout of the East-Side Clan headquarters, he can use his Maran powers to dig tunnels under it and come up through the cellars. Olvir invites the heroes to join him in a preparatory

service in the Bratvar's inner shrine, somewhere the heroes have never been before. Only a select few of the Bratvar are allowed in; they bring an East-Side captive.

The shrine is dominated not by the images of Lanbril on the walls, but by a large pit in the centre of the room. This, Olvir explains, is the holy place of the Bratvar's new patron deity, Maran the Hungry. The captive is thrown screaming into the bottomless pit

in thanks for Her aid. Some six-legged, chitinous creatures emerge from the pit. Gifted heroes see daimons of a similar shape scuttling across the walls. The message of the runes scratched in the walls becomes obvious to the heroes as Olvir Maransson cackles in his victory. This is no temple to Maran the Hungry: it is a temple to Krarsht, the Empty Maw, the Chaos Devourer.

How the heroes extricate themselves (if they choose to) is up to them. There are enough krarshtkids (*Anaxial's Roster*, pp180-181) and krarshtides (shadowy krarsht spirits, *Might 20-20W*), as well as Bratvar gang members in the building above, to make a fighting escape difficult at least. If the heroes decide that discretion is the better part of valour, what unspeakable acts must they commit before they can leave?

By the way, Although Krarsht has infiltrated the Bratvar, most of the gang are completely unaware of this and

have no detectable link to Krarsht. Only the leaders have some inkling of the powers they have contacted, and that knowledge is incomplete. (Hence the Blade's original sense that there was *some* taint on Mikhil but nothing it could be sure of.)

Act 3: Truth and Consequences

Scene 1: Painful Choices

The heroes are faced with a difficult choice, and little time in which to make it. Should they stay allied to the Bratvar, as they promised, in order to defeat the Lunars and their allies? Doing so would mean allying with Chaos. Or should they betray the Bratvar and their own honour and join the forces of Shepelkirt? If they attempt to join the East-Side Clan or the Lunars, will their entreaties be heard, what punishment will be levied, and what revenge will the Bratvar extract? While the heroes agonise over their decision, time is running out and preparations are underway for the attack on the East-Side Clan.





Scene 2: Turn and About

It is expected that the heroes will come to the conclusion that not all Lunars are Chaotic, and that Ohenkash can be trusted. The Blade will be forceful in saying that this Krarshti menace takes precedence, even withholding wyter powers in protest if ignored. In this position, the heroes will most likely want to defect and turn against the Bratvar.



They could make contact with Ohenkash in a number of ways. Perhaps the most convenient way would be through Oirec of Oiroiroi, though there is little time. (They might also be captured, perhaps by a joint Lunar and Tarshite force, with Kadone priestesses to counter their magics, Doburduni to control their storms, and large numbers of troops.) However it happens, they are clapped in iron Xaroni manacles (which drops the heroes' magical resistance to 6) and dragged into Ohenkash's headquarters, just to the west of the Temple of Lunar Resonance (a holy

place, probably Dangerous for the heroes). Ohenkash, Heresis, and Harrulf are there, as is a slight, young red-haired woman. Ohenkash will listen attentively and, after some little time (and a few desperate tests of the heroes' persuasion abilities) become convinced of the truth of the heroes' tale.

Ohenkash is prepared to bargain an amnesty for the heroes in return for their aid in destroying the Bratvar and their Krarshti masters. If the heroes agree, Ohenkash will obtain oaths from the heroes to this effect. When the heroes sincerely agree, the red-haired woman nods her approval and Ohenkash removes the manacles.

Ohenkash explains that he has received information that Krarshti had infiltrated the Bratvar's leaders, hence his focussing on that gang. He now wants the heroes' assistance in planning the final destruction of the gang. With the heroes' connivance, he should be able to sneak one or two Prides of Lion Guard into the East-Side Clan's headquarters before the council without the Bratvar noticing. A large contingent of PargAddi can be nearby, ready to pounce. If asked about the Krarsht temple, Ohenkash says that its destruction is in hand. He glances towards the red-head, who is busily inspecting her fingernails.

Scene 3: Blood in the Streets

Depending on what the heroes advise, the Bratvar should go very badly wrong. The Lion Guard lie in wait in the building and ambush the Bratvar as they emerge from the basement. The Big End Boys simultaneously attack from the street. Krarshtkids emerging from the tunnels kill many Lunars, but are turned back by the small woman with a pair of dancing scimitars. The Bratvar and their allies are soon in retreat.



Once the battle hits the streets of Furthest, the PargAddi get involved. When this happens, the Lion Guard spend as much time trying to restrain the bloodthirsty soldiers as they do following and attacking the remnants of the Bratvar. The battle rages through the streets with death and destruction all around. Groups of fighters, on both sides, run from place to place, hoping to shake off pursuers or outflank their enemies. The Bratvar fight well, but cannot withstand the superior numbers of their enemies.

From the Tablets of Ohenkash, Judex Krarsht

We must always beware Krarsht, the Hungry One, She Who Eats in the Darkness. Her cult is a disciplined, hierarchical and conspiratorial menace, committed to penetrating and undermining our societies, just as her children's tunnels penetrate and undermine our world. Her temples generally also operate as organised criminal structures, involved in a wide range of nefarious activities, from racketeering and smuggling to contract killing and theft. However, they tend to operate at a higher level than most gangs – there will rarely be Krarshti muscle in the market shaking down traders or moving the odd mule-load of hazia. If they are going to carry out such operations, it will generally be as part of a greater plan and through agents (who often do not know they are acting for Krarsht). These people scare me, ever since that time I was buried in a tunnel outside Kerikor. The only consolation, is that they also scare many other criminals, and their relations with other groups range from the cordially cooperative where their interests are not at stake (I understand this is the case in Pavis, where they deal with the Black Fang assassins) to murderously competitive. Lanbril would preserve and live off that which Krarsht would control and destroy, and so there is little common ground. The only real constraint on this rivalry is that neither side want to force the local authorities into giving us the kind of powers and forces we could then use to crack down on that very underworld they are fighting over.



Eventually the heroes, Ohenkash, the Lion Guard, and the red-haired warrior arrive at the Bratvar gang's headquarters and battle through the last remaining resistance into the inner shrine. Olvir Maransson, by now part transformed into a krarshtkid, is forced back and back towards the pit. The aura of power around the woman increases and increases until the air crackles and ground shifts in response to the phenomenal magics being used. At the last moment Olvir escapes down the pit. JarEel, now in full Hero Glow, simply steps into the bottomless pit to follow him.

As she drops into the pit, JarEel is displaying her full, otherworldly beauty (Beautiful 15W3). Anyone vaguely alive will be overcome with desire for her, and may try to follow her down the pit (a Really Bad Idea). And turning the rebel heroes' infatuations into long-term plot devices can be *lots* of fun.

Option 1: The Subdued, Film Noir Ending. The fight is over. The Bratvar have been destroyed. The Krarsht temple is no more. No-one seems concerned over the fate of JarEel. "She'll turn up," says Ohenkash. The very matter-of-fact way he and those around him treat her pursuit of a Chaos god's avatar should unsettle the heroes and remind them of just how powerful the forces ranged against Sartar are.

Option 2 The Monster Movie Ending. Ohenkash drives everyone away from the pit. There is a sudden subterranean rumble, and out from it blasts a jet of black smoke wrapped in a filament of blinding red light. The two cohere into massive forms, avatars of Krarsht and JarEel, which proceed to battle through and over the city, as at home in the air as on the ground. This can be played out between two players, one running Krarsht (Might 10W6), another JarEel (Might 20W6^10). Ultimately JarEel should win, rending Krarsht with a shining moonblade so that it dissipates into a foul-smelling miasma which hangs over the city for a week. Neither Krarsht nor JarEel will actually be destroyed by the combat, which is magical and symbolic, but it can banish Krarsht from Furthest or leave JarEel stunned and wounded and out of action for a season's campaigning. Unless of extraordinary power, the heroes cannot intervene in the conflict – the ability levels are merely representative, for this is actually a Chaos god and the greatest hero of the Empire in battle! For every Major Victory/Defeat or greater in the contest, assume some cinematically impressive damage has been done to the city.



Scene 4: Going Home

The next morning, the citizens of Furthest wake to a scene of confusion. Large parts of the east and north-east of the city have been wrecked; some fires are still burning. The PargAddi patrol, keeping the peace. The Lion Guard patrol, keeping the PargAddi in check.

Ohenkash thanks the heroes for their efforts and warns them that he never wants to see them again: the warmth of the leave-taking (and the comfort of their journey) depends on their own demeanour and past actions. Potentially, they have found themselves a 'friendly enemy' who respects them even while he seeks to bring them to justice; at worst, he regards them as little better than the Krarshti and will personally pursue them.

Before they really have a chance to come to terms with what they have done, they are bundled onto a boat and sailed upriver under with a grim escort of two PargAddi Elevens. Unless the heroes escape them, the PargAddi take them all the way south to the Building Wall in the Holy Country. From there, the heroes are free again.

Having been chastened by its failure to realise that it was being used by Krarshti, then in the hands of Lunars, the Blade is now positively jaunty. "Well, we made some friends in our enemies' camp, we foiled the Great Maw, we saw much of Furthest burnt and smashed. And we got out alive. On balance, I'd call that a result."



The Quiet Thunder

Mark Galeotti

Beneath its gleaming civilised veneer, Furthest has more than enough secrets, from dark cults to hidden conspiracies, corrupt deals to ancient curses. This includes the city's underworld. Furthest is large and sophisticated enough to support genuine organised crime. On the whole, these are local gangs with very distinct turfs, or else essentially corrupt officials with a sideline in smuggling or protection racketeering. There are, however, exceptions: the Quiet Thunder is one.

The group was formed in 1593 by three Orlanthi godar, Hrafl Eisterson, Tirug the Gaunt and Godvig Ambaros, as an underground movement to resist the growing oppression of their faith. From the first, there were disagreements on tactics. Hrafl favoured concentrating on preserving the worship of Orlanth, consecrating secret hilltop sites and teaching the young of the ways of the storm. Tirug advocated bloodprice: vengeance on those persecuting the Orlanthi. Godvig tried to reconcile the two, while building up a network of allies and members and collecting 'tithes' from supporters.

Godvig was arrested in 1597, charged with the murder of a Royal Shieldman and Given to the Fields. Without his moderating influence, Hrafl and Tirug vied ever more fiercely. The latter went on a terrible and savage heroquest, returning a broken man, with only one arm and prone to seizures. However, he had managed to contact a powerful spirit, Changan the Moon Scourge, who lent his followers dark and dangerous powers. In 1599, Hrafl was murdered in Goldege, returning from a secret meeting with Orlanthi godi in Aldachur. His supporters blamed Tirug's henchmen and the subsequent bloodletting left the Quiet Thunder at less than half its old membership, with very different men in charge.

Tirug survived as nominal leader but his power was limited and his death in 1610 almost unnoticed and unmourned. Instead a new generation had risen; some felt that vengeance was the best way to respond to the persecution of Orlanth, others were interested less in faith and more in profit. From dissidence, the movement turned more and more to terrorism and crime. 'Tithes' are now collected within their turf – 'tula' – as a protection racket and death visited not just on officials and collaborators but anyone for the right price.

Is this a criminal gang justifying itself with empty Orlanthi rhetoric? Or a desperate group of rebels forced to use whatever means necessary to keep the winds of freedom blowing? Even its leaders are divided. Broadly speaking, Talaming 'Wolfsong' and Leiki 'Blackfist' Olgirsson define the two extremes, with the rest falling somewhere between. The current leader, Cormyr 'Hidden Knife' Leikisson is more criminal than revolutionary, but is not yet ready to give his father leave to purge the so-called 'Hraflings'.

This means that the Quiet Thunder is at a cross-roads – which way will it turn when the Hero Wars begin?

The Quiet Thunder

'We Are the Storm that Blows Away the Weak'

Form: Criminal and/or political conspiracy

Cultural Context: Orlanthi resistance movement seduced by crime

Ideology: The lunars, the Tarshite government and their quislings are trying to tame Orlanth – so whatever we do against them is a blow struck for the Storm.

Look and Feel: An underground terrorist organisation, with slogans and passwords.

Purpose: Up for grabs at the moment!

Reactions: The Quiet Thunder is regarded as a criminal organisation by the Tarshite government – and even by many who still cling to Orlanth

Resources

Leader: Cormyr 'Hidden Knife' Leikisson

Renowned Members: Leiki 'Blackfist' Olgirsson, Talaming 'Wolfsong', Eroana

'Ten Scalp' Elmysdattir

Membership: Perhaps 40 core members and another 200 hangers-on, informants and contacts

Headquarters: Cormyr has a safehouse above a wine shop in Furthest; a hill to the south of the city is used for services to Orlanth, but Cormyr himself attends increasingly infrequently.

Other Contacts: The Quiet Thunder has relations with the other gangs of Furthest – sometimes they cooperate, sometimes they compete.

Organisation

A cell-based structure. The basic unit is the 'handful' of 3-5 members. They work with each other but use code-names, and only their leader ('the fist') knows their real identities. Each 'fist' is a member of Cormyr's 'ring'.

Membership Keywords

Entry Requirements: Worship Orlanth or one of his aspects

Mental Skills: Know Quiet Thunder Ways, Furthest Streetwise

Personality: Suspicious; criminal or fanatic

Relationships: To Quiet Thunder, To Fist

Magic: The more extreme members may join the herocult of Changan, other more moderate ones such as Hengkot KingsBane, but all will worship an aspect of Orlanth.

Disadvantages: Must obey seniors and pass up a share of all booty; risk of death if arrested

Living Standard: Poor to Prosperous, depending on rank



Key Members

Cormyr 'Hidden Knife' Leikisson

Orlanthi warrior 2W, Organised crime mastermind 2W2, Initiate of Desemborth the Thief 20W (Combat, Movement, Stealth), Initiate of Chamgaran 15W (Moon Scourge), Glutton 20, Intimidate 20W, Cunning Plan 15W

Cormyr joined the movement as a committed revolutionary, but was

seduced by the power and wealth that crime could bring. His respect for Orlanth has been dwindling, and some have even suggested (not to his face) that he is beginning to be visited by Impests. He is a glutton in every sense: for food, power, wealth and fear. But for all his bulk, he is a cunning, ruthless and terrifying foe – as Talaming and his faction will soon discover.

Leiki 'Blackfist' Olgirsson

Orlanthi warrior 5W2, Initiate of Helamakt 17W (Clouds, Combat, Rain), Devotee of Chamgaran 18W (Moon Scourge), Bloodthirsty 10W

Leiki's family come from the Exile tribe of the Mitchuinns, the 'Moon Haters' and he was sent to Furthest to help the Quiet Thunder with his wife and his son Cormyr in 1600. But Leiki is interested not in upholding Orlanth's faith – is Orlanth such a weakling that he needs it? – but in war and plunder, even if the battlefield is now in the shadows and sidestreets of Furthest.

Talaming 'Wolfsong'

Orlanthi warrior 20W, Devotee of Desemborth the Thief 20W (Combat, Movement, Stealth), Cunning 5W, Dashing 1W2

Talaming is native to Furthest and the leading 'Hrafling', intent on restoring its original purpose to the Quiet Thunder. In many ways he is the archetypal Desemborthi: dashing, daring, an 'honest thief.' Will this be enough in the face of Cormyr's cunning and Leiki's blade?

Eroana 'Ten Scalp' Elmysdattir

Vingan warrior 3W2, Initiate of Vinga 20W (Combat, Defender Storm, Movement), Frightening 5W, Fearless 10W2, Perceptive 5W

Eroana understands fear. She faced the Unspeakable Terror of the Last Night when heroquesting and since then her hair has been white (even when she tries to dye it red in good Vingan fashion), her teeth chattering but her nerves unbreakable. Because she understands fear, she also knows when to use it, and plays on her disconcerting looks, draping herself in scalps and painting half her face white. That way, it is rare that any challenge or question her. Although she secretly doubts whether Talaming will prevail, she knows he is right and does not fear to support him.

Chamgaran the Moon Scourge



By 1598, Tirug was both consumed with hatred from the empire and also desperate to acquire an edge in his struggle with Hrafl. How else to explain the foolishness or foolhardiness which saw him contact the spirit of one of the generals of the war host which Shang Seleris brought against the empire in the Nights of Horror? Chamgaran, called the Screaming Whip, the Tattooed Madness and the Moon Scourge, is a figure of little wisdom but much cunning. He grants his Tarshite worshippers some powers so that they can hurt his enemies and because it amuses him to see outlanders kill each other while he waits for Sheng to rise again. He does not tell his worshippers of himself, and they seem satisfied with his discretion or simply don't care so long as he lends them his magic. Leiki is now his chiefest follower in Tarsh, and may be beginning to suspect his nature - the fact that he seems not to mind pleases Chamgaran immensely.

Entry Requirements: The secret of this cult is closely guarded within the Quiet Thunder

Mundane Abilities: Cause Pain, Indentify Fears, Resist Pain.

Affinity: **Moon Scourge** (Flay Lunar, Terrifying Scream, Transfer Pain, Hate Lunar)

Worshippers: Chamgaran's spirit is remembered in eastern Pent, but in Tarsh only the more extreme members of the Quiet Thunder worship him, either to fight the lunars or because his powers of terror help their criminal activities.

Other Side: The official line is that Chamgaran has no home, instead rushing to wherever he can fight the lunars. In fact, the Quiet Thunder cannot or would not be able easily to find him because he is in the Spirit World.

Other Connections: None available to the Quiet Thunder.

Disadvantages: Although knowledge of this died with Tirug, this is misapplied worship of a spirit. The usual penalties apply: double hero points to learn feats and the affinity and no access to a Secret.

Furthest (City) Gang Tough

Simon Bray

The hard men of the Furthest (City) underworld, they specialise in distressing people on behalf of their bosses. It is their job to break limbs as required, extort money on demand and burn down a building at a moment's notice. They come from all walks of life, but each has a code of honour, commands respect from the common man and expects the law to keep out of his business.

Mundane Abilities: Appear Menacing, Close Combat (One Fighting Style, Brawling), Furthest (City) Underworld Knowledge, Intimidate, Know My Rights, Smash Things, Spot Dupe, Streetwise, Tough.

Typical Personality Traits: Aggressive, Cool, Hate (other) Gang, Vicious.

Typical Relationships: To Boss, to Gang.

Magic: Varies from gang to gang - some gangs have their own petty daimon or spirit cult.

Living Standard: Common (though this may depend on your fortunes at the Arena).

Disadvantage: Distrusted by Society ('Wanted Criminal' if anyone could pin anything on you)

Equipment: A room, good quality clothes, leather armour, appropriate weapons, flashy jewellery, Gang tattoo or symbol.



Building the Thieves' Arm

Mark Galeotti & Simon Bray

Now that they have their base, their wyter and a reputation of note, the way is clear for the heroes to build the Thieves' Arm. Will it be a network of spies, saboteurs and assassins? An array of scouts and raiders? A formalised warband? This is up to the heroes. There are many more people and groups they may consider trying to recruit beyond the obvious Finovani raiders, Desemborth thieves and Destor adventurers. Here are just a few:

↑ **Spies:** The best warriors will tell you knowing whom to strike and how is as important as the strength of your arm or edge on your blade. It may be wise for the Thieves' Arm to recruit its own spies. Yinkini followers of Alusar the Spy are especially suited to this, but travelling traders of Issaries, Donandari bards or even Chalana Arroy healers, stretching but not breaking their vows of neutrality may be able to gather all variety of useful information. And a follower of Niskis may be able to make friends and hear secrets in all sorts of un-expected places...

↑ **Tusk Riders:** The half-troll Aramites of the Stinking Woods are raiders and burners, eaters and takers. That said, it is an unpalatable fact that at times Orlanthe have dealt with them in order to use them against a greater foe. They know their dark woods intimately, and their boar-riding warriors would be formidable allies. But at what price?

↑ **The Boldhome underworld:** The capital of Sartar is just about large enough to have its own organised underworld, reportedly dominated by a figure known as Morak Moran. Would it not be useful to have eyes, ears and blades in the very heart of the Empire's puppet administration? But is Morak Moran really in charge, and if so, is he a loyal Sartari patriot or a mercenary? And how can the heroes find out? Or have their experiences in Furthest left the heroes unwilling to venture into the by turns subtle and violent politics or urban crime?

↑ **Praxians:** Dragon Pass has periodically been plundered by nomads from Prax, seeking booty, taking scalps and reaffirming the superiority of Waha's ways. They have generally always been regarded as enemies, but Argrath found himself able to use these fearsome raiders against the Empire, winning their loyalty and joining their secret societies, so why should not the heroes? There is a sample Praxian warband, **Rush's Bachelors**, by Neil Smith, in the support material for this issue on the **Unspoken Word** website at <http://www.celtic-webs.com.theunspokenword>.

↑ **Tarshites:** The people of Tarsh are kin, and many – especially in the uplands – resent Lunar domination and the banning of Orlanth. As Moirades seeks to reshape Tarsh, more and more will choose or be forced to flee Tarsh altogether. Among the displaced and the disgruntled will be those who will be of use and who will relish the opportunity to strike against the Empire. Indeed, there are whole clans and tribes with grievances on which the heroes could play. See *Tarsh in Flames* for more on the uplanders and their discontents.

↑ **Tricksters:** Eural's unruly followers are not thieves, although they often steal, any more than they are anything else but themselves. Nonetheless, who knows how a trickster might help or hinder the Thieves' Arm?


↑ **Thralls and Slaves:** To arm a thrall is to free one. How better to liberate Sartar than by liberating thralls, either contributed by friendly clans or else seized from Imperial allies and given the chance to fight for their future? Was Argrath himself not known as the Liberator?

↑ **Durulz:** Since the Empire put a bounty on their bills, the durulz have virtually become an entire outlaw people. Many are highly skilled in the ways of the swamp, stream and fen, and they can be dangerous skirmishers and elusive scouts. What is more dangerous than the warrior with nothing to lose?


↑ **Tomb Robbers:** Could there be anything worse than plundering the bodies and sanctuaries of the dead? Dragon Pass is a land of buried dead, from the charred bodies of the True Golden Horde, immured in the lava of dragonfire, to the urnfields of clans past and present. However, there are always those who will brave the curses of the dead and vengeance of the living (see p7). Tomb robbers are thus dangerous people, possibly powerful, but never to be trusted.





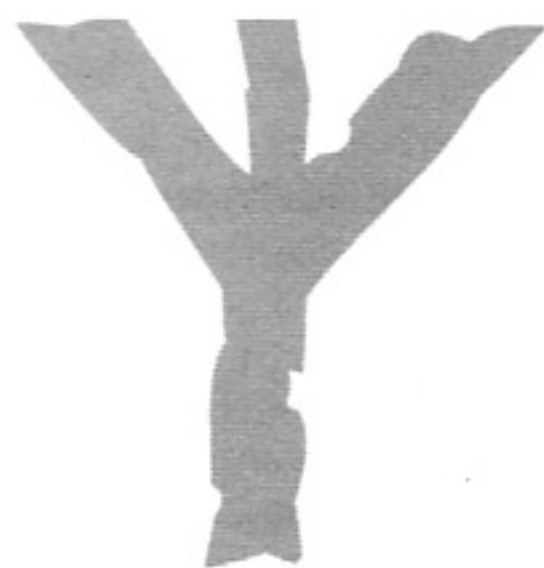

Uz: The uz regard theft, raiding and fighting for honest gain as just and proper aspects of life in Hurtplace. With Dragon Pass getting colder and the scent of blood in the air, they will be increasingly in evidence, not least in plundering battlefields for loot...and food. Perhaps with Neep's help, whole hosts of refugee enlo could be gathered and turned into soldiers through the magics of the Sticker the Spearkin subcult of Argan Argar, or else maybe uz warbands could be convinced to join? See *Uz: the trolls of Glorantha* for more on the uz.




Grazers: No Grazer would describe himself as a thief. After all, they are the rightful overlords of Dragon Pass, and what walking people have is theirs by right! Nonetheless, raiding is more than just a staple of the Grazer economy, it is also an essential part of their culture and the rites of adulthood. Why not turn that energy to good use and recruit these ferocious horse-warriors and nimble skirmishers to the cause of freedom?

As the Thieves' Arm grows, so too will it be all the more important that the heroes develop relations with the Rebellion and also Kallyr and her followers will seek to recruit them. The exact nature of the heroes' relationship with Kallyr is up to them, but this will provide an alternative route into participating in the events described in *Orlanth is Dead* and subsequent books.

Of course, the more effective and dangerous the Thieves' Arm, the greater the efforts the Empire will devote to destroying it. Ohenkash's enlightened ways will probably not chime well with Tatiush the Bright's apocalyptic and uncompromising way of war. He may be replaced by a more brutal magistrate. Such a figure may be counter-productive, driving more to join the rebels with his (or her) terror tactics. On the other hand, the Empire has many weapons at its disposal, from the subtle to the savage. The PargAddi might be deployed in force. Informants and propagandists can fight their wars of whispers and smiles, while assassins stalk the shadows. The war is only just beginning...



After the messenger had left, Heresis and Harrulf crowded into Ohenkash's plain office with the unceremonious ease of comrades in arms. The Judex still sat on his stool, staring unseeing at the map of Dragon Pass on the table. The drumming of fingers on the pommel of his sword was the only sign of his inner turmoil. "It seems our esteemed Governor-General believes I have been insufficiently rigorous in the application of Imperial Justice. Our talents are best suited to combating embezzlement of funds for the new walls of Fyllich Kwan. My replacement will be here tomorrow: Khorshenish the Unyielding."

"The Butcher of Voranel," murmured Harrulf.

"I believe the official term is Saviour," Heresis corrected primly, but without conviction.

Khorshenish obviously had a taste for the dramatic. His company crested the low rise outside Jonstown just as dawn broke, so that the first rays of the rising sun could spark from the gleaming gold of his soldiers' breastplates and try (vainly) to add richness to the heavy velvet banner hanging between bronze poles, on which the sigils of his ancient Dara Happan house were emblazoned. His soldiers moved in absolute unity, their boots trampling down the corn as they marched in a wide column in a direct line to the city gate, ignoring the existing road. Its winding route was obviously lacking in the straight-edged perfection such a scion of Yelmic nobility demands. The farmers hung back, but their dark looks and balled fists reminded any observer prepared to take note that these were free Heortling farmers, not Dara Happan peasants.

Ohenkash absently tossed his baton of office into the air, catching it without seeming to pay it any attention. "Somehow I feel Khorshenish will be the Thieves' greatest asset, and they may in turn become one of Kallyr's."

"Surely there is little such a rabble could do against the might of the Empire," protested Heresis.

With sudden decision, Ohenkash roused himself from his reverie. "We shall see. True, Kallyr cannot *win* a victory against our massed armies. She will have to *steal* it."



Jaxarte and the Outlaws

Michael 'MOB' O'Brien

Annotations by his biographer, Floriat Fedora, Grey Sage.

Floriat Fedora: In this undated excerpt from his journal, Jaxarte is on the Pavís Road, returning to the city from Moonbroth:

...for once, my Sable Rider escorts stuck by me, probably because there were only a few of them left moments after the flying outlaws ambushed us. It happened when I was laboriously trying to find out from one brave how far we were from the city. As he sat there, insolently picking his teeth and pretending not to understand New Pelorian nor my valiant attempts at Praxian, in a blink of an eye, he and his mount unexpectedly crashed to the ground beside me in a spray of dust and blood. Before I even had time to call out, heavy rocks dropped from above likewise dispatched several others. Two more sablemen rode away in panic, and in horror I watched them (and their animals) reduced to little more than flayed bones by a pair of man-sized tornadoes that rose out of the sand and chased them down.¹

Another rock barely missed me, my mule reared in fright and I was thrown from saddle. Seized by panic, the stupid beast ran away, and moments later was shredded by the dust clouds (along with most of my possessions, including a beautifully graven hardwood bowl I had bought for my mother but which was reduced to nothing more than expensive sawdust). Looking up, I saw several dozen mounted warriors swooping down with the sun behind them. For a moment I thought they might be Imperial Wyvern riders, come to save us, but no, these were riding a motley collection of ordinary Praxian beasts: most were on bison and zebras, but I also saw impalas, bolos, llamas and even a flying rhino! At any other time, I might have smiled at the absurdity of watching a flying ostrich diving at me with the sun at its back, but not today.

And so they came down upon us, and rode about just above our heads in an ever-diminishing circle, whooping, shrieking and taunting. I don't know what they were saying, but the sable riders, who until now had treated me with so much disdain, bunched together around me, and implored me to use my "great red mother magic" to save them!

As I wondered what we could do next, several sable men began

Acknowledgements:

Moonboat descriptions based in part on *Glorantha Digest* discussions by Nick Brooke, Peter Metcalfe, Keith Nellist, Ian Thomson, myself and others; Martin Laurie and Wesley Quadros first drew attention to parallels between Count Julian with a character that later appeared in a certain SF TV comedy series; special thanks to Ian for help with the ending...

¹ Known as the *wyrlvish*, these are said to be the animate spirits of folk who died in dust storms out on the plains.



grimly gashing strips on their faces,² and another screamed in terror as he was whipped out of his saddle and into the air by a lasso. The bandits whooped with delight as their hapless victim was flung about by the bison rider who snared him. Desperately clutching at the rope around his neck, several times he was almost pitched to the ground, only to be jerked up short. As he began to go limp, the others seemed to bellow that they had been deprived of their sport, and so he was lassoed another half-dozen ropes, including one from the rhino man. They pulled him back, high in the air above us. With a shout of *Ga-Garth!*, they all suddenly rode in different directions, pulling the ropes taut.³

With a sickening rip, the sableman was torn apart, and the bandits cheered as his scattered remains fell down around us. The bandits followed the corpse down, lassos twirling.

As the sablemen around me began a keening wail, I started to say my prayers, hoping that by some miracle the goddess might hear my plea and take me away. When, with a jolt, as I was lifted into the air for the barest scant second I thought this might be happening, until I felt the coarse rope around my waist. An impala rider had roped me, and his mount seemed to be having trouble pulling me high into the air. Another, thrown by the leering ostrich rider as he scooted past, caught me round the throat, and my hands went instinctively to my neck to try to

² These must be the marks of suicidal death – to be precise, actually cut into the forehead among the sable folk. Such a measure is only taken when all hope is lost.

³ The flying bandits were followers of the outcast god Gagarth the Most Wild Wind. Expelled from their own tribes for abominable crimes, Gagarthi are the scourge of caravans, lone travellers and isolated camps throughout the Wastes.



stop myself choking. As I twirled helplessly, I saw that most of the others had been likewise taken. Things were, to say the least, looking grim.

It was then my prayers *were* answered, praise the Goddess! The rope around my waist suddenly came free, and it was only the one round my neck that stopped me plummeting to the ground like several of the sablesmen around me, who were similarly released. First it was flying animals; now high, high above, shimmering in the heat, I saw the shining silvery hull of a flying boat!⁴

It was one of the fabulous flying Moonboats to be sure, one of the Wonders of the Empire.⁵ I had no idea what it was doing this far beyond the Glowline⁶ but I didn't care: here was our deliverance, or at least a chance of it! I had never been fortunate enough to go on board a moonboat⁷ and wasn't sure what weaponry they carried,⁸ but hoped one would be a match for these outlaws.

I gripped the rope round my neck with my hands, and held on grimly. Though I might be a bit ashamed to admit it now, as a youngster I was something of a "boatspotter", hanging around our local Moonport with other lads on cold winter mornings, shivering in our oilskins while we waited for the wondrous vessels to glide in and out. While I'd put my own spotter's slate away some time ago, years of chatting with the uncouth sailors at moondocks (not to mention turning



down their repeated offers for me to 'play Lukarius' with them) finally paid off. Even hanging at the end of a rope I could tell the moonboat was a third rater,⁹ the commonest type, which carried a small crew and few marines, possibly none at all. It dawned on me it might be up to the passengers – if any – to save the day.

Believe me, dangling from a rope twenty meters from the ground is not the best place to watch an aerial battle, but at this point I'd didn't have much choice. The outlaws swarmed up at the Moonboat on their flying steeds, whooping with excitement and thought of what rich pickings lay inside such a vessel. This was a prize far bigger than a lowly pack of sablesmen on the desert floor.

I wanted to call out a warning, but the Moonboat was too far above and the coarse rope round my neck made it difficult to breathe, let alone shout. But there must have been a lookout stationed on the ship because moments later the impala rider and his mount plummeted past me, both skewered by a huge arrow.¹⁰ I watched them slam into the earth with a sickening thud, and realised that if I fell, it would be my death as well. Nearby, the small tornadoes were now dancing across the ground toward each other, swirling together as if in a dance. An outlaw, wearing untanned skins and an antelope skull as a helmet stood in the centre of the storm, spinning wildly and waving his arms. His chant seemed to be echoed by the moaning whirlwind, as if there were malignant spirits trapped within. As it swelled

⁴ Moonboats are based on the Yuthuppan "Ships of God", which the priests of that city use to fly from their Star Towers to visit the realms of the Sky People. Vargar, a Yestendos sailor from Darjiin stole the incomplete plans for Anaxial's boat, and using these fashioned the first Moonboats from the reeds of the Red Moon's Occluded Sea. (The Lunars still cannot make a "Ship of God", but the White Moon heretics claim that if the White Moon rises then a true White Moonboat will be built to save the Pure).

⁵ In an empire of myriad wondrous things, candidates for inclusion in a list of "Seven Wonders of the Empire" have been much debated. Other obvious candidates include the Crater, the statue of Raiba, Erigia, Iphigios's Acropolis in Jillaro and The Daughters Road, and all these are popular attractions for pilgrims and tourists. Less definitive nominees for the list have been cited from time to time such as Burntwall, the Mad Sultanate of Tork, the Crimson Bat, the Fornicating Colossus of Fangar and the assorted Electric Proxies. A minor scandal erupted when Moonson Argenteus named his then favourite, Timmy the Trollkin, a "wonder of the empire".

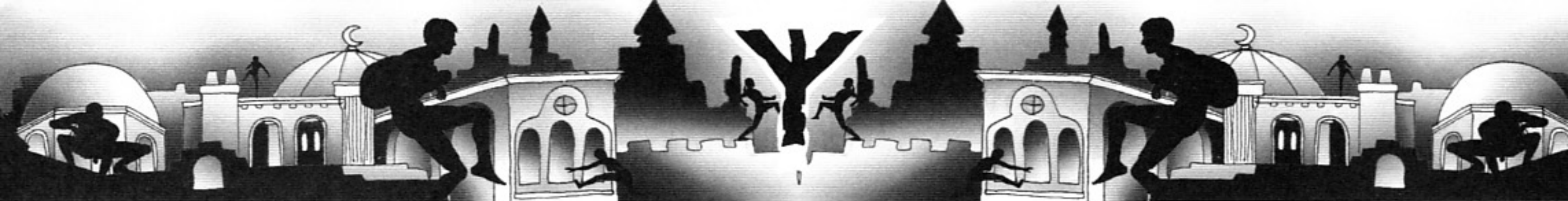
⁶ It was lucky for Jaxarte the Moonboat came along, but no coincidence their paths crossed: the vessel was simply following the Pavis Road to reach its destination (though deviating south to the safety of Lunar-held Moonbroth for a single night's rest on the way).

⁷ High noble though he is, it was unsurprising that Jaxarte had never been on board a Moonboat, use of which is reserved for officials and functionaries at the highest level of Imperial affairs. There are of course, occasional abuses and an increasing number of exceptions. The Arrolian branch of the Lunar church has used them for decades, and several satraps have acquired their own small fleets (though none can match the Satrap of Darjiin, whose moonboat squadron includes a huge purpose-built Pleasure Barge that floats lazily a mile above his capital and houses the sweaty deliberations of the Perpetual Congress).

⁸ Moonboats actually have little in the way of weaponry and only the largest can carry troops. Primarily used for fast communications, vulnerability to high winds, thunderbolts, lightning strikes and turbulence make these highly valuable craft unsuitable for military operations, especially outside the Glowline where the weather is far less predictable. The finest moonboat captains come from Arrolia, because they gain all their experience working beyond the Lunar frontier. Arrolian moonboat captains rightly have contempt for their spoiled Imperial counterparts, who thanks to the Kalikos icebreaker expeditions and Molanni's *pointy stick*, spend their careers cruising in full moonlight the placid skies inside the Empire's borders.

⁹ Moonboats are rated into seven grades. It is a common error of schoolboy boatspotter's like the young Jaxarte to assume this depends on the vessel's size, but in fact the rating is based on the number of Darjiini sailors – those unsavoury acolytes of Yestendos – needed to keep it aloft. While it is a general rule that the larger the craft, the more such crew required, other factors include the speed and manoeuvrability desired, and whether the moonboat will be sailing in the radiant glow of the Red Moon inside the Glowline, or the turbulent skies without where the strength of the moon varies. (We know of Lukarius the Archer from classical poetry; he of course pierced the Moon with his 'fine straight shaft'.)

¹⁰ Most probably shot from the forward-mounted ballistae, standard equipment on Moonboats. Cumbersome and with a very slow rate of fire, their usual use is for firing winch cables.



bigger and bigger, the dust began to sting my eyes, and through the tears I saw ghostly shapes of dead nomads astride gaunt beasts, reaching out with spectral claws as if to pull things into the spinning miasma.¹¹

Above, the flying rhino rammed the hull of the Moonboat as the others circled above it, shooting from the saddle and lobbing spears onto the decks. The craft shuddered from the impact, lurched to one side, and rapidly began losing altitude. On board the listing moonboat I could just make out figures scrambling about the deck. Hopefully they were mounting some sort of defence. A figure in a flaming red cloak stood near the stern, directing the others, and with a flash of magic, blasted two riders out of the sky. As I cheered this hero on, the port scuttle opened, and out flew a pair of red-cloaked Lunar Wyvern Riders, the great reptiles shrieking as they went to do battle with the nomads. But what good could two wyverns do against twenty?



the rampaging rhino with his red cloak and tricked it into charging at him and straight over the side! Then, incredible as it sounds, he put his scimitar between his teeth and leapt straight after it! Landing squarely on the beast's back, he manhandled its startled rider off. Waving his sword above his head, the rhino's new master spurred the beast on and they disappeared into the swirling maelstrom, the four wyvern riders following.

For a brief moment, the ostrich man and I were united in admiration, watching this awesome display. We looked at each for a second. "*Reppik a'em ekoms!*" he said in Praxian breathlessly,¹² and then, recovering his composure first, punched me in the face. I fell headlong off the back of the ostrich, into the swirling dust...



As I pondered this, two more answered their shrieks, and a great white wyvern and a nimbler red one came into view. Astride their backs were more red cloaked figures, and once again magic blasted several more riders from the sky. But the great whirlwind by now had become monstrous, and was beginning to suck the moonboat into its grasp. These red cloaked riders might be mounting a spirited defence, but it would be a fruitless one if their ship was torn from the sky. Not content to wait for it to be pulled to earth, several outlaws including the rhino landed on its deck and began wreaking havoc. A bison rider butted one crewman over the side, and as the ship was buckled and buffeted by the wind, two more fell to their deaths. The nomads all whooped with delight.

My captor wanted to join his cheering fellows, but without anyone else to take my weight, the ostrich was having trouble gaining height. With horror, I realised the Ostrich man decided the moonboat was a better attraction than I was, and had started to untie the rope from the saddle. Praying to the goddess for strength, I began climbing up to him, but could accomplish no more than give them both a decent yank. The ostrich squawked, and it looked like rider almost came off. I yanked again, but this time he pulled in his knees and grinned as he took out a huge knife and began hacking through the rope.

With arms and legs flailing helplessly, I hung suspended in the air for a moment, and then plummeted – straight up! I must have been caught in a powerful draught of the whirlwind, and went smashing straight into the soft feathery underbelly of the ostrich. This tossed us all, ostrich, rider and me, into the swirling storm. As the rider and I wrestled to keep ahold of the bird, we were thrown high above the beleaguered moonboat.

As I gripped the ostrich's neck and kicked at the rider, I watched in amazement as the figure at the stern of the moonboat taunted

...when I came to, I was lying on the desert floor, sore all over as if all my whole body had been rubbed raw. A beautiful purple-haired woman was singing gently as she wrapped me in a red cloak. "That was a brave thing you did, m'laddo", said a deep, strong voice. I looked up to see the hero, flicking the hair out of eyes. "If you hadn't dived on that shaman, that storm he was whipping up would've turned us into duck soup for certain." He gestured with his thumb over to the great war rhino, now contentedly munching on a skullbush shrub. "I tried to run him over with young Tinkerbelle there, but we could never quite pin the blighter down." He extended his hand and smiled. "Thanks!"

I wanted to shake it, but the pain was too great. And although puffed with pride by his words I felt compelled to confess that landing on the outlaw priest was an accident, but he was busy giving instructions to a huge, incredibly tattooed man with a hook, and a tall, thin one with a shiny bald head. Both wore the same red cloaks.

Looking around, I gasped when I saw the Moonboat uncharacteristically lying on its side in a small gully, battered and scarred. But there were uniformed Lunar troops and bare-bottomed Darjiini already swarming over it, and another red-cloaked figure was leading a band of our Sable allies over the rise. The man was back again, and saw the look on my face. "Don't worry kid", he said, "we'll have that crate sky-side in no time. Then the princess here will get you down to our sawbones at Moonbroth and we'll see about growing you a new hide". The purple-haired lady smiled, and my heart melted.

¹¹ It appears that the Gagarth shaman had called forth The Wild Hunt.

¹² Tokal tells me that in Praxian dialect, this is a colloquial expression of amazement, admiration or awe. Roughly translated, it means something like "What a guy!"



"You can hang on to my cloak young buddy, but I've gotta fly", continued the man. I was desperately sad to see him go. "No need to look glum. Sit tight while they repair the big kite, and I'll hunt down the last of those bad boys." He winked. "Keep a watch out for me: I'll bring 'em back in a conga line behind Tinkerbelle here, trussed up prettier than a Sacred Time jubble bird."

"Who are you?" I called out, as he patted the rhino's flanks and hoisted himself up.

"We're the Coders, kid, and we're on our way to pay poor old Sor Eel a house-call. My name's Julian - Count Julian to the brass - but friends like you can call me 'Ace'."¹² With that, the remarkable Count wheeled his rhino and actually managed to get it to rear up on its hind legs, before thundering off over a dune. His happy booming voice echoed behind him: "Choke me a gippah, I'll be back for breakfast."¹³

¹² The origin of Julian's nickname is obscure, but in Iron Marldemr's unauthorised biography *What a Complete Count* he claims Julian used to be a particularly vigorous and enthusiastic "ball boy" at Moonson Argenteus's infamously lewd lawn tennis parties.

¹³ A 'gippah' is a rare Heartland delicacy, usually served blanched followed by a light braising. Those unacquainted with the finer points of Lunar cuisine assume that it is a specially prepared river eel. Gippahs are in fact the tender end sections of walktapus tentacles. To render them safe for eating, these wriggling ends first need to be 'choked' - tied off with string - and then dipped in boiling water.



Floriat Fedora: Jaxarte was still recuperating at Moonbroth when the Lunar Coders made their surprise Moon-boat arrival in Pavis in late 1620, but was later embroiled in some of their most gallant escapades [see "Jaxarte and the Cradle" in Tales of the Reaching Moon #20]. Despite his uncle's hostility they remained on good terms, although ironically it was Jaxarte who was sent

to the Provincial Overseer by Sor Eel to complain about their conduct [see "Jaxarte and the Emperor" in The Rough Guide to Glamour].



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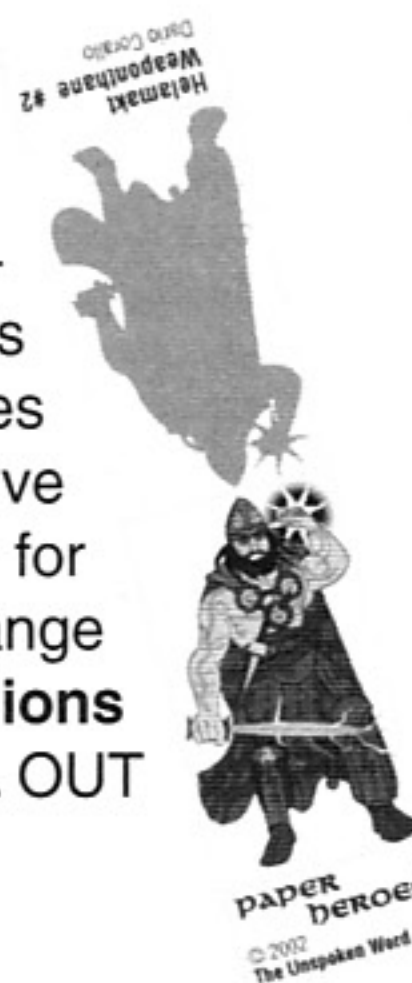
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