

UMBERTO PIGNATELLI

BEASTS & BARBARIANS

DARK PLACES OF THE DOMINIONS



BEASTS BARBARIANS

A Sword and Sorcery Savage Worlds setting

By UMBERTO PIGNATELLI

DARK PLACES OF THE DOMINIONS

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FOR M. K.

WELCOME BACK TO THE DOMINIONS! THIS SOURCEBOOK IS ABOUT THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF ANY ADVENTURE: LOCATIONS. AMONG THESE PAGES YOU WILL FIND A NUMBER OF DETAILED, READY-TO-PLAY MYSTERIOUS PLACES OF THE DREAD SEA DOMINIONS, EACH OF THEM RIPE WITH INTERESTING OPPORTUNITIES (AND TERRIBLE DANGERS) FOR THE HEROES, WHICH YOU CAN USE IN YOUR CAMPAIGN.

AN INSTANT PLOT IS ALSO GIVEN FOR EACH OF THEM, A PRE-MADE IDEA TO USE IT AS A NO-PREP, STAND-ALONE ADVENTURE. SO GRAB YOUR SWORD, CHECK YOUR BOW AND VENTURE INTO THE DOMINIONS AGAIN!

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My beloved master Velastios,

As you will understand by reading this letter, in the end I and my friends managed to escape from Tricarnia. We are safe, if barely. Now we are on a Syranthian merchant ship, headed southward. I don't know where my voyages will lead me next, so I am sending you the travel log I scrupulously wrote every day over the last three years.

As you'll surely understand, it is very dear to me, so I hope you'll keep it safe, and that someday, it may find a place in the Library, maybe with the great books of lore of the past.

As always, I salute you as my master and mentor, and wish you well.

— From the letters of Justinus of Syranthia

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back to the Dominions! This sourcebook is a little different from the standard *Beasts & Barbarians* material published till now.

In these pages you won't find a full-fledged plot-based scenario, nor pure background material, nor rules.

Instead you'll find several locales, or, as the title says, Dark Places.

Each of them is a full-fledged location (even if in some cases we are stretching the term a little) with an interesting feature for adventurers: it could be a treasure, a creature, a big event happening or something totally different.

No complete story is given for the Dark Places, but there are plenty of suggestions on how to get the party involved in them. This approach is more "sandboxing" and the resulting scenario can be very rewarding, for the players and the GM alike.

Do you feel intimidated?
You shouldn't!

Stories will emerge from these places simply by throwing the party inside and watching them sink or swim (or drown!) and they will surely reveal some additional surprises compared to a standard plot-based scenario.

Instant Plot. In case you are in a super-hurry (and we know players have busy lives), every Place also includes a super-condensed "instant plot", to create an adventure from it with almost no preparation time.

So, grab your sword, put your favorite dagger in your boot and go walking in the Dominions again!

REQUIREMENTS

The creatures and dangers presented in this sourcebook are made for a party of 4 Seasoned heroes, but it will be easy to scale them for more experienced groups.

A NOTE ON ABBREVIATIONS

To save space, several abbreviations are used in this book to refer to other books of the *Beasts & Barbarians* line. They are listed below:

GE: Beasts & Barbarians Golden Edition

BOD: Beasts of the Dominions

JCT: Jalizar, City of Thieves

TB: Tattered Banners

TLD: Tricarnia, Land of Demons

GOD: Gladiators of the Dominions

Characters and enemies are defined in the text as follows.

(E): Extra

(H): Henchman

(RH): Right Hand

(WC): Wild Card



THE GORGE OF LOVAR SHAN

“You must know, noble stranger, that many years ago Lovar Shan, chief of Red Nomads, wounded unto death his own brother, One-Eyed Marik, and left him to die among those rocks, with both legs broken. From that day, when the wind of the sands blows, you can still hear Marik’s agonized cries coming out from that gorge...”

– From the diary of Justinus of Syranthia

LOCATION: RED DESERT

Lovar Shan, chief of a powerful tribe of Red Nomads, condemned his brother One-Eyed Marik to die in a horrible way, because he tried to seize power from him. Marik died, but his hate continues to live and even today he haunts the desert gorge where he passed away, killing wanderers and draining their life essence. There is

only one way to really kill him: find his mortal remains and destroy his skull.

HOW TO INTRODUCE THE GORGE INTO A SCENARIO

There are many reasons for the heroes to venture into the Gorge: they may be escaping from a dangerous enemy, chasing someone, looking for a particular item

which was lost in the Gorge, or they are simply oblivious wanderers, who got lost in the Red Desert.

WHAT THE HEROES KNOW

The characters could have heard stories of this cursed place around the campfires of the Desert Nomads. With a Common Knowledge (for characters native to the desert) or Knowledge (Legends and Lore) roll (for others), the adventurers remember something about the legends of this place. The player rolling the highest number (if he achieved at least a raise) also obtains a Bennie.

CROSSING THE GORGE

The Gorge has a single entrance and a single exit, but it has a series of junctions, where getting lost is quite easy. Exploring (or simply crossing) the place uses the Abstract Navigation System (see *GE* page 134). Depending on the situation, the skill used could be Tracking (if the party is chasing someone) or Survival (if the party is simply trekking through the gorge). During each exploration round (half an hour long), draw a card from the Action Deck and play the mini-scene detailed below (or use the re-draw option if the card was already drawn).

When the party has at least 8 Advancement Tokens and is near to the exit of the Gorge, they meet the Thing Which Lurks in the Gorge (see next scene).

Objective (O). If the party is looking for someone or something, they'll likely find it (or him). When they have at least 6 Advancement Tokens, the next scene marked with (O) also includes the object of their quest. The GM should work it logically into the situation.

GORGE SCENES

Deuce – Landslide! The walls of the gorge are made of crumbling rocks and some of them fall down, creating a dangerous avalanche! Each hero must roll Agility (-2) or suffer 3d6 damage. In addition, from now on, going back is impossible. Is this a natural event?

Three – Bird of Ill Omen (O). A desert vulture, on a dead tree, watches the party with malevolent eyes, as if ready to savor their dead flesh. Unless the heroes attack and kill it (Toughness: 4, -2 to attack it, only one round of attack is possible, then the beast flies away), everybody in the party must make a Spirit roll. Whoever fails (if several characters fail, pick the one

INSTANT PLOT:

THE CALL OF BLOOD

Many years have passed since Lovar Shan's murderous act. The Nomad chief is older today, but not softer at all. He decided his daughter, Marala, had to marry Shakim, one of his followers, an ugly bandit twenty years older than her. But the girl is strong-willed and won't do this: she stole a camel and fled into the desert. Lovar Shan offered a great reward to the man who brings her back, and the heroes have been on the girl's tracks for a while. The tracks are clear: she ventured into that dark gorge...

Twists: *Marala is Marik's (the Dweller's) niece. How the creature will react to the blood of his blood? Will he try to kill her? Will he spare her? Or use her to lure his brother into the Gorge?*

with the lowest result) loses a Bennie, due to the ill omen.

Four – Watch Your Feet (O)! A small but treacherous scorpion is hidden among the rocks. If the heroes have mounts, or there are NPCs with them, the beast attacks one of them, otherwise it targets a random hero. The victim is automatically punctured by the creature unless she (if the target is a player character) or a random player character nearby (in case of an NPC or a mount) succeeds at a Notice (-2) roll, spotting the scorpion before it is disturbed. The scorpion poison is Venomous, but the poison can be purged with a Healing (-1) roll, if this is made immediately. A poisoned NPC who is saved suffers from a tremendous fever (consider him Exhausted, and he must be transported by the party, becoming quite a problem). A poisoned mount or PC which is saved is lame for the rest of the scenario (suffers from the One Leg Hindrance).

Five – Gorge Hyenas (O). This place is inhabited by a pack of malevolent Desert Hyenas, which were blighted by the dark power of the Gorge Dweller. They attack the party from many directions at the same time, and are led by a bigger specimen, with eyes shimmering with a strange greenish light. If the heroes heard the Chorus of Howls (see Nine) the pack has gathered (add an additional Hyena per hero). If the heroes kill the Pack Leader, the Gorge Dweller is weakened (see below).

(E) Desert Hyena (1 per Hero +2). See page 10.

(WC) Pack Leader (1). Use Desert Hyena stats. See page 10.

Six – Wind and Sand. Suddenly a strong wind rises up. The air fills with sand, debris

and strange howling noises. They are simply a natural effect... or aren't they? Every Notice roll and ranged attack, from this moment on, is at -2. Each character must also make a Vigor (+2) roll, in the case of failure the constant exposure to the wind causes them one level of Fatigue.

Note: if this card is drawn again, ignore the redraw rule, instead the wind ceases.

Seven – Poisoned Spring (O). The heroes hear water gurgling not far away. There is a small spring nearby! The water is very fresh, but it is poisoned by the tainted black stones all around. Half an hour after drinking it, the heroes must make a Vigor (-2) roll or they feel ill, suffering a level of Fatigue. It is possible to discover the danger with a Survival (-2) roll or from the fact that there is no vegetation around the spring (if the players specifically ask about this).

Eight – Dead Camel (O). The party stumbles on the skeleton of an old camel, still saddled, which belonged to an unfortunate traveler. Tied to the saddle there is a scimitar still in its scabbard (which falls to rusty pieces when unsheathed), a Kullah (a Desert Nomad dagger, very sharp – AP 1) still in perfect condition, and, in a leather bag, there is a map or another document chosen by the GM (useful as a hook for another adventure).

Nine – Chorus of Howls. Suddenly the heroes hear savage howls, similar to laughter. With a Survival roll, they are recognized as produced by Desert Hyenas. As they are very unnerving, the characters must make a Fear check, at +2 if they understood the nature of the howls. Characters failing the roll, if they met the Hyenas later (see Five), begin the fight Shaken, being still unnerved by what they

heard. If the party already defeated the pack, these voices belong to the survivors, and they are too few and haggard to require the roll.

Ten – Killer Rats (O)! The gorge's walls at this point are made of crumbling rocks and are full of holes. Unless the players explicitly say they are advancing quietly (a group Stealth roll is required), a horde of black rats swarms out of the holes, eager to devour the adventurers!

(E) Swarm of Rats (1 per 2 Heroes). See page 12.

Jack – Gray Thorn Brambles (O). Strange brambles infest the gorge in this place: hideous plants with long, gray spines. In truth they are specimens of the Gray Lotus of the Sands (see sidebar), luckily not dangerous. They are recognized with a Lotusmastery roll. The heroes can harvest up to three doses of Lotus from them.

Queen – Crevasse (O). A large fissure, created by a crack in the ground, divides the gorge in two. The party must turn back (losing two Advancement Tokens) or find a way to cross it. The fissure is six yards wide and has some handholds which can be used to throw a rope to the other side. In this case a Throwing (-2) roll is necessary to fix the rope, and then an Agility or Strength roll to cross it hand over hand.

In the case of failure the adventurer falls, suffering 3d6 damage.

King – Tree of the Dead. The heroes stop near an old dead tree to rest a while (everyone recovers a Fatigue level). While catching his breath, a randomly selected hero spots an object shimmering among the roots of the old plant. If he tries to pick it up, the plant animates and 1d4+2 branches attack the party! Each branch has Fighting d8, Reach 2 and deals 2d8 damage. They have Parry 5 and Toughness 7. The tree's trunk has Toughness 10. Both the trunk and the branches suffer double damage from fire. The strange object among the roots is a human skull, with a large incision near the left eye-socket (this means that the owner probably lost his eye in life). It is the skull of One-Eyed Marik (see next scene). Using the *detect arcana* Power reveals the object to be infused with a strange magic.

Ace – Cavern of Inscriptions (O). Concealed in the ravine (a Notice roll is required to spot it) there is a small grotto. It is empty but the walls are covered in graffiti and inscriptions. With a Knowledge (Arcana) (-2) roll they can be interpreted. It is an ancient curse in the desert tongue condemning anybody dying in the Gorge to haunt this place! Damaging the inscriptions will weaken the Gorge Dweller (see below).

HERO'S JOURNAL: GRAY LOTUS OF THE SANDS

This dangerous looking plant is actually harmless and very helpful. Also called Lotus of the Widows, the thorns of this bramble, if pulverized, have great restorative powers. In game terms a dose of these herbs is considered Refined Lotus, which in addition grants +2 to the Lotusmastery roll if used to concoct healing potions.

Joker – Vision of the Past. The heroes, while advancing, see a strange scene in front of them. A group of dismounted desert nomads, swords in hand, surround another nomad, unarmed and with a very visible eyepatch (One-Eyed Marik). From the armed group a single figure comes out: he is Lovar Shan, but he seems much younger (if the party met him recently). He is armed with a thick club and uses it to smash the knees of the one-eyed nomad, who falls on the ground, begging for mercy. Then, Lovar Shan mounts his horse and leaves his brother to die. While he gallops away, Marik's death curse echoes in the Gorge. This scene isn't real, it is evoked by Marik's powers. If the heroes run to help him, a ghostly wind blows a rain of pebbles against the adventurers: they must make an Agility roll or suffer 2d6 damage. When the wind ceases, they hear a distant echo whispering "I'll get you, Lovar! I'll get you!" There is nothing the party can do here.

Redraw – "the Desert has no Pity". The heroes start being tired: the sun is harsh (or, if during nighttime, it is very cold). Everybody must make a Vigor (+2) roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. Every time this event happens, the roll's modifier worsens by 1, up to (-2). At this point, ignore any further redraws.

THE GORGE DWELLER

When the heroes achieve the number of Advancement Tokens required read or rephrase the text below.

Suddenly, a strange, cold wind rises up from the gorge, and a terrible howl is heard. The wind takes the shape of an irregular whirlwind, in which a vague face can be seen. A face missing an eye.

From the whirlwind a ghostly voice emerges.

"Lovar! Lovar! Where you are, brother mine? Lovar! Where you are, assassin? I'll have no peace until I drain your black soul!"

It is the tormented spirit of One-Eyed Marik who speaks. The being desires only one thing: killing his hated brother and assassin, and he attacks every wanderer fool enough to cross his realm. If the heroes killed the Hyena's Pack Leader or desecrated the graffiti in the Cavern of the Inscriptions the creature is weakened, but the only way to really kill him is destroying his skull (if they found it). Alternatively if, for some reason, Lovar Shan is there, and dies, Marik is freed forever.

If none of these is viable, the only option left to the heroes is escaping: the Gorge's exit isn't far away, with a Standard length Chase the heroes can leave this place, and the Dweller cannot leave his prison...

During the Chase Marik calls on the surviving Hyenas to support him.

(E) Desert Hyena (2 per Hero). See page 10.

(WC) Gorge Dweller. See page 12.

CREATURES AND NPCs

DESERT HYENA

A large canine, with brownish fur and large, strong jaws. These beasts haunt the deserts of the Dominions, in particular the

Red Desert. Usually they don't attack men unless very hungry and in large numbers, but this pack was slowly tainted by the dark powers of the Gorge Dweller. They are somewhat bigger, stronger and bolder. A strange green light flickers in their eyes. They are led by a huge male, with a knot of muscles on his back and almost black fur.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d8.

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Fleet-Footed:** Hyenas roll a d10 instead of a d6 when they run.
- **Go for the Throat:** Hyenas instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on their attack rolls, they hit the target's most weakly armored location.
- **Hideous Laughter:**
Hyenas are famous for their hideous laughter, which is considered an Intimidation test. A pack (at least four) laughing in the same action can make a group

Intimidation roll, affecting all enemies within a LBT.

- **Pack Leader:** The pack is led by an individual with Strength, Vigor and Fighting one die step higher, and with Size 0. In addition he has the Command Edge. He is a Wild Card.

- **Size -1:** Desert Hyenas are dog-sized, more or less.



GORGE DWELLER

The Gorge Dweller is a very powerful ghost, created by the ancient spells written in the Cavern of Inscriptions by unknown hands in the far past. His former identity, One-Eyed Marik, is almost lost, but his terrible hate toward the man who killed him, his brother Lovar Shan, still burns.

Weakening the Gorge Dweller: There are various things the heroes can do to weaken the Gorge Dweller. The first weakening lowers his Fighting, Vigor and Strength by one die step, the second



reduces his Spirit by one die step and his Power Points by 5.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Throwing d8.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities

- **Ethereal:** The Gorge Dweller is immune to any physical attack, only magic and his Weakness can damage him.

- **Fear -2:** The Gorge Dweller is a terrible supernatural being: seeing him causes a Fear (-2) roll.

- **Hail of Rocks:** The Gorge Dweller can attack by throwing a deadly hail of rock, sand and pebbles at his opponents. This is a melee attack, dealing Str+d6 damage, with Reach 2 and the Improved Sweep Edge.

- **Weakness (Skull):** The sole part of Marik's body still existing, the skull, has Toughness 4. Shattering it automatically destroys the Gorge Dweller, which explodes dealing 3d6 damage to any target in a LBT.

- **Wind Powers:** The Gorge Dweller has 20 Power Points and the following Powers, using Spirit as the arcane skill: *fear* (freezing cold howl), *havoc* (terrible gale) and *obscure* (wind of the night).

SWARM OF RATS

Swarms are treated just like a creature. Swarms cover an area equal to a Large Burst Template and attack everyone within it every round. When a swarm is wounded, its size decreases to a Medium Burst Template (see the Split Special Ability for smaller size swarms). Another hit reduces it to a Small Burst Template and a third one disperses it.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Notice d6.

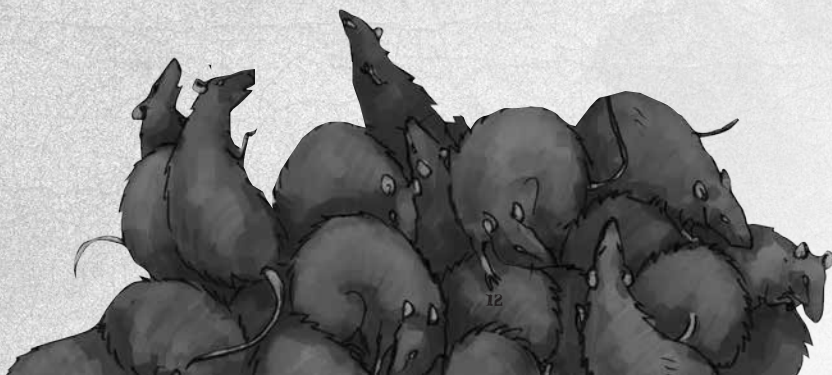
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- **Bites:** A Swarm of Rats inflicts hundreds of tiny scratches every round on their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location (victims in completely sealed suits are immune).

- **Split:** This swarm is clever enough to split into two smaller ones (Small Burst Templates) should their foes split up. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is lowered by -2 (to 4 each) and their Agility is lowered by a die step.

- **Swarm:** Parry +2; because the swarm is composed of dozens of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do only half damage. Area-effect weapons work normally.





THE CARAVAN OF TWO LANTERNS

"Come on! Come on! The Two Lanterns are in town! Spices from Kyros, we have them! Wine from Faberterra, sweet as the kiss of a woman, we have that too! Silk from Tricornia, I saw it! And songs, and stories and marvels such as you have never seen! Come on! Visit the Caravan of the Two Lanterns!"

– From the diary of Justinus of Syranthia

LOCATION: ANYWHERE THERE
IS A CHANCE FOR PROFIT
(USUALLY FROM NORTHEIM
TO KYROS)

The sight of the Caravan of Two Lanterns is welcomed in almost all the towns and cities of the Dominions. Made up of a variable number of wagons, from ten in

the worst periods to as many as thirty in the best ones, it also includes a number of horsemen and people walking beside the carts.

Composed of merchants, artisans and entertainers of all types, it owes its name to the wagon of the caravan master, Talud the Wise, a beautiful cart, more like a house on wheels, with a pair of oil lamps in front of the door. During nighttime the

lights are visible from miles away and help the farthest carts not to lose the trail.

The caravan hides a secret: Talud, despite posing as an Ekulian peddler, is Taleeso, a Jalizaran master thief, ruler of a very good band of robbers, disguised as merchants, artisans and entertainers among the rest of the caravan.

Talud is very cautious and keeps his men on a tight leash: apart from letting them commit some small crimes (typically pickpocketing, cheating at gambling and swindles), he organizes a single theft in each city visited by the caravan. Usually it is something very valuable and very dangerous, but so far the Band of the Two Lanterns, as the thieves call themselves, hasn't been caught and the thefts remain unpunished.

INTRODUCING THE CARAVAN INTO A SCENARIO

There are basically three ways to use the Caravan in play.

The first one is using it for a diversion, a relatively peaceful session where the players do some shopping, carouse, spend some money and gather clues and stories from the wanderers. To add some action, you can use the Event described for each merchant.

The second way is pitting the heroes against the Band of the Two Lanterns: the thieves carry out a spectacular robbery, and the heroes must solve the mystery and recover the loot. Talud tries to minimize the damage: he seems to offer his collaboration and helps the party capture one (and only one) culprit as a scapegoat.

INSTANT PLOT: THE HEART OF BERA

The Governor of Berashum, a small Kyrosian town, is a rich man, grown fat at the expense of his subjects, whom he leeches without any remorse. He recently came into possession of the Heart of Bera, a gem sacred to a local deity, so beautiful that he promised to gift it to the Autarch himself, who has a soft spot for such jewelry. In this manner he'll improve his position in the kingdom substantially. But the day before the Autarch's emissaries arrive to collect the gem, the strongbox where the gem was kept is found empty. The blame falls on the guards, the heroes, who guarded the room, on the top of a tower, all night; but they saw nothing. The Governor, frothing, gives them a day to find the gem, otherwise they'll be beheaded. The Gem was stolen by Marcela the Acrobat (see below), who was smuggled into the treasure room inside a precious trunk, now empty, and escaped through a very narrow window; but the theft was a collective effort by all the Band of the Two Lanterns.

The heroes must track down the burglars, but once found, they face a moral choice: their master is an awful bastard, and the theft was commissioned by his most pious citizens, who want to restore the treasure to their deity. If the heroes don't return the gem to the Governor, the next day he is taken away in chains by the Autarch's emissaries, who don't like to travel for nothing. Berashum receives a different governor, and the party, if they want, can join the Caravan and the Band of the Two Lanterns.

Then, when the caravan leaves, the Band organizes his escape.

The third way is making the heroes join the caravan first, and the Band later. This could happen because they need a job, or maybe because they must disappear for some reason. Talud asks no questions, but he doesn't offer free meals either: the heroes, if they have suitable skills, must help the band in some spectacular theft.

WANDERING AMONG THE STALLS

In the following sections are detailed some of the most important merchants and characters of the caravan. Feel free to add others that suit your taste: after all, the caravan includes many different persons, with different stories and motivations. If the party is simply wandering among the stalls draw a card and check the table below. For each stall there is also an Event, a special happening which can lead to a scene or a small adventure.

Unless stated otherwise, all characters in the stalls are Commoners.

CARAVAN STALLS

Deuce – Pickpockets! There are a number of youngsters in the caravan. Some of them are the children of the caravan members, others are beggars and street children who joined the wagons to have the chance to survive. For some reason Talud doesn't send them away, so long as they don't steal too much. In addition, they are excellent eyes and ears, ready to report to the old caravan master what is happening. When this card is dealt, one of the heroes is pickpocketed by one of this band of little thieves! There are at least six

of them, making a cooperative Stealth d8 roll opposed by the victim's Notice. If the hero loses the roll, he doesn't discover his loss until it is too late, if the hero wins, without a raise, he is robbed but notices the fact and a Standard length Chase starts among the stalls, using Agility. The boys are smart and when possible (when they are acting on Action Cards within two different numbers, like 10 and Queen or 6 and 8) they pass the stolen goods to one another. Pursuing heroes must make a Notice roll to spot this. The pickpockets, obviously, don't rob other members of the caravan, unless they are really starving.

Event – A New Friend. This event triggers if a hero catches one of the small thieves and doesn't trash, hit or bring him to the guards. In this case Kiro, a tomboy, ten years old and very dirty, adopts him. Consider her an Ally of the hero, and no, the character cannot send her away: Kiro will stay with him willy-nilly...

Three – Gambling Table. Tainted-faced Rufo and his "friends" Ralto and Hazit look like simple caravan guards, and this is their job when the caravan is moving. But when the wagons make camp the three of them set up a gambling table, luring the locals into "innocent" dice games. They pose as rough, dumb fellows, but they are old foxes, all of them with Gambling d8 and ready to cheat. They can lose up to 200 Moons without a flinch, but if they lose more, they draw their blades and things get ugly, or they wait for the lucky winner in some dark back alley to take back the loot.

Event – The Knife Thrower. One evening, when the gambling activity is very intense, a cloaked figure enters the tent of the gamblers. She is Matana, a very beautiful woman, dressed in a scanty bikini. She says her husband lost everything at this

table, and asks for the chance to win it back. She is not a gambler, but she can throw a knife, so asks for a throwing competition, with three knives. She has no money, but puts herself up as a prize, against all the money on the table. Hazit is a good knife thrower (Throwing d8) and gladly accepts, confident that he can beat a woman. Everyone, including the heroes, can join the game. Matana is an excellent thrower (Throwing d10, Marksman, Wild Card), but limits herself to d6 for the first two rounds of the competition. In the third one, she throws at her best, but not at the target, she hits the lantern of the tent, immersing everyone in darkness. When the light is restored, Matana isn't there anymore, nor is the bag with all the money. Oh, and she is not married at all.

(E) Gamblers (3). Use the Caravan Fighter stats. Rufo is a Right Hand. See page 22.

Four to Six – Merchants. Not every peddler of the caravan is a thief in disguise. In truth, the great majority of them aren't. If this card is drawn the heroes encounter one of these fellows, depending on the suit.

With clubs they met Goram, a Northlander pelt seller; with diamonds the merchant is Tanigo, a Borderlands wine merchant; with hearts the peddler is Mirana and her daughters, who sell cutlery and cheap jewels; finally with clubs they find Martano of Syranthia, disgraced Master Merchant, who now sells olives and dried figs.

Event – The Menace. While the heroes are at the stall, a noble man with two burly guards arrives at the stall, and verbally threatens the merchant, accusing him or her of being a swindler and of having sold him faulty goods. Unless the heroes

intervene, his men kick the wares from the stand. The noble, Lord Hamaro, is very vengeful and things don't end there, especially if Hamaro is defeated in public. For example, the son or daughter of the merchant could be kidnapped by night and taken to Hamaro's palace...

Seven – Vagro, the Beast Tamer.

Vagro the Valk is a lanky man, with long moustache and a cruel face. This corresponds to the truth: he is a sour and cruel person. He is the Beast Tamer of the Caravan, he puts a show in every town where the caravan stops, and on his wagon there is a cage containing the main attraction of the show, Bera the Tiger. He also has a couple of trained dogs and a very small monkey, Vandala, which loves to throw her droppings at people. Vagro has two slaves, a couple of dwarves, Tor and Tar (who have some Pigmy blood in their veins), that ride the dogs in the shows, and are generally harassed by their master. Vagro mistreats both his servants and his beasts, and is often drunk. In this case he is even meaner than normal (add the Bloodthirsty Hindrance).

Event – It's Loose! One day, before the show begins, the tiger breaks free of the cage and brings mayhem to the city! The heroes must stop her, if possible without killing her. If they do, but the animal dies, Vagro, completely drunk, blames them. He even draws his sword. If the heroes give him a lesson, the bastard takes his revenge on his dwarves, whipping Tar to death. Then, he nurtures his grudge. Vandala, his monkey, is a trained pickpocket (Stealth d10, Acrobat) but can also be used to place stolen items in the unguarded backpacks of the heroes...

(E) Vagro. Use the Caravan Fighter stats, adding the Beast Master and Trademark Weapon (Whip) Edges. See page 22.

(E) Tor and Tar. Use the Commoner stats, adding the Small Hindrance. See page 23.

(E) Bera the Tiger. See page 22.

Eight – Marcela the Acrobat. Marcela is a young girl, with so many different races in her blood that she can only be defined as an Imperial. She is lean as a cat and much more agile. Marcela is an acrobat, and when the caravan stops in a town, she uses her amazing skills to entertain commoners and nobles alike. Marcela has a wonderful body which attracts a lot of men, but she isn't interested. Nor in women, either. Marcela is a key element of the Band of the Two Lanterns, because there is a skill she has but is forbidden to use in public: She is a great contortionist and sometimes the rest of the band smuggle her inside heavily guarded locations to complete very difficult thefts.

Event – She Hasn't Returned. Marcela was on a job last night. Talud delivered her to the house of Prince Varios, in a fake barrel of wine. She was to have sneaked into the bedroom of the lord, stolen a precious ledger and got away. But she never returned. Talud fears that Lord Varios, who is known to be very fond of “recreational” tortures, caught Marcela and is now having fun with her. He asks the party to investigate, and if necessary to break in and free her. In truth Varios isn't the culprit; Marcela did the job and left Lord Varios' house, but on the road back to the caravan one of her spurned suitors, the obsessed Lotusmaster Gracus, captured her, and now the girl is lying in his laboratory, waiting for the preparation of a potion which will make her love the man forever.

Nine – Lobora the Seer. Lobora is an Ivory Savannah woman in her forties, with

magnetic, cat-like eyes. She is an Ivory Savannah witch, but she hasn't danced for a number of years now. Her main business is reading fortunes for people. Lobora's magic is all a ruse: she hasn't any real powers, but any character with the Sorcery Arcane Background touching her will feel something strange. The same faint aura is also found with the *detect arcana* Power. Lobora is the daughter of Oba the Witch, a very powerful being of the Savannah (see *BOD*, the *Hunter's Moon* scenario), and she has inherited strange, if untrained, gifts.

Lobora reads the future for 5 Moons, and the procedure is handled with an opposed roll between Lobora's Persuasion and the customer's Smarts. In the case of success, she delivers vague prophecies, but good enough to satisfy the person. In addition draw a card from the Action Deck. If it is a Joker, it means that Lobora's latent powers emerge and she falls into trance, making a real prophecy. With a red Joker the prophecy is positive, and the character receives the Luck Edge till the next full moon, if it is black the prophecy is a bad omen, and the person suffers the Bad Luck Hindrance for the same interval of time.

Event – Burn the Witch! The day before, when the caravan arrived in a remote Northeim village, Balthur, the village chief, a braggart Northlander warrior, mockingly asked the Seer for a vision of his life, hoping to hear of glory, sons and prestige. Things went bad, and Lobora had a real vision, seeing instead Balthur's death. The chief cursed the woman and went away enraged, with his fellow warriors. The day after, Balthur's body was found on the shores of the nearby lake. Apparently he fell in the water and drowned. His warriors blame the foreign witch and take Lobora, meaning to sacrifice her

on the funeral pyre of Balthur, to soothe the warrior's soul. In truth Balthur was killed by his best friend Lann, who always coveted Balthur's leadership. The heroes must unravel the culprit or free Labora by force from a fortified Northlander village.

Ten – Meeto the Tapestry Maker. A meek, smiling man, Meeto is an excellent weaver. He produces and sells tapestries. They are very fine, but all with the same decoration. The reason is simple: Meeto is blind, and he works using only touch (he recognizes the different types of fibers) and memory. The horses of his wagon are trained to follow the rest of the caravan, so he doesn't get lost, and Talud keeps an eye on him. Meeto hasn't always been blind and hasn't always been a weaver, either. In the past he was the Lockmaster of the Thieves Guild of Jalizar, meaning he was the best lockpicker among his peers. Meeto was a legend, and a very rich man. He failed only once, when, sneaking into the Black Windowed Mansion of Jalizar (see *JCT*, page 50), he tried to open an ancient Tricarnian strongbox belonging to Priest Prince Talbarioc. A small poisonous needle punctured him, and the evil Tricarnian poison robbed him of his most precious treasure: sight. Prince Talbarioc, amused by his fate, only put the Lockmaster out of the door, easy prey for his enemies. Meeto had only one friend at that time: Talud. He joined the Caravan and left Jalizar forever. A hero winning Meeto's trust can learn a lot from the Lockmaster: with a Smarts (-4) roll and two months of time, he can acquire a Wild Die in Lockpicking if an Extra, or permanently raise his Wild Die, for Lockpicking only, by one die step.

Event – Bring the Lockmaster on the Job. Despite being blind, Meeto's hands can still work, and he is by far one of the best burglars of the Dominions, even if for

obvious reasons he cannot work anymore. But the tabernacle of the Goddess Ramashasa, in the the Doorless Temple, is a too great a temptation. The problem is that the lock can be picked only by night, and in perfect darkness, to avoid being spotted by the guards. Only one man can do it, Meeto, but someone must take him to the heart of the Temple.

(RH) Meeto the Lockmaster. Use the Commoner stats, adding the Blind Hindrance. He has Lockpicking d12+2 (Wild Die d10), Repair d10 and the Thief Edge. See page 23.

Jack – The Marvelous Wares of Attanasios. Attanasios is a Zandorian merchant of indefinite age, with a very long beard, neatly trimmed into two spikes. Attanasios owns an old carriage full of all types of stuff: old scrolls, discarded dresses, even furniture. He is the closest thing to a junk dealer in the Caravan. But among his stuff, sometimes, very strange items can be found. The GM can use Attanasios to provide the heroes with a special item or a hook for another adventure (see sidebar for examples). Attanasios is a Commoner, but has Smarts d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, and Knowledge (History) d4.

Event – The Mystery Box. Among Attanasios' wares, there is one item that has given him a headache for years: a black, ebony box, perfectly sealed and without any visible lock or other means of opening it. If shaken, the container sounds full. Periodically, the man tries to open it, without any success. He doesn't sell it, but the item is often found lying among other stuff. With a Knowledge (Arcana) (-4) or (History) (-2) a character identifies it as a Keronian Strongbox (if the hero saw the mysterious cage in the *Eyes of the Night* scenario of *BOD* he automatically recognizes it as being a similar object).

The characters have no means of opening it (even magic doesn't work) and brute force destroys the contents. One morning, Attanasios is found missing. The only clue is the mystery box, lying open in his wagon. It is empty. The box in fact contained a deadly Jade Wasp, a small demonic insect, summoned by an ancient Keronian priest as "gift" to a rival. The beast is very dangerous, because persons killed by it come back as undead corpses under its control.

(WC) Jade Wasp. See page 23.

(E) Wasp Slave (up to 20). See page 25.

Queen – Mistress Hambra and Her Nieces. The carriage of Mistress Hambra is colorful, clean and very comfortable. The mistress is a morbid, but nice, woman in her late forties with a sweet Kyrosian

accent and her girls Tuk Tuk (an Ivory Savannah Girl), Gimalira (who poses as a Tricornian princess but is actually a Jalizaran washerwoman) and Vanesa (a half-Lhobanite beauty) are skilled courtesans. They could be a money sink for any lusty hero and traveler, but they also keep their ears open for interesting stories that Mistress Hambra reports to Valud, to plan thefts. If the heroes befriend one of them, he gains +2 to Streetwise rolls till the next session.

Event – Drained to Death. While the caravan is in a town, the city guards find a man dead in a back alley. The weird thing is that the body shows no wounds but seems totally drained of every liquid. This happens again after 1d10 days: another man is found dead in the same manner, even if the caravan moved to another town. The culprit is Gimalira and all the

HERO'S JOURNAL: ATTANASIOS' WARES

Among the junk and worthless stuff of the Zandorian merchant, several strange items can be found. Here some examples. Note that often the merchant has no idea what he is really selling...

Traveler's Staff. *A sturdy shepherd's staff, which has a knife engraved on the head. Any character belonging to the Cult of Hulian automatically identifies it as the Mark of the Smith (see GE page 120), others need a Knowledge (Religion) (-2) or Knowledge (Arcana) (-4) to recognize it. Cost: 70 Moons.*

Gray Lotus of Visions. *Attanasios sells this powder in an ancient silver bowl, of Cairnlander make, saying that it is a powerful Lotus concoction bestowing prophetic powers. He is totally wrong, as can be discovered with a Lotusmastery roll: it is the powdered bones of a powerful Ancestor of the Cairn Lord, Half Goat. Inhaling it can, at the GM's discretion, cause possession by an Ancestor's Ghost (see GE page 183). Cost: 300 Moons.*

Etu's Carnal Mysteries. *This vellum scroll, several yards long, is a finely painted erotic tome, made by some past priestess of Etu. It has some worth as a piece of art, but it can be even more important if someone ever washes the scroll with wine: the colors will fade, revealing a map of the Land of Idols, showing the way to the fabled Gold Hand of Qu Var, a relic belonging to one of the greatest Lhoban sorcerers of the past. Cost: 400 Moons.*

dead men are her customers. She received a gift from Attanasios as payment for some private attention, a delicate necklace of Lhoban mountain pearls. The item is a powerful, but cursed artifact, which in certain intimate moments transforms the girl into a hellish, vampiric creature, the Katavasha. Gimalira remembers nothing of the transformation or the hours immediately afterwards. To complicate the plot, Vanesa, jealous of the jewel, steals it...

(WC) Katavasha (1). See page 23.

King – Seed the Mad Priest. This old, dirty man, wears the robes of the Fagiri, the wandering priests and agronomists of Etu. There is a fanatical light in his eyes, showing his madness. Nobody knows his real name, but all call him Seed because he starts all his public preaching by showing a grain seed to the crowd. Despite his mental problems, Seed is an excellent speaker, which hints that in the past he must have been a learned man. Seed's preaching isn't the standard philosophy of Etu, he often speaks of the absolute right of all people to be nourished, because Etu is mother to everyone. These words, sooner or later, will cause trouble for the ragged preacher.

Event – Nobody Knows Where a Prince Can Hide. Seed's story is one of those which could tear the Dominions apart. His name, in a long forgotten past, was Arides, and he is the last surviving elder brother of Ganymedes II, the Autarch of Kyros, making him the legitimate Autarch. During the internecine wars for power, Arides was strangled by one of Ganymedes' assassins and his body dumped in the Sword River. But Arides wasn't dead, and survived, even if his brain was severely damaged. He was saved by a humble wandering Fagiri, who didn't

recognize him. Many years have passed since that day, during which Arides joined the sect and took a new name. Seed doesn't even remember his past life most of the time, and in his few moments of lucidity he is very careful to keep it hidden. Seed's past emerges abruptly one day, while the caravan is in Kyros: the Autarch's army is passing, and an elephant of the royal palace goes out of control, threatening to trample a baby. Seed, without even thinking, jumps in front of him. The beast recognizes his old mahut (rider) and stops, bowing in front of him. The incident seems forgotten, but somebody, hearing the story, makes the connection: General Tunamos (see *B&B* #2 – *The Citadel of the Winged Gods*), who sends his men to take him. Only one person in the caravan knows the real identity of Seed: Mistress Hambra, and the aged courtesan will do anything she can to keep him safe...

Ace – Tarabo the Candy Seller. Tarabo is a nice, plump fellow, in his fifties. He owns a small stall where he sells sweets, from honey-covered almonds, to fried ants of the Savannah and winter apples of Northeim. Tarabo is a chatty fellow, and very amicable, especially with babies. In truth this is only a façade for Tarabo's real job: he is a killer for hire of the Assassins' Guild of Jalizar, an itinerant one, ready to sell his services to the highest bidder. On his trading stall there is always in plain sight an old vase, filled with honey, with some crude decorations on it. The "decorations" are in truth an inscription in the Thieves' Signs of Jalizar meaning "assassin for hire". Talud, his sons and Meeto are the only ones in the caravan who know the real identity of Tarabo and are quite scared of him. Talud would likely get rid of Tarabo, but fears the plump little man.

Event – A Contract is a Contract. Tarabo is a simple person: when he is hired, he does the job, regardless of the victim's identity. If he fails at the first attempt, he tries another time, and so on. Nothing can stop him, even if the commissioner changes his mind. Latus, a rather rich merchant, and his wife Verania are two old acquaintances of one of the heroes. Latus has been a very unfaithful man in the past, but he redeemed himself after marrying Verania, who is very jealous. The problem is that Verania suspects that Latus has a lover, and, mad with jealousy, hired Tarabo to kill her husband. Luckily for him, the heroes are present during the first murder attempt (an arrow shot from a distance) and Latus is saved. At this point Verania, in tears, confesses, and promises to revoke the contract. But Tarabo cannot be found anywhere, and the caravan will leave tomorrow. The heroes must protect their friend from this terrible opponent.

(WC) Tarabo the Assassin (1). See page 24.

Joker – Talud/Taleeso the Caravan Master. Talud is a man in his late fifties, very tanned, with a snow white beard and smiling blue eyes. Despite posing as an Ekulian, characters native to Jalizar, with a Smarts (-4) roll (without penalty if they have the Linguist Edge) recognize him as being born in the City of Thieves. Talud, apart from being the caravan master, sells cloth of various types. He has a stall, but he mainly lives with his two sons, the twins Taro and Timeso, in his wagon. Taro and Timeso are identical, black-haired, close-mouthed fellows and act as bodyguards and security for the caravan, besides being excellent thieves themselves.

Talud's wagon has a secret compartment, cleverly concealed on the right wall, containing the stash of the band (an

amount varying between 1000 and 6000 Moons). Finding it is very difficult, a Notice (-4) roll is necessary, and a Lockpicking (-2) or Repair (-2) roll is required to open it. It is protected by a trap, a poisoned needle which automatically hits unless the burglar scored a raise on the roll to open it. It is smeared with a Very Fast Non-Lethal *poison* concoction prepared with Lotusmastery d10 and a Wild Die.

Event – Missing Person. Talud is worried because one of his people is missing. You can devise a small adventure or pick another card (ignoring Jokers) to check who is missing and why. If the card is a club, the missing person was kidnapped for something he did in the past. With a diamond the person fled, after robbing another caravan member (draw another card). With a heart it is a matter of love: depending on the character the missing person could have been abducted by a spurned suitor or imprisoned by a rival. With a spade the missing person is imprisoned by the authorities, but for a crime he didn't commit.

(WC) Talud the Caravan Master (1). Use the Caravan Fighter stats, with Smarts, Spirit, Stealth and Streetwise at d8. Add the Thief and Connections (Merchants, Thieves) Edges. See page 22.

(H) Taro and Timeso (2). Use the Caravan Fighter stats, with Agility, Fighting and Stealth at d8 and adding the Block and Thief Edges. See page 22.

CREATURES AND NPCs

BERA THE TIGER

A mighty beast of the Kyrosian jungle. Her captivity and mistreatment by her master have only made her meaner.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Stealth d8.

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities

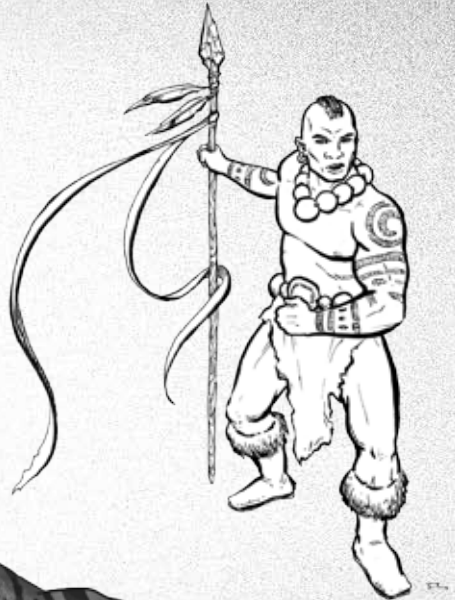
- **Bite or Claw:** Str+d6.
- **Improved Frenzy:** Tigers may make two Fighting attacks each action at no penalty.
- **Low Light Vision:** Tigers ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
- **Pounce:** A tiger often pounces on its prey to best bring its mass and claws to bear. It can leap 1d4" to gain a +4 to its attack and damage. However, its Parry is reduced by -2 until its next action when performing this maneuver.

- **Size +3:** This specimen weighs over 700 pounds.

CARAVAN FIGHTER

This profile can be used for any able-bodied fighting man of the caravan, whether a camel rider, a personal bodyguard or a sentinel.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6



Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Riding d6, Streetwise d4, Survival d4, Throwing d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5;

Toughness: 6 (1)

Edges: -.

Hindrances: Up to one Major and two Minor.

Gear: Bronze short sword (Str+d6), bronze dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), light leather armor (+1), traveler's garments.

COMMONER

A common man or woman; you can tweak the following stats a little to represent specific individuals. When necessary, roll on the Allies Personality Table (see SW core rules) to add some characterization.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (one craft) d6, Notice d4.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 4;

Toughness: 5

Gear: Bronze knife (Str+d4) or farming tool (Str+d6, -1 to Fighting rolls).



KAVATASHA

The Kavatasha, or Soul Stealer in the Lhoban tongue, is a spirit, usually entrapped in mountain pearls, jewels found only in the highest mountain lakes. The Kavatasha doesn't have a body, but can possess a person, usually a woman, wearing the cursed pearl in contact with her skin. The Kavatasha can stay dormant for months, even years, and it is very difficult to find (-4 to any roll to detect her) unless she manifests. This happens when the spirit is hungry and when the host is in a strong emotional state (the courtesan, in this case, was badly mistreated by rough customers). When the manifestation starts, the skin of the

host becomes bark-like and black, and the touch of the creature becomes deadly, sucking away the life essence of the victim.

Despite its weird nature, a Kavatasha isn't a demon, but a strange natural creature.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10.

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities

• **Draining Touch:** Any creature touched by a Kavatasha must make an opposed Vigor roll. This is considered a touch attack. If the monster wins, the victim suffers one level of Fatigue, plus another one for severe, instantaneous dehydration. This can lead to Exhaustion and to death. Fatigue taken in this manner is recovered extremely slowly at the rate of one level per month, with a Vigor roll. In the case of failure, the victim recovers, but permanently loses one Vigor die step.

• **Fear -2:** Seeing a person possessed by a Kavatasha is a terrifying experience, which causes a Fear Check (-2).

• **Pearl Beauty:** A Kavatasha pearl, if kept in contact with the skin, enhances the attractiveness of any woman wearing it, giving her +2 on Persuasion rolls toward men.

• **Weakness (Pearl):** Removing the pearl from skin contact with the victim breaks the possession, but only if it is kept intact. Destroying the pearl while in contact with the host permanently traps the spirit in the vessel. Hitting the pearl, if worn in a necklace, requires a Called Shot (-4).



JADE WASP

This creature resembles a giant wasp, but in truth it is construct in which a demon was bound. Six inches long, it is made

of small segments of interlocked jade. The Jade Wasp is a diminutive, but lethal killer: it delivers a strong poison, which, a day after the killing the victim, makes them return from the grave as slaves of the Wasp. Wasps usually have a specific task, such as killing an individual: if their task cannot be fulfilled any more (as in this case), they are free to bring mayhem as they wish, and their instincts usually make them create armies of drones to form personal “hives”. Luckily they can only command a certain number of slaves at a time and then only if they remain near them. They cannot reproduce, but are virtually immortal.

Jade Wasps are considered of Heroic Rank for the purpose of the *summon ally* Power. In addition to the normal requisites of the spell, the sorcerer must provide the body of the wasp, to the inhabited by the demonic spirit. This costs at least 1000 Moons.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Stealth d10.

Pace: 2; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities

- **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and maladies and receive +2 to rolls to recover from Shaken.

- **Poisonous Stinger:** The only attack of a Jade Wasp is its poisonous stinger. The attack is made with a penalty equal to the Armor of the victim (so against a target with Armor +2 it is made at -2), but no damage is done: the Wasp always punctures an area of unprotected skin. The victim suffers the effect of a Venomous Poison. If the victim dies, and the Wasp doesn't already have the maximum number of Slaves under its control (see

below), he comes back as a Wasp Slave after 24 hours.

- **Size -2:** A Jade Wasp is only 6 inches long.

- **Slave Mistress:** A creature killed by a Jade Wasp comes back as an undead, a Wasp Slave. The maximum number of Slaves a Wasp can have is twice its Spirit die (so 20 with Spirit d10). The Wasp must be within 12" of its Slaves to command them.

- **Small:** As it is so small, attacks against a Jade Wasp are made at -2.



TARABO THE ASSASSIN

This harmless-looking peddler is in fact a deadly killer of the Assassins' Guild of Jalizar.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d10, Healing d6, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Riding d6, Shooting d10, Streetwise d8, Survival d4, Throwing d8.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8;

Toughness: 6 (1)

Edges: Assassin, Block, Lowlife, Marksman, No Mercy, Poisoner.

Hindrances: Code of Honor (always fulfill a contract).

Gear: Razor sharp iron stiletto (Str+d4+1, AP 1 – concealed under his clothing), bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48), light leather armor (+1), several disguises, poisoner's ring, tiger's claw, 3 doses of Refined Lotus.

Special Abilities

- **Almost Harmless:** Tarabo is very good at looking like a simple, harmless man. He can get the Drop on people who don't know his real identity with a Persuasion (+2) roll, opposed by the victim's Notice.

• **Poisoner:** Tarabo has Lotusmastery d8 and 9 Power Points. He is considered a Veteran character. He usually has a dose of a Very Fast blade *poison* (Opalescent Lotus of Death) and another one of Normal Non-Lethal ingestion *poison* (Stonehammer Knock), which he uses to subdue sentinels, guards and similar threats.

WASP SLAVE

A bloated, undead creature, killed by the poison of a Jade Wasp.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities

• **Claws:** Str+d4.

• **Fearless:** Wasp Slaves are immune to Intimidation and Fear.

• **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage.

• **Weakness (Jade Wasp):** If there isn't a Jade Wasp within 12" from them, Wasp Slaves are inactive. If the Jade Wasp who sired them is destroyed, so are they.





THE WINDOWLESS TOWER

“The tower has always been where you see it today, noble wanderer, like a skeletal finger pointed skyward. Nobody knows who dwells in it, but, if you would pay heed to the words of an old man, stay at home during nights of the full moon, when the walls of the tower are as red as the conscience of a monarch...”

— From the diary of Justinus of Syranthia

LOCATION: ANY CITY OR TOWN IN A CIVILIZED AREA

This strange tower of yellow stone is placed in the heart of a city chosen by the GM, in a dangerous and not very frequented quarter. Without any apparent doors or windows, the tower is covered with engravings representing monstrous creatures and vaguely repulsive

decorations. With a successful Knowledge (History) or Knowledge (Arcana) (-2) roll, its peculiar architecture is recognized as Keronian.

The tower is slender but very tall, with at least six floors, and can be seen from anywhere in the city.

In truth the tower is an ancient temple dedicated to a demon, the Guardian of

the Yellow Door. The creature is bound to the building and cannot leave it, but it has lured inside some people who, seduced by its arcane gifts, founded a cult in its name and make a human sacrifice to it each night of the full moon. This has contributed to spreading the sinister fame surrounding the tower.

The Cult of the Yellow Door. The ordinary cultists of the tower are lowlife: thieves, ruffians and similar people, but the higher ranks, the Chosen Ones, are occupied by citizens beyond suspicion: Balthus the goldsmith and Zagarra the tavern keeper. Valatur the butcher, Master of the Cult, is the secret head of the sect. These people behave normally during the rest of the month, but on nights of the full moon, they dress in the trappings of the cult, long, hooded yellow robes, and prowl the back alleys looking for an unlucky victim to sacrifice to their unholy deity.

INTRODUCING THE TOWER INTO A SCENARIO

The most straightforward and sword-and-sorcery way to introduce the Windowless Tower into an adventure is the classic kidnapped girl plot. A woman, if possible the love interest of a party member, is kidnapped by the cultists during a night ambush. The victim's tracks (hair, an earring, the blood of a wounded cultist) lead to the base of the tower.

Another classic hook is making the heroes investigate the mysterious cult endangering the streets on certain nights. This can happen because a powerful patron (a noble, a priest or even the head of the local thieves' guild) asks them to investigate or out of simple curiosity. Sooner or later the cultists, who don't like this type of attention, ambush the party, and, if defeated, escape to the Tower.

INSTANT PLOT: AN UNWANTED TREASURE

One night a hero, leaving a tavern half-drunk, is attacked by Zajos, a lowlife trying to rob him. The fight is very brutal, but Zajos is defeated, and runs away into the night. While the hero is catching his breath, he notices something on the ground; it is a strange amulet the lowlife lost during the struggle. It looks quite precious so probably the character will pick it up.

A couple of nights later, Zajos the Robber is found dead in a back alley: this is a punishment from the cult for losing his precious Door Amulet (see below). The rumor spreads quickly through the quarter and the heroes also hear of it.

It is important, in the meantime, that the party has something else to do (for example they are looking for clues as part of another adventure or are hired as guards by a nobleman).

In the next few days, the cultists (who are frantically looking for the lost amulet) kill all the acquaintances of Zajos, one after another, till they arrive at the hero, one of the last people to meet him...

Whatever the chosen method, sooner or later the party will be at the tower's base, looking for an entrance.

EXPLORING THE TOWER

Sooner or later, the heroes will arrive at the Windowless Tower. The building has six floors and seems quite small from outside. Once inside, this isn't true anymore and the rooms seem much bigger (at the GM's discretion); this is an effect of the Door Guardian's powers.

Ground Floor – Concealed Door. The tower, from outside, apparently lacks any doors or windows. In truth a door is present, well-concealed in the wall. A Notice (-4) roll is necessary to spot it. The roll is without any penalty if the party has a Door Amulet, because the object has the same shape as a small niche in the wall, which is actually the keyhole: inserting the amulet causes the opening of the door. If the party, for any reason, are chasing the cultists, they spot a piece of cloth conveniently torn off in the door, giving +2 to the Notice roll and making it possible to get inside using a Lockpicking (-2) roll or by bashing the door open with a Strength (-4) roll.

The interior is a small dark room, with a stairwell going up. Hanging from the walls there are strange torches of engraved bronze, unlit. When taken in hand these suddenly come alight, burning with a blue, cold flame. They are ancient Keronian magic. Each torch lasts for 100 hours before the magic fades away. The torches' fire is considered a magical weapon (so they can harm both Yakh-Tis and the Door Guardian – see below). There are two of them, dealing Str+d4 damage.

First Floor – Wall Paintings and Well. This room, with walls covered of paintings, hosts a round-shaped well in the middle, closed by an engraved bronze cover. The paintings are pictographs, and a Smarts roll is enough to understand their meaning: they tell the story of a creature, vaguely humanoid. The being comes in from a door, and tears away a peduncle eye from its head to give it to a group of worshippers. The creature then goes back through the door, which closes behind it, but the worshippers jealously guard the eye, and use it, in the next images, to close and open the door which the creature came from. Understanding the paintings gives a hint to the party about how to defeat the Guardian (see Fifth Floor). The well is very peculiar. First, for its position: being on the first floor it is physically impossible that it draws water from anywhere; second, for the engravings on it, representing a pack of agile greyhounds. Uncovering the well requires a Strength roll. Once opened, a puff of green smoke escapes from it, then a pack of Keronian greyhounds comes out, eager to kill!

The dogs are only an illusion, caused by the Lotus vapors imprisoned inside. Characters suspecting this can make a Spirit (-2) roll to make them disappear. The monsters disappear anyway after four rounds. Wounds caused by the illusions are revealed to be Fatigue after the fight, and they are fully recovered in one hour.

The well is actually a container, five feet deep, totally empty.

(E) Keronian Greyhound (2 per Hero). Use the Desert Hyena stats without the Hideous Laughter and Pack Leader special abilities. See page 10.

Second Floor – Storage Room. This room is full of old junk: discarded furniture, barrels and other stuff that for

some reason the cultists decided to store there. Guarding all these worthless things (or, more likely, posted here to keep him out of trouble) there is a fat cultist, snoring upon a sack full of straw. He is Zag, the sole and worthless son of Zagarra the tavern keeper (one of the Chosen Ones of the cult). Zag is absolutely spineless, and ready to reveal everything he knows of the cult and the tower. This isn't much, but he tells the heroes that the caged girl should not be disturbed, and that the windows on the upper floor must not be uncovered.

(E) Zag the Cultist. Use the Yellow Door Cultist stats, adding the Yellow and Obese Hindrances. See page 32.

Third Floor – Room of Many Windows.

This room is empty, apart from a massive table in the middle of it, covered by a thick layer of dust, a sign that it isn't used frequently. On the walls there are four big windows, covered with curtains of black velvet. They are placed on the four cardinal points. From the exterior of the tower, these windows don't exist and, uncovering

them, the heroes will see strange landscapes, as if they looked out on other worlds. The northern window shows a wood of black, twisted trees, the southern one shows a leaden sky, with clouds red as fresh blood, while the eastern one looks out along an infinitely long corridor, made of yellow stones. Each hero exposed to these visions must make a Spirit roll, with -1 for each additional window he looked out of; in the case of failure he is Nauseated till the last scene, and he won't uncover any more windows. If he scores a raise, the adventurer isn't scared by them, but intrigued, and receives a Bennie (only once, however many windows he uncovers). The western window is a fake; it hides a concealed stairwell, which leads directly to the Fifth floor, through a secret passage (see below).

Fourth Floor – The Cages. This room is full of cages, of different dimensions: some are very small, as if made to keep singing birds, others dog-sized and finally some are large enough for human beings. Most hang from long chains on

GM'S TIP: JUMPING OUT OF THE WINDOWS

The exact nature of the windows to other worlds is left to the GM. They could be just "visions", or they could be real passages to other dimensions. If a hero decides (or is forced) to pass through one, he could enter a totally different dimension, maybe a pocket universe like the one of B&B #3 – Green World, or the Dream Kingdom (see TLD), or even a passage to another age. This could lead to a very interesting scenario...

the ceiling, while the bigger ones are placed in large niches on the walls. One of this last type, a cage made with very thin silver bars, is bell-shaped and contains a marvelous girl of exotic appearance, with night-black eyes and hair. She says (in slightly accented Imperial) she is Yakh-Tis, a dancer kidnapped by the cult. In truth she is something very different: a spider-demon, which if released immediately attacks the group. The cage is locked, but the bars are so thin, that they can be broken with a Strength roll (pieces of these bars can be used as Small Improvised Weapons made of silver, see Yakh-Tis description). A sorcerer, with a Knowledge (Arcana) (-4) roll, can have heard of a demon with that name, and can know of some of its capabilities (at least the *disguise* Power, the Weaknesses are known only with a raise).

(RH) Yakh-Tis the Spider Demon. See page 31.

Fifth Floor – The Door Guardian.

This large room on the top of the tower is the sanctum sanctorum of the cult. Surrounded by a colonnade, there is a portal in this room, on the northern wall, entirely made of stone.

It is closed, but, on nights of the full moon, after a human sacrifice (the best one is a busty girl), it opens and fills with a swirling darkness and the Door Guardian appears in front of its followers to receive their offering and give its blessings. If the demon doesn't find an offering, it'll grab a random person to satisfy its cravings.

During the ritual all the cultists gather in this room, including the Chosen Ones and the Master. The rite includes chanting, and the ignition of two braziers (which can be useful to defeat the demon when it appears). The room contains a

secret door (see Third Floor) concealed in a shadowy area of the colonnade, flanking the cultists.

How to Defeat the Guardian. This creature, being a demon, is immortal, but it doesn't belong to this world. It manages to enter and stay only due the presence of its Eye, which is in the hands of the Cult Master. The heroes can guess this fact if they looked at the paintings on the First Floor. If they get the Eye, and throw it in the Door, the Guardian loses its anchor, it dematerializes and, after few moments, the tower, without the power of its magic to sustain it, starts falling apart!

At this point the heroes should run away; this counts as a Short Chase sequence.

At GM's discretion, this encounter might not be the end of the Windowless Tower and the Guardian: after some time this strange building could appear somewhere else...

(E) Yellow Door Cultist (2 per Hero+2). See page 32.

(WC) Valatur the Butcher (1). See page 30.

(WC) Yellow Door Guardian (1). See page 33.

CREATURES AND NPCs



VALATUR THE BUTCHER

Nobody would imagine that this big, amiable fellow is actually the head of

a deranged cult. But this is the truth. Valatur hides a murderer's soul, and was the first to be lured into the Tower, years ago. From that day his business has grown a lot, and now he is quite rich. Valatur is

Special Abilities

• **The Cult Has Many Eyes:** The cultists can count on a network of affiliates, spies and helpers. They receive +2 to Streetwise rolls in their city.



remorseless and ready to sacrifice his men for the good of the cult.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (religion) d6, Persuasion d8, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Brawny, Command, Loincloth Hero

Hindrances: Delusional, Vow (he must abide by the tenets of his faith).

Gear: Flame-bladed dagger (Str+d4+1, see sidebar), meat cleaver (Str+d6), hooded robe, door amulet (see sidebar), Guardian's Eye (see sidebar).

YAKH-TIS THE SPIDER DEMON

Spider Demons are an ancient race, servants of more powerful entities. They love to trap their prey in webs, poison them, and suck out their entrails once they're dead. Yakh-Tis is quite well-known among the sorcerers of the Dominions. She has a weakness: she can change her appearance, but cannot lie about her name, if directly asked.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d12+2, Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Shooting d8, Stealth d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- **Bite:** Str+d4.
- **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and maladies and receive +2 to rolls to recover from Shaken.
- **False Appearance:** Spider Demons are masters of disguise and can take the shape of any living being they want. This is an illusion and treated as the *disguise* Power, cast using Persuasion as the arcane skill and with an unlimited number of Power Points. They can also use this ability to perfectly imitate a person (an opposed roll between the demon's Persuasion and the heroes' Notice is necessary to distinguish the original from the copy).
- **Invulnerability:** Spider Demons can be Shaken by mundane weapons, but not killed, except by those listed in their Weaknesses.
- **Poison:** A Spider Demon's bite delivers a Venomous poison.
- **Wall Walker:** A Spider Demon can walk on vertical surfaces at Pace 8.
- **Weaknesses (Silver and Magic):** Spider Demons can be damaged normally by magic, steel and silver, to which it is particularly sensitive. Weapons of this material deal double damage, and, in

addition, if the attack renders the demon Shaken, its False Appearance Special Ability is automatically disrupted.

- **Webbing:** Spider Demons can cast webs from their thorax that are the size of Small Burst Templates. This is a Shooting roll with a range of 3/6/12. Anyone in the web must cut or break their way free (Toughness 7). Webbed characters can still fight, but all physical actions are at -4.

YELLOW DOOR CULTIST

This individual, despite living a normal life by day, is the worshipper of a deranged deity by night. Many of these cultists are criminals, beggars and other members of the lower echelons. The Chosen Ones, the ringleaders, are instead esteemed members of society.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (religion) d4, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5;

Toughness: 5

HERO'S JOURNAL: CULTIST GEAR

Cultists are weird people, these ones in particular have access to unusual equipment, described below.

Door Amulet. *A round pendant made of yellow stone, the same material as the tower, perfectly smooth and without any engraving. Its main use is as a key to enter the Windowless Tower.*

Flame-Bladed Dagger. *The typical weapon of these cultists is an ancient, flame-shaped dagger, of Keronian make, part of a batch found in the tower. It cannot be thrown, but it inflicts +1 damage. In addition, in the hands of a cultist, it grants the Arcane Resistance Edge. It is made of ensorcelled bronze, pag 131.*

Guardian's Eye. *This disgusting object is a stone peduncle with an insectoid eye on the top. The peduncle, dessicated but still alive (it randomly blinks its eyelid) is part of the body of the Guardian, acting as its anchor in the Dominions (see above) and has strange powers. It allows using the stun Power (paralyzing stare) with 5 Power Points and arcane skill d8. Unlike the normal Power, it works in a cone template (the "sight arc" of the eye).*

Hindrances: Delusional, Vow (they must abide by the tenets of their faith).

Gear: Flame-bladed dagger (Str+d4+1, see sidebar), hooded robe, door amulet (see sidebar).

Special Abilities

• **Chosen Ones:** The Yellow Door cult has two ringleaders: Balthus the goldsmith and Zagarra the tavern keeper. They have Spirit and Fighting d8, and the Command Edge. They are respectively a Right Hand and a Henchman.

• **Fanatical:** The cultists are ready to sacrifice their lives for their master, so they use the Fanatics setting rule, protecting the Cult Master and the Chosen Ones.

• **The Cult Has Many Eyes:** The cultists can count on a network of affiliates, spies and helpers. They receive +2 to Streetwise rolls in their city.



YELLOW DOOR GUARDIAN

This ape-like being is one of the servants of Baachaga, Master of Shapes, one of the Demon Lords worshipped in Tricarnia and an ancient Keronian god. The Guardian has a peculiarity; his head is constantly changing shape between snake, jaguar and mantis forms. Every time the head is different, but has the same recurring feature: it is missing an eye, which the Guardian gave to the Cult Master.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Perception d8.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities

• **Claws:** Str+d4.

• **Demon:** Demons are immune to poison and maladies and receive +2 to rolls to recover from Shaken.

• **Horrible:** The Guardian is so alien that it causes a Fear check in whoever sees it for the first time.

• **Invulnerability:** The Guardian can be Shaken by mundane weapons, but not killed.

• **Mutating Head:** The Guardian's head changes cyclically every round and can make an additional attack without any penalty. The three shapes are: snake head (Str+d4, delivers a Lethal poison), jaguar (Str+d6), mantis (Str+d4, the Guardian is dealt two Action Cards and acts on the best one).

• **Size +1:** The Guardian is slightly bigger than a human being.

• **Weaknesses (Fire and Magic):** The Guardian can only be damaged by fire or magical weapons.





THE DARK LADY

"I swear, I was on that ship, noble master! Or, at least I know someone who was! Filled with gold was the hull of the Dark Lady, and Tarasko the Grim, the captain, danced drunkenly over it. But pay heed to my words, nobody can rob the Pygmies of their treasures and hope to live. Nobody knows where the Dark Lady is: the Anaconda River swallowed it, and the ancient gods guard it!"

— From the diary of Justinus of Syranthia

LOCATION: SOMEWHERE IN THE LUSH JUNGLE

Everybody in Verazar knows the story of the *Dark Lady*, the ship of Tarasko the Grim, infamous pirate of the Anaconda River. The tale of how he plundered the gold from a Pygmy temple, deep in the jungle, is one favored by drunkards, and its conclusion varies

according to the teller, but what is certain is that the *Dark Lady*, full of gold, never managed to leave the Lush Jungle and disappeared somewhere on the Anaconda River or one of its many tributaries. The man who finds it will become rich beyond imagination.

The Fate of the Dark Lady. Robbing the Pygmies isn't a good idea: they aren't

very tall or strong, but their shamans are powerful, commanding powers forgotten by the rest of mankind. The *Dark Lady's* end started with the sound of drums in the evening. Nobody knows if they were the cause, but few hours later, during a particularly dark night, the ship's hull was severely holed by a sunken tree in the river. At this point, with the crew in panic, *something* crossed the water, a horrible creature called by Pygmy drums from the depths of an ancient jungle temple to punish the thieves. It was the Bidibu-Tarauza: the Being-Which-Devours-The-Flesh. The cries of the crew were desperate, if short-lived. But what the shamans did, they cannot undo: the Bidibu-Tarauza could not be called back. Nobody, not even the jungle dwellers, can approach the ship, because the Bidibu-Tarauza knows no mercy, has no friends, and kills everyone; so it has remained, half asleep, in the hull of the ship, guarding the Pygmy gold forever.

First months, then years, passed; the ship's hull was covered with debris, and then plants grew on it, creating a small, artificial islet in that part of the river. Today it is chock-full of plants, and nothing, apart from the mast's top coming out from the plants, reveals its true nature.

INTRODUCING THE *DARK LADY* INTO A SCENARIO

There are at least two ways to introduce the *Dark Lady* into an adventure.

The most straightforward one is for the party to stumble upon the islet while sailing on a tributary of the Anaconda River, and, noticing the mast, they go to investigate, unaware of the mortal danger they are in.

The second way consists of finding, somewhere in the jungle, a feverish gold

hunter, who reveals, in the last hours of his life, that he knows the location of the *Dark Lady*. His directions are vague, and maybe partially wrong due to the fever, but by following them the heroes can find the ship.

A Widely Known Legend: the story of the *Dark Lady* is very popular, so any hero living at least three months in the Lush Jungle can make a Common Knowledge roll to remember it (as is told in the introduction to this chapter).

GETTING TO THE SHIP

Reaching the ship isn't easy. Below are listed some encounters the party can find when they are very near to the *Dark Lady*, according to whether they come by foot, crossing the jungle, or by ship, sailing up the river. The GM is encouraged to add others, to make the voyage more dangerous.

JUNGLE ENCOUNTERS

Skull Poles. The heroes, while advancing in the thick of the jungle, spot a crude spear planted in the ground, adorned with feathers, and a skull on it. It is a warning, in the Pygmies' way, that the territory beyond is forbidden. This information is known by any character making a Survival roll. With a raise, the hero also recognizes the clan who did it: the Barkaku, meaning Night Worshipers. In addition any hero must make a Spirit (+2) roll, with a failure they suffer from Nausea till they reach the Islet.

The Mad Hermit. Ask the heroes for a Notice (-4) roll. If someone is successful, tell him that he feels watched and has a glimpse of something moving among the foliage. Moments later terrible howls and growls are heard, as if an enormous

INSTANT PLOT: TREASURE HUNT

While the heroes are leaving a tavern in Varazar by night, they are approached by a staggering man, probably a river mariner. He falls down and, revealing a dagger planted in his back, and dies. He holds a medallion in one hand. While the heroes take the object, a group of thugs arrives, swords unsheathed. They are the murderers of the mariner and demand the medallion. A fight erupts, the thugs probably lose, and while they escape, one of them shouts: "Orono will kill you for this!"

Orono, called "Cold Eyes" for his freezing violence, is a notorious bandit and river pirate, sailing the Anaconda River on his ship, the Alligator.

The amulet is of plain onyx and quite precious, but hides a hidden compartment, where there is a piece of old sail, on which a map is drawn, with the directions to the Dark Lady's location! It was made by Valensio (see below), who lost it gambling, years ago. Using it, the heroes could locate the Dark Lady, but Orono won't be far away from them, ready to intervene when the heroes reach the lost ship.

Plot Twist. *If you want to add some complexity, the map the heroes found is only one piece of three. The second piece is property of Orono, while the third is hidden in another amulet, hanging from the neck of Lady Kazina, wife of the Lord of Verazar. Gathering all the pieces could mean making a deal with the pirate captain and finding a way to get the jewel from the well-protected woman...*

beast was approaching! Consider it an Intimidation Test of Will: if the party fails, tell the players their heroes will likely escape (but they must decide what to do). With a 1 on the Spirit die they are Panicked and must flee, stumbling automatically into the Pygmy Ambush below with catastrophic results. In truth the growls are fake (as a Smarts (-4) or Survival (-2)) roll can reveal) and the source is someone hidden among the plants! If discovered he tries to escape, but can be caught with an opposed Agility roll. The man is a mad hermit who calls himself Rat. In truth he is Valensio, second officer of the *Dark Lady*, who escaped death by throwing himself in the river. He survived, but he is totally mad. He is the author of the character's map (if they have one): he is a weirdo, who wanders in the jungle, but often returns to this region, because he is obsessed with the idea of getting the gold on the ship. Valensio's mind could not accept what he saw that night and any direct question about it drives him mad. He won't join the heroes and will escape into the jungle at the first opportunity.

(RH) Valensio the Rat (1). See page 46.

Pygmy Ambush! The Pygmies don't dare go to the Islet, but patrol the land around it. They noticed the intruders long ago, and are just waiting for the right occasion to dispatch them. Pick a random character and ask him to make a Notice (-2) roll; in the case of failure he triggers a trap, a snapped branch which propels a sharp bone point toward his bowels! This is a Fighting d8 attack, causing 2d6 damage plus poison (see the Poison Master ability of the Pygmies on page 45). At this point, the Pygmies jump out from the trees, led by Tarakuku, a Masked Warrior. They fight till half of them (or Tarakuku) are killed, then they retreat.

Panicked Heroes. If the party is fleeing from the Mad Hermit, all Notice rolls are made with -2 and they are automatically surprised.

(E) Pygmy Warriors (1 per hero +2). See page 45.

(WC) Tarakuku the Masked Warrior (1). See page 45.

SHIP ENCOUNTERS

Underwater Danger. While the party is advancing on the river, they arrive in a placid area, where the waters are covered in kuzu (an invasive plant). Under the thick greenish layer, there are a number of broken trees, poles and other similar things, which can tear apart the hull of the heroes' vessel. Crossing this dangerous area requires four Boating (-2) rolls, made by the helmsman. The other heroes aboard can help him, making Boating (-2) or Notice (-4) rolls to give him +1. Using ingenious expedients (like probing the water with ropes and weights) gives bonuses ranging from +1 to +4. Per failure, the vessel suffers 2d8 damage, with AP 6. If the ship is too damaged, the heroes must abandon it and go on by foot (see above).

Drums on the River. The heroes' ship overcame the kuzu, but they didn't pass unseen. Pygmy sentinels noticed them. Any character native to the jungle can try to discern the meaning of the drums with a Smarts (-2) or Survival roll. With a success they understand they are alerting the nearby tribes to trespassers, with a raise they understand they are also calling for warriors, and that other drums are answering.

Characters understanding this are ready for the danger of the incoming battle of

the Verdant Tunnel and receive +1 to the first three battle rolls (if you are handling it as a Mass Battle), or they gain the Level Headed Edge during the first two rounds if you are playing it out on the tabletop.

Verdant Tunnel. The river narrows a lot here, and the trees of the riverside almost join together, creating a sort of tunnel. Inside, visibility is very limited (consider it Dim Light (-1) during day or Pitch Black (-4)) during night time). When the heroes are in the middle of the tunnel, the Pygmies assault them, in force. Some of them shoot poisoned darts from the riverside, while others board the ship using vines as ropes. They are led by Tarakaku, the Masked Warrior.

Mass Battle Option. If the heroes' ship is big you can use the mass battle rules to handle it. The defender can use the better of Boating and Knowledge (Battle). The Pygmy tribe is led by Tarakaku. The odds are in favor of the Pygmies, who have 10 Tokens against only 7 for the heroes' vessel. If you are using *TB* rules, consider the Pygmies to have Battle Value 300 and the Familiar Terrain (Jungle) Band Edge.

Tabletop Option. If the heroes' ship is small, you can handle this scene as a normal tabletop fight, using the number of opponents below.

If the heroes' ship is defeated, the heroes can try to reach the riverside and escape into the jungle.

(E) Pygmy Warriors (2 per hero +1 per crew member). See page 45. A third of the Pygmies stay on the riverside, using ranged weapons, while the others attack in melee.

(WC) Tarakaku the Masked Warrior (1). See page 45.

THE ISLET

Finally, the heroes arrive in broad part of the river. There is a small island in the middle of it, heavily forested. Looking closely, they can see a strange "tree" in the middle of it, the vine-covered mast of a ship. The area, river included, is strangely silent. If the party doesn't have a boat, they must find a way to reach the island. The waters hide no dangers (unless the GM decides otherwise), and the party can swim or use a floating log.

The islet is overgrown, but there is a small path leading into the heart of it, where the mast stands. It seems "planted" in the ground, because the ship is totally buried in the islet. Looking around, the party finds part of the forecandle, emerging from the ground, with a stair going down. The ship's hull, apart from this protuberance, is totally buried, while all the parts above are destroyed, so the party must take this path to explore the wreck.

The exploration of the ship is handled without any map; instead several encounters are described below. The GM should play them in order, but is free to skip (or to add) some to make the scenario shorter or longer. The last encounter, before going to the final location, should be the Stairs Down one.

Visibility: Unless otherwise noted, the ship is in Pitch Black (-4) condition.

Inclination: The ship sank from the stern, so the vessel is inclined by 30 degrees. Ideally, all the encounters below describe locations from fore to aft, so the heroes are constantly going downhill. During combat consider all the ship being Difficult Ground, in addition, any time a hero rolls 1 on the Fighting die, he falls

down, moving 1d4" downhill. If he hits any obstacle, he is automatically Shaken.

Noise: Apart from the Bidibu-Tarauza, there are a number of undead crewmembers slumbering in the depths of the ship. If the heroes are silent, they will (probably) stay idle, but if they are noisy, they wake up and go looking for fresh, human meat! The level of noise is handled with Noise Tokens. The party begins with zero Noise Tokens, but certain actions, described in the text, gain them some. The GM is free to give additional Tokens for other actions by the heroes (for example if they shout). In addition, each time a character acts on a deuce during combat, the party receives another Noise Token.

When the group has 5 or more Tokens, the Hungry Crew Encounter (described below) automatically triggers.

STAIRS TO THE LOWER DECK

These are stairs which the party sees on the surface, and they actually are the only way to explore the ship. The stairs are narrow, only a single person can pass, and marching order is important.

After years in the jungle, the wood is covered in humid moss and the stairs are very slippery. Every character walking on the stair must make an Agility (+1) roll, in reverse order of march (so from the last to the first). In case of failure, the character trips and falls down! Apart from suffering 2d6 damage, the hero tramples over any other character ahead of him, who must make an Agility (-4) roll to avoid being involved in the fall.

For every two characters falling down (round up) the party receives one Noise Token.

CREW QUARTERS

This cramped, low-ceiled, room was part of the crew quarters. Apart from being devastated by a long-forgotten battle, the flooring is full of debris, while from the ceiling hang down several big roots, like wooden stalactites. There is nothing useful there, but, if the party is going to fight in this place, ranged attacks suffer an additional -2 penalty.

DIMLY-LIT CABIN

The heroes see a glimpse of bluish light coming out from this room. Going inside they find a small passenger cabin, infested by moss and strange slugs big as a hand. One of them is positioned exactly over the door, and falls on the head of the first hero entering the room. The creature is slimy, cold and absolutely disgusting, so the hero must make a Spirit roll to avoid shouting (and gaining a Noise Token). The slugs are slightly luminous, probably due to the strange moss they eat, and can be used as improvised source of light; each one reduces the Light Modifier by one in a 3" radius. They die the day after being removed from their ecosystem, the ship. The moss could be useful to a Lotusmaster, with a Lotusmastery roll he can take up to two doses of Refined Lotus of an unknown type (the hero can name it!), which, if used for a concoction, adds a light trapping to the effect.

A COOK WITH A BAD ATTITUDE

The party enters the kitchen of the ship. All the food is long gone and the fireplace

is destroyed. The only piece of furniture still intact is a massive wooden bench, with a chair. Sitting on the chair is the skeletal body of a big man (he was Zugambi, the ship's cook). The body of the man is anchored in a grisly way to the table; he is pinned there by a large obsidian knife, of Pygmy craftsmanship. Zugambi was a mean person in life, and death didn't change him a bit. Removing the dagger requires a Strength (-2) roll; when this happens, Zugambi suddenly comes back to life, attacking the nearest target with the Drop.

The dagger is worthy treasure (see sidebar).

(WC) Zugambi the Cook. Use the Dead Ones stats, raising Strength and Vigor to d10 and adding the Frenzy Edge. He is unarmed, apart from his claws. See page 44.

THE OBSIDIAN DAGGER

This crude-looking weapon is more than it appears. It is a carved from a single piece of obsidian, with the hilt covered by a strip of leather. It belonged to a Pygmy warrior who found it in an ancient temple in the jungle. The past owner dared to enter the ship to explore it, but met Zugambi. He pinned his enemy to the table and fled. He lost his weapon but saved his life.

The dagger is razor-sharp (+1 Damage and AP 1) and is considered a magical weapon; in addition it ignores any magical Armor bonus (for example, that of the armor Power).

THE LOCKED DOOR

The heroes stumble across a door on the northern wall (meaning in the direction of the bow). The door is closed, blocked by an encrusted lock. It can be pried open with brute force, with a Strength (-2) roll which can be cooperative; or picked with a Lockpicking (-2) roll. In either case the door bangs open, forced by gravity: the room inside was filled with barrels, which roll in direction of the stern, creating a deadly avalanche! Every character standing in front of the door must make an Agility roll or be hit by several barrels, falling down and suffering 3d6 damage. This accident causes a ruckus and the party receives two Noise Tokens.

THE FLOODED PASSAGE

This part of the corridor is partially flooded: the characters are ankle deep in water, but there is a part of the passage where water is much deeper (twelve feet). This is caused by a hole in the *Dark Lady's* hull, and the water comes in through it (the islet's earth is soft enough to let water pass). Apart from water, other, darker things sneaked into the ship through it; in particular, a nasty giant Anaconda uses this filthy place. When the beast spots the party, it decides to taste a piece of human flesh. The creature silently sneaks up from the deeper water (using Stealth) and attacks the last member of the group, trying to grapple and drag her into the deep water zone. If the victim is hit with a Raise, she must make a Spirit roll to shout, if she fails, she cannot even shout, and the other party members must roll on Notice to become aware of her absence. In the case of failure, two rounds pass before anyone can intervene. If she succeeds on the roll, her comrades are immediately alerted to what is happening, but the party receives one Noise Token.

(E) Giant Anaconda. See page 44.

TREACHEROUS CORRIDOR

This corridor, which leads to the Captain's Quarters, is a little larger than the others, allowing two heroes to walk side-by-side. It hides a danger: the wooden flooring is rotten, and is prone to breaking if someone heavy walks on it. Draw a card from the Action Deck per hero passing in the corridor: if it is a face card, the floor breaks under his feet! Place a MBT centered on the unlucky hero, anybody caught in the template falls down into the darkness. Characters with the Obese Hindrance or Brawny Edge draw two additional cards and use the worst one, while Small heroes draw two additional cards and use the best one.

The floor breaking is very noisy; the party receives one Noise Token.

Falling heroes go down three yards, landing in a water-filled hold. They suffer no damage, but must roll on Agility to avoid being Shaken. The water is only one yard deep, but the hold contains a number of Dead Ones, which, awakened by the unfortunate heroes' intrusion, attack them. The hold has a door leading to other parts of this deck, but it is blocked by water and debris, so the heroes can only leave this place by climbing up to the upper deck. Optionally, if the GM wants to make the scenario shorter, with a Strength (-2) roll, which can be cooperative, the passage can be cleared of debris, leading directly to The Thing in the Hull (see below).

(E) Dead Ones (1 per hero +2). See page 44.

CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

This large room is in the stern, and for some reason is almost intact (the water

flooded the lower deck). The furniture includes a large bed, an armoire, a cabinet and a desk.

The bed is reduced to a mass of rotting cloth, and the armoire contains only old clothes and a still usable iron short sword.

The desk's contents were destroyed by the ship's list, but on the ground, near it, a large, thick book is found, the pages made of cured leather. It is the captain's log. It is heavily damaged by the water and the humidity, but some parts of it can still be read. See sidebar for details. Finding the book and reading it gives some useful hints to the party. The hero peering into it receives a Bennie.

The cabinet was full of liquor bottles, but the greater part of them was destroyed. A couple of bottles of booze are still salvageable: one contains the infamous Snake Liquor (a small reptile in alcohol) and the second is a Syranthian Brandy. Drinking the first gives a robust shock to the drinker, letting him recover a Wound, while the second lets him recover a Fatigue level.

HERO'S JOURNAL: TARASKO'S LOG

This item could be an excellent plot device to create a follow-on adventure. It contains the notes that led Captain Tarasko to the mysterious Temple of the Ill Moon, deep in the jungle, where he overcame the deadly Three Dead Heads trap and stole some of the Pygmies' gold. According to the diary, there is still a lot to plunder there...

STAIRS DOWN

These stairs lead down into the hold, where the treasure, and its unholy guardian, lies. Go on with *The Thing in the Hull* (see below).

HUNGRY CREW

Note: This encounter is special and happens only when the party has 5 or more Noise Tokens.

The presence of the heroes aboard hasn't passed unnoticed; the crewmen, now reduced to undead, wake up from their slumber and go hunting for the party.

They crawl from the hull, come out from the flooded areas of the ship or are simply fallen skeletons that come back to life. The GM should make appear then in three "waves". The first wave appears on the scene when this encounter triggers, the second after two rounds and the third after four. The second wave is led by Tarasko, the former captain of the *Dark Lady*.

Below is listed the number of opponents per wave.

(E) Dead Ones (1 per hero +2). See page 44.

(WC) Captain Tarasko (1). Second wave only. See page 44

THE THING IN THE HULL

In one way or another, the party should reach the hull of the *Dark Lady*, where the unholy guardian of the ship's treasure lies.

The treasure was all stored in the after part of the ship, and it is a pile of old

jewels, sprinkled with gems. They were stored in huge earthenware vases, which shattered during the impact and created a vast glimmering bed, upon which the Bidibu-Tarauza lies. The GM, to make the encounter scarier, should hide the creature's real shape in the darkness, at the end of the room, revealing its true appearance only at the end.

Crashing and Bashing. The Bidibu-Tarauza attacks on sight, using its Trample and Hundred-Handed Runner Monstrous Abilities. Remember that it is incredibly strong, but the ship's hull isn't. The walls only have Toughness 7 and every time they are damaged a leak is created. Every round, per leak, put a Water Token on the table. When there are at least 6 Water Tokens the heroes must swim (the monster doesn't float). When there are 12 or more Water Tokens the hull cracks and starts collapsing! The party should leave the ship as fast as they can because soon it will be destroyed, burying everyone inside. At the GM's discretion this can be handled with a Swimming (the first round) and Agility (the other rounds) Dramatic Task.

Note that the Bidibu-Tarauza can survive underwater, but not for too long; after ten minutes, if it hasn't managed to leave the ship, it dies.

The Pygmies' Gold. The treasure of the Pygmies is worth at least 30,000 Moons, but being mainly jewelry, it weighs one pound per 200 Moons (so 150 pounds in total). In a combat situation, the characters can grab 1d4 pounds of jewelry per round. Remember to apply the Encumbrance rules, especially if the party is going to escape from the ship!

(WC) Bidibu-Tarauza. See page 43.

CREATURES AND NPC



BIDIBU-TARAUZA

This ancient, age-old creature defies the categorization of the Sages. It isn't a demon, or an undead. Instead it is a bastard son of the Pygmies' jungle gods. It resembles a huge ball, three yards high, covered by a thick, leathery skin. There are dozens and dozens of small, clawed hands protruding from the ball, which make it capable of rolling incredibly fast, even uphill. The Bidibu-Tarauza has a vaguely human face, slightly bigger than normal. The mouth, despite looking almost normal, can become extremely wide, large enough to swallow a man, and from this it derives its name, which means "the Thing Which Devours the Flesh".

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6;

Toughness: 10

Special Abilities

- **Bite:** Str+d6.

When its head is exposed (see Weakness below), the Bidibu-Tarauza can make a free bite attack which doesn't count as an additional action.

- **Fear -2:** The Bidibu-Tarauza is a

terrible sight, which causes a Fear (-2) roll.

- **Heavy Armor:** The Bidibu-Tarauza's skin is so thick as to be impervious to everything except Heavy Weapons.

- **Hundred-Handed Runner:** The Bidibu-Tarauza moves using its hands. It ignores any Difficult Ground and rolls d8 as its Running Die, but it must always move in straight lines and must use its entire Pace. If it ends up against a solid obstacle (like the ship's hull) it deals it normal Str damage.

- **Size +3:** The Bidibu-Tarauza is three yards tall and weighs up to three tons.

- **Trample:** The main attack of this creature consists of trampling the opponents in its path. Opponents in its way must make an opposed roll between their Agility and the monster's Fighting. If they fail they suffer Str+d4 damage. The monster occupies a SBT on the battleground.

- **Weakness (Face):** The only soft spot of this ancient creature is its face. Since it rolls, the face isn't always exposed, only if

the monster *or* the character is acting on a club card. When this happens, it can be targeted with a Called Shot (-4). The face of the monster only has Toughness 6 and no Heavy Armor.



CAPTAIN TARASKO

A former Caldeian mercenary, pirate and adventurer, Tarasko was a legend in this part of the world. He was known for his swordsmanship, too, an ability he partially conserved in his un-death.



Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 8

Edges: Counterattack, Improved First Strike.

Gear: Tarasko's Sword (Str+d8, +1 Parry, see below).

Special Abilities

• **Claws:** Str+d4.

• **Fearless:** Dead Ones are immune to Intimidation and Fear.

• **Tarasko's Sword:**

This silver-hilted saber is a very good weapon, despite years spent in the water. Perfectly balanced, it grants the user +1 Parry. In addition, if the user rolls 1 on the Fighting die, regardless of the

Wild Die, he can freely reroll, as if he had spent a Bennie. It is a precious weapon, worth at least 1000 Moons, and could attract the attention of many people unless properly disguised.

• **Undead:** +2

Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage.

• **Undead Captain:** Tarasko commanded his men in life and does the same in un-death. He grants +1 to Fighting and Spirit rolls to Dead Ones in his Command Radius.

DEAD ONE

A living skeleton, part of the crew of the *Dark Lady*. It has little flesh on its bones, but it is animated by an evil will.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Gear: Rusty sword (Str+d8, breaks on a 1 on the Fighting die).

Special Abilities

• **Claws:** Str+d4.

• **Fearless:** Dead Ones are immune to Intimidation and Fear.

• **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage.

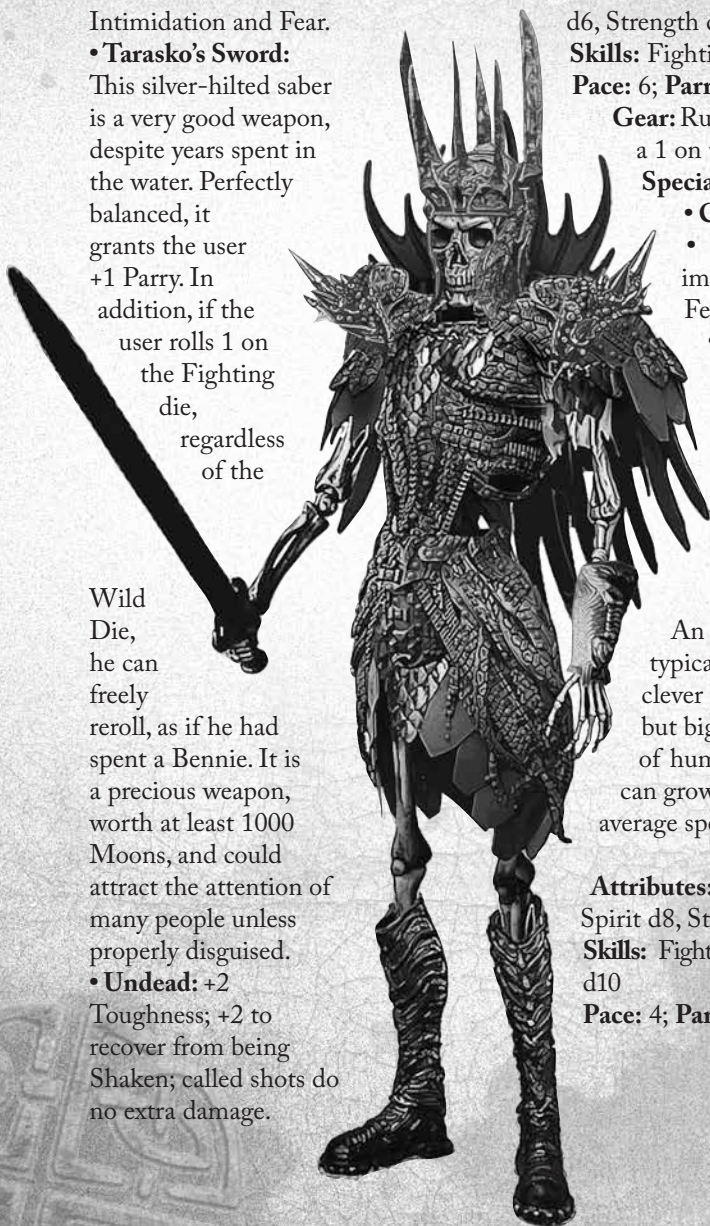
GIANT ANACONDA

An enormous, brownish snake, typical of the Anaconda River. A clever hunter, it eats mainly rats, but bigger specimens are also fond of human flesh. Giant Anacondas can grow to enormous size, this is an average specimen.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 8



Special Abilities

- **Anaconda River's Son:** Legends say that Anacondas are the favorite offspring of Gwatalovanambo, the Pygmy god of the Anaconda River, for this reason these creatures receive +2 to Stealth rolls.
- **Aquatic:** Anacondas are natural-born swimmers and need not roll on Swimming. They have Pace 8 in water.
- **Bite:** Str.
- **Constrict:** A Giant Anaconda bites when it succeeds on a Fighting roll, and entangles when it scores a raise. The round it entangles and each round thereafter, it causes Str+d6 damage to its prey. The prey may attempt to escape on its action by getting a raise on an opposed Strength roll.
- **Size +1:** Giant Anacondas are 12 feet long and one foot thick.

PYGMY WARRIOR

This Pygmy warrior belongs to the Barkaku tribe. They are somewhat bolder than other clans, and quite often use javelins in war and for hunting. The tribe recently lost its shaman, and now depends only on its Masked Warrior, Tarakuku.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Survival d8, Throwing d8.

Charisma: -4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Woodsman.

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Small.

Gear: Poisoned bone dagger (Str+d4, see poison master below), Pygmy blowpipe (see poison master below, range: 7/14/28), javelin (Str+d6, Range: 6/12/24).

Special abilities:

- **Jungle Dweller:** The Pygmies are excellent tree climbers. They can squeeze past

gnarled roots and run through the dense undergrowth which carpets the jungle floor with perfect ease. So, they ignore Difficult Ground while in the jungle.

- **Poison Master:** Pygmies are known for their dangerous poisons. In game terms, while in the jungle, they can use the *poison* Power with 5 Power Points and Survival as the arcane skill. In addition, their daggers, javelins and blowpipes are coated with a Very Fast Injection *poison* (no Power Points required), which can either be lethal or only cause Fatigue.



TARAKUKU THE MASKED WARRIOR

Tarakuku is the Mask of the Many Mouths, which was made in ancient times to be the servant of the Bidibu-Tarauza. The warrior wearing it is cold and aloof and must self-inflict various scars to be accepted by the Mask (see below). In addition, once per moon, he must eat a piece of human flesh.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Throwing d8.

Charisma: -4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Block, Command, Counterattack, Woodsman.

Hindrances: Bloodthirsty, Small.

Gear: Pygmy sacred mask (+3, head only, see below), wooden war club (Str+d8, 2 hands).

Special abilities:

- **Jungle Dweller:** The Pygmies are excellent tree climbers. They can squeeze past gnarled roots and run through the dense undergrowth which carpets the jungle floor

with perfect ease. So, they ignore Difficult Ground while in the jungle.

• **Tarakuku Mask:** The Mask of Tarakuku has a whitish, rectangular face. In addition the warrior ritually scars his body with a dozen cuts, which once healed, look like gaping mouths (and resemble the Bidibu-Tarauza). The warrior can make them open and close. This grants him +2 on any Intimidation roll.

VALENSIO THE RAT

Valensio is a thin, dirty fellow, with long, unkempt hair and beard, and a wild-eyed stare on his heavily-tattooed face. Once, many years ago, he was a sailor on the *Dark Lady*. Today he is only a wild madman living in the jungle, dressed in a cloak made of leaves. The Pygmies captured him years ago, but his madness convinced them he is a holy man and they freed him. Valensio is obsessed by the gold on the *Dark Lady*, but fears the horror dwelling in the ship too

much to return there. He calls himself “rat” because he swims like a rat and this saved his life years ago, on the dramatic night of the *Dark Lady*’s destruction.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d8, Stealth d10, Survival d10, Swimming d10.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4

Edges: Woodsman.

Hindrances: Delusional (Major), Elderly, Poor.

Gear: Cloak of dried leaves (+2 to Stealth rolls in the jungle).

Special abilities:

• **Holaboga Tattoos:** The Pygmies tattooed Valensio’s face with white signs. This makes him a Holaboga, a holy man. No Pygmy will touch or harm him. They won’t help him either.





THE BATTLE OF THE GRAY GHOST

"I was in the rearguard, stranger, and that is the only reason why I am here today to tell you the story. The Caleds came out from the woods like wolves, and before we could do anything, we were fighting for our lives. I saw Lord Brannon fell from his horse, and then I was sure it was all lost. I ran, I ran like hell, in the woods, to escape the howling barbarians. I hid in the bushes, living off roots for three days, then I finally managed to leave the forest and to reach the Fort, with the Caled horde not far away. There, on the battlements, I saw Lord Brannon, he was alive, I swear! I joined my comrades. We fought again, and then... well, everybody knows how it ended."

— From the diary of Justinus of Syranthia

LOCATION: THE CALED FOREST

The Forts of the Borderlands have guarded the Empire from the barbarians for many

years. One of the northernmost is Fort Skargos, not far from the Caled Forest. In the last few months, the tattooed barbarians' incursions have grown bolder, so a new commander was assigned to

the fort, Lord Brannon, the son of an important noble of Felantium, known for his courage.

But courage and wisdom rarely go together.

A few days ago, a large raiding party crossed the God's Axe river, and Lord Brannon's troops arrived too late to save the poor farmers, but not too late to pursue the raiders. The long chase brought the Lord's army into the Caled Forest, despite his counselors' advice to stay clear of it. Brannon wanted a victory, so he stubbornly refused to retreat. Suddenly from the woods emerged Caled warriors; dozens, hundreds of them. It was clear that the raids and the long pursuit were just a ruse to lure the fort's soldiers into a trap. But it was too late to do anything; the Borderlanders broke, and the army shattered, the proud Fort soldiers butchered by the stone axes and wooden spears of the Caled.

Now everyone is on his own, in a spooky forest, hunted by bloodthirsty barbarians.

INTRODUCING THE BATTLE OF THE GRAY GHOST INTO A SCENARIO

This place is more a situation than a regular location: the characters are involved in a large scale conflict, an event lasting several days and ending in a mass battle at Fort Skargos (see below).

There are several ways the heroes can be involved in it.

They can be part of the personal guard of Lord Brannon (who isn't dead, as will be discovered later), who, separated from

their lord, must find him in the confusion of the battle.

Alternatively, they can be simple soldiers or explorers who now must survive in some manner and leave this damned forest on their own, ignoring pleas for aid from their former comrades.

Whatever the exact background and motivation of the party, the goal is very similar: save their skins and get away from the cursed Caled forest.

IN THE CALED FOREST

The heroes' retreat to Fort Skargos is handled in an abstract way. Every six hours (an Advancement Round) the party makes an Advancement roll, which is a cooperative Survival or Notice (-2) or Smarts (-4) roll. In the case of success, they get one Advancement Token, two if they scored a raise or better. When they get at least 8 Token, it means they have finally reached Fort Skargos, where a nasty surprise awaits them. Go to the Battle of the Fort Scene.

Each Advancement Round, draw a card from the Action Deck, and run the appropriate scene below. In case of redraws, consult Redraw Scenes below.

Travel Exhaustion. The heroes are escaping, and they are probably without food or water and with wounded comrades with them. After each scene, they must make a Vigor roll or suffer a level of Fatigue. Also their allies make a group Vigor roll (use d6), a failure means that a good part of them start getting tired. This Fatigue is recovered only when the scenes say so.

Number of Opponents. Count each three Extra Allies as one hero for “number of opponents” purposes. So, if a scene says that the party faces “2 Caled Warriors per hero” and the party is composed of two players and six Extra Allies, they meet 8 Caled Warriors.

Deuce – Ambush! Caled warriors have been shadowing the party for a while, and now they decide to strike! Each hero is allowed a Notice (-2) roll to avoid being surprised, while all their allies make a single group roll. If they fail the roll, they begin the battle Surprised. From the bushes, and from the tops of the trees, come naked barbarians, ready to kill!

(E) Naked Spearman (3 per hero). See page 61.

Three – Pinned Soldiers. The heroes hear shouts and cries nearby. A group of their comrades are fighting for their lives against a band of Caleds! They can intervene, if they want, to save them, otherwise they can automatically skip the encounter. If they decide to rush to their friends’ aid, the combat takes place in a clearing. The Borderlanders are gathered under a large tree, and are surrounded by Caled warriors. The two groups are locked in melee, so if the heroes are silent (Stealth roll required) they can get the Drop in the first round.

During the fight, the Borderland Soldiers are run by the GM, but, once the opponents are defeated, they are more than eager to join the heroes and to accept their command.

The encounter can be evaded without any need for rolling dice.

(E) Borderland Soldier (4). See page 59.

(E) Naked Spearman (2 per hero + 4). See page 61.

Four – Natural Feature. This card can be dealt multiple times, with different effects depending on the suit. For each suit, the party finds a different natural feature.

Clubs – Rotten Tree. Pick a random hero (or a character with the Bad Luck Hindrance). He is passing near a tree, which seems healthy, but instead it is rotten, and it falls down on him (maybe because the hero leaned on it). The character must make an Agility (-2) roll or suffer 3d6 damage. If there are allies with the group, 1d4 of them are in the tree’s path and must make the same roll.

Diamonds – Quarry. Pick a character at random and ask him to make a Notice (-2) or Survival roll. With a success he spots a deer or other similar beast within 4d6”. The beast has Parry: 5 and Toughness: 6. Its only defense is escaping and it will do this next round. If the characters manage to kill it, they’ll have plenty of fresh food. Everyone in the group eating the raw meat is allowed a free natural healing roll. If they cook the meat the roll is made with +4, but this makes it very easy for the Caleds to locate the fugitives. Play a Caled Attack (see below among Redraws) scene after 1d4 hours.

Hearts – Holy Stone. The party finds a strange, engraved stone in the middle of a clearing. This place is sacred to the Caleds, consecrated to the Gods of the Forest, and they won’t spill blood there. Characters can safely rest there for a while. They are allowed a Vigor roll to recover a level of Fatigue.

Spades – Wild Berries. The party finds some wild berries, the only food they can grab without stopping to forage. They look tasty, but in truth are poisonous. Any character eating them must make a Vigor roll or feel ill for half a day (during which

he suffers a level of Fatigue). The berries can be recognized as dangerous with a Survival (-1) roll.

Five – Lost Wagons. The heroes find a couple of the baggage wagons of their army, which carried the provisions for the expedition. They are half-wrecked and apparently abandoned, apart from the body of a poor soldier, nailed to the cart with a Caled spear. If the heroes approach and examine the scene, with a Notice roll, they spot two things: first, that the body of the soldier is half-eaten by some beast, and second that in the area, apart from the tracks of the battle, there are those of a massive bear (see King of the Forest below). The wagons contain a substantial amount of food, water and other supplies, including arrows. All the characters recover a Fatigue level and, from this moment on, they receive +2 to the Vigor roll for Travel Exhaustion purposes (see above). Extras can also restore their ammo level to Very High.

Six – Fallen Friends. The heroes stumble across a narrowing of the wood, which was used as the scene of an ambush. Lying on the ground there are a dozen Borderland Soldiers, killed in a gruesome way, and an equal number of fallen enemies. The Borderlanders are mainly rangers and infantrymen, but there is also one of the personal guards of Lord Brannon. The corpses can be looted for weapons, arrows and similar things. In addition, with a Notice roll, one of the heroes finds a ranger still alive, although mortally wounded. His name is Rammart. With a Healing roll he can be revived, enough to speak for a few moments. Rammart tells the party that Lord Brannon is alive, with some members of his personal guard. The Lord was with him, when they were attacked by the Caleds, and cannot be far away. With this information, the party, if they want, can follow the tracks of the

Lord and his surviving men. In this case, they skip the next Advancement Roll, but make a simple Tracking roll. In the case of success the next Advancement Round they receive an Advancement Token and no card is drawn to choose an encounter, because the party goes directly to the Lord's Last Stand scene.

Seven – The Fog Rises. The winds blowing from the south west, from Tricarnia, bring a thick, damp fog to the Caled Forest. From this moment on, the visibility in the forest is Darkness by day and Pitch Black by night. In addition, if the card drawn is a club, it means that the atmosphere is very spooky. Make a group Spirit (-1) roll for the Extras with the party. With a failure one of them is Panicked and flees at random into the woods. If the party doesn't intervene, he is lost and will find a horrible death. The fog lasts for 1d4 Advancement Rounds.

Eight – The Bridge over the River. The party's path is blocked by a deep ravine, crossed by a river. Apparently there is no way to cross it, except taking a long detour (the heroes lose one Advancement Token and cannot earn any during this Advancement Round). With some exploration, a way to cross the river is found: it is a large tree, which fell over, creating a sort of makeshift bridge. The problem is that the existence of the bridge is well-known to the Caleds, who left some dangerous sentinels to guard it. Hidden in the woods there are several murders of crows, summoned by the magic of the Caled shamans. They can be spotted with a Notice (-4) or Survival (-2) roll. In addition, characters with the Danger Sense Edge can roll on it, because the situation is potentially very dangerous. The crows come out from the woods and storm the heroes when they try to cross the bridge. The bridge is 18" long and 2" wide. There are at least three 2" by 2" patches of

Difficult Ground on it. Characters Shaken or Wounded while on the bridge must make an Agility roll to avoid falling down (Wild Cards suffer 3d6 damage and end up somewhere downstream, Extras are automatically lost).

(E) Murder of Crows (1 per hero +2). See page 61.

Nine – Prisoners. The party stumbles into a group of Caled warriors, escorting some prisoners into the thick of the forest, where they won't be seen again. If the heroes are silent, they have a chance to take them by surprise (or even to evade the encounter). There are a dozen prisoners, with their hands tied together and linked by a long rope. The guards are placed around them, to avoid escapes. If the party frees the prisoners, they will surely join them. They are obviously weaponless (though they still wear armor) and are Fatigued. Freeing these men is a heroic act and the players should be rewarded with a Bennie. In addition this group of fellows picks one of the characters as their leader; treat the hero as having the Command Edge, but only toward the freed prisoners. This effect is permanent.

(E) Naked Spearman (1 per hero +2). See page 61.

(E) Borderland Soldier (10). They are equally divided among the various Specializations, apart from Bodyguard. See page 59.

Ten – Drummer of Death. The adventurers are crossing a part of the forest with very tall firs, surrounded by undergrowth; mainly a thick cushion of green moss, dotted by small purple flowers. They look harmless, but they aren't: with a Lotusmastery (+2) or Survival (-2) roll they can be recognized as a Cushion of Purple Death, a very dangerous type of

Lotus. If pressed (for example by walking upon it), the moss releases a cloud of dangerous spores. Place a MBT over any characters walking on the moss. Anybody under it is caught in the cloud and, each round, must make a Vigor roll, or suffer a level of Fatigue, which can lead to Exhaustion and even to death. Covering the face with a damp cloth or similar expedients grants +1 to the roll. There are the skeletons of some beasts, partially covered by the moss, all around, to point out the danger in this area. Luckily, the path the heroes are using (large enough for two people) is clear of the Lotus, so crossing this area is simple enough. But this doesn't mean it is safe. Unbeknownst to the heroes, a strange Caled warrior is shadowing them. He is Thra Visho, which means Drummer of Death, which in effect he is. Thra Visho isn't strong or bold, but in his veins runs an ancient magic. When he sounds his drums, he can force a target (only one at a time) hearing them to walk toward him. Consider this the *puppet* Power cast with arcane skill d10 and 30 Power Points, which lasts only while Thra Visho drums and has a range of 48". The drummer is sitting on the branches of one of the firs, cross-legged, 30" from the party and plays his music to lure the characters, starting with the Extras, into the Cushion of Purple Death. Thra Visho never attacks (he isn't even armed) and, being a very good acrobat, follows the heroes by walking (and occasionally jumping) from tree to tree. He always stays 30" away, unless the party finds a way to lure or catch him. When he exhausts his Power Points, he goes away into the wood. Thra Visho, if alive, will be present in the Battle of Fort Skargos (see next scene).

(RH) Thra Visho (1). Use the Naked Spearman stats, removing the Naked Warrior Special Ability. Apart from his supernatural drumming skill, he has

Agility d10, the Acrobat and Improved Dodge Edges. He isn't armed. See pag. 61.

Jack – Tricornian Ruins. The heroes are in a part of the wood which seems even less frequented than usual. Ivy covers everything, the plants are suffocating and dying under the deadly grasp of the infesting plant. Characters with the Danger Sense Edge can use it; with a success they don't feel an immediate danger, but realize something is very wrong there. If the party goes back, they lose any Advancement Token they got this Advancement Round. If they go on, they find an old ruin, totally overgrown by vegetation. With a Common Knowledge (-2) roll the characters recognize the style of the building as Tricornian (no need to roll for Tricornian heroes). It must be one of the fortresses built by Tricornians on the forest's border, before the Caled Wars. It is a good place to rest for the night, there is even a small spring somewhere (the water is clean and fresh, the group recovers a Fatigue level), but there is something here that makes the heroes uneasy. If they are curious, and explore the area, ask them for a cooperative Notice roll, applying

the bonus for the Treasure Hunter Edge. With a success, they find some old trinket (a bracer, a ring, a piece of amber), worth 1d4 x5 Moons, while with a raise they find something weirder: concealed behind the ivy, there is a massive wooden door, blocked by a massive stone. Opening it requires a cooperative Strength (-4) roll, which causes one level of Fatigue if failed. The door leads to a sealed underground room, full of the skeletons of Tricornian soldiers. Something terrible happened there; when the Caleds assaulted the fortress, the Tricornians retreated into this place. Instead of attacking them, the Caleds simply barred the door from outside and condemned the poor souls to die in a horrible way, first from cannibalism, then from hunger. Inspecting these grim remains, the party finds something interesting, a circlet of great craftsmanship, with a shimmering gem on it (see sidebar), on the body of someone who was probably a noble. It belonged to Prince Haraman of Nal Ramasha, the last to die in this place, who cast a death curse with his last breath. If the party brings his body outside the ruins and gives him a proper burial, the curse is lifted, otherwise,

HERO'S JOURNAL: HARAMAN'S CIRCLET

This piece of Tricornian jewelry is made of ensorcelled bronze, pag. 131 and has a blue gem encased in it. It is both a piece of art and a powerful magical artifact at the same time. If worn by a character with Spirit d8+ it grants the capacity to see specters, ghosts and invisible things. If the wearer is a sorcerer, it also grants 5 additional Power Points, as per the Power Points Edge. In addition, if the sorcerer knows the summon ally Power, with a Sorcery roll and one week of study the warlock learns how to summon Prince Haraman's ghost (he is considered a Heroic creature) but only once a year. Haraman's Circlet was in the hands of an undead for several centuries, so it is tainted. After a month of wearing it, the user starts to become aloof, losing 1 point of Charisma, if it is positive. He loses another one each month, till Charisma drops to zero. As a piece of jewelry, it could be sold for 1500 Moons, twice that in Tricornia, because it is an heirloom of Nal Ramasha, a noble family which doesn't exist anymore.

Haraman's Circlet could play an important role in the Battle of Fort Skargos.

during the night something terrible happens: the ghosts of the dead soldiers appear in the ruins and attack anyone in them. They are led by the ghost of Prince Haraman himself, recognizable by the circlet on his head.

(E) Tricarnian Specter (1 per hero +2).
See page 63.

(WC) Prince Haraman (1). Use the Tricarnian Specter stats, raising Fighting to d8. In his case the Spirit rolls for the Cold Hands of Death Special Ability are made at -2. See page 63.

Queen – The Woman of the Woods. Pick a hero at random and ask him for a Notice roll. With a success, he spots something weird. In a pool among the plants, he sees a naked woman bathing. She isn't a Caled, but clearly a Borderlander woman. After a while she dresses and goes into the wood. If sneakily followed she reaches her house: a sort of hut built inside the hollow trunk of an enormous tree. The woman is Tamariska, the Woman of the Woods. Tamariska is peaceful, even if obviously cautious, and will help the heroes, giving them food and a place to rest. If questioned on how she lives there, she says that the Caleds leave her alone. This is false; Tamariska is the lover of Dothra Vagg, a Caled warchief and she is a skilled Lotusmaster too. If the heroes poke around, not far away from the hut they find strange herbs and a grisly thing: the corpse of a Borderlander soldier (another fugitive), recently killed. Tamariska appears friendly but gives the heroes a soup of poisoned mushrooms (see Tamariska's stats). In the meantime Tamariska throws some powder in the fireplace, creating a large pillar of red smoke, a signal for her lover to come. He will arrive, with warriors, after two hours. If Tamariska is captured and

forced to collaborate, she adds +2 to the Advancement rolls of the party, but she tries in any way she can to escape or to lead the adventurers into some trap.

(WC) Tamariska the Wood Witch (1).
See page 62.

(WC) Dothra Vagg (1). See page 60.

(E) Naked Spearman (2 per hero). See page 61.

King – The King of the Forest. The Caleds aren't the only dwellers in the forest, nor the most dangerous ones. Other, more ancient creatures live there. The King of the Forest is one of them. It is an enormous black bear, which the tattooed barbarians call Galagos. The Caleds used to make human sacrifices to him, and the beast now loves the taste of human flesh. The party stumbles across an old stone altar, covered in moss and stained with blood. The Caleds left, as an offering, the body of a recently slain Borderland soldier, a sacrifice to the King of the Forest. If a player declares that his hero is going to remove the soldier from the unholy altar, he should be rewarded with a Bennie, but while he is busy, from the shadows Galagos emerges and attacks the characters! If no hero approaches the altar, Galagos arrives on the scene after 1d4 rounds. If he is left alone, he first devours the corpse (in three rounds), then, if the party is still present, attacks them.

(WC) Galagos, the King of the Forest (1). See page 60.

Ace – The War Chief. The heroes are upon a ledge, in the thick of the woods, when they hear some sounds coming from underneath it. There is a path, where a large war host of Caleds is passing. With a Notice roll, they spot one of the warriors

as being taller than the others and heavily tattooed. The other warriors look at him with deference, so he is surely a chief. In truth this man is Dothra Vagg, the war chief behind all the Caled attacks. Dothra Vagg is within bowshot (20", in medium range) and this offers an opportunity which won't come again: killing him on the spot. The characters have the Drop, and, for this situation only, Dothra Vagg cannot spend Bennies to Soak wounds (but still benefits from the Naked Warrior Special Ability). If the heroes want, they can try to get closer (up to 10", in short range), but this means climbing down the ledge, in a very quiet way; in game terms, the character must make both a Stealth and a Climbing roll. If Dothra Vagg is killed on the spot, the barbarians are disorganized for some moments, and this gives the adventurers time to escape.

If the war chief is only wounded, the Caleds react immediately, and the group should escape with an Extended Chase (10 rounds long) based on Agility in the first three rounds, on Stealth or Survival (opposed by the Caleds' Notice or Tracking) from the fourth to the seventh,

and on Vigor from the eighth to the tenth round). The chasers are three groups of ten Naked Spearmen each.

If Dothra Vagg is already dead (see The Woman of the Woods), there is another war chief in place (consider him a Wild Card Naked Spearman with Knowledge (Battle) d6)).

(WC) Dothra Vagg (1). See page 60.

(E) Naked Spearman (70). See page 61.

Joker – The Lord's Last Stand. The heroes hear sounds of battle, very near. Blocked in the middle of a small stream, three men are fighting for their life: they are Lord Brannon himself and two of his bodyguards. They are surrounded by a number of Caled warriors, led by a sort of giant, armed with an axe. When the party arrives, the Lord raises his eyes for a moment, and, distracted, is pierced by a spear (he is automatically Wounded, and this will have some influence in the next scene). The party should intervene to save him. If they don't do this, they automatically lose a Bennie. If the heroes

DOTHRA VAGG'S DEATH

The fall of the main Caled chief has a great impact on the following events. When his death is discovered, the drums of the Caled forest start sounding, spreading the news. Any Caled warrior will then be on the tracks of the heroes. From this moment on, increase the number of any group of Caled warriors by two Naked Spearmen (in total). In addition the Caled are always considered Active Sentinels for the next two days. Dothra Vagg's death is very important for the battle at Fort Skargos (see next scene) but also for the hero who killed him: he gains a Bennie and an additional Experience Point at the end of the session. But, if there were living witnesses to the killing, the rumor spreads among the Caleds, who now consider him an enemy. The hero permanently gains the Enemy (Caled) Hindrance. The GM should not abuse this, but it could lead to interesting adventures (even in the far future: the Caleds have long memories) centred on the Caleds' vengeance...

save the Lord, they gain a Bennie. The Lord, so as not to dishearten his men further, conceals his wound as best as he can, saying it is only a graze, and doesn't allow anyone to check him. He is too tired to assume command, and lets the heroes lead. He only wants to reach Fort Skargos as soon as possible.

(WC) Lord Brannon (1). See page 62.

(H) Lord's Bodyguards (2). Use Borderlands Soldier Stats, adding the Bodyguard Specialization. See page 59.

(E) Naked Spearman (2 per hero + 3). See page 61.

(WC) River Turtle, Caled Hero (1). Use the Naked Spearman stats, raising Strength, Vigor and Fighting to d10 and adding the Command and Improved Sweep Edge. He is armed with a big war axe (Str+d10, 2 hands, Reach 1, -1 Parry). See pag. 61.

REDRAW SCENES

Use these encounters when the party is given an already-used card. In this case don't consider the card value, but only the card suit. There are only four redraws, but are very generic, so they can be used multiple times (they become worse every time they are played).

Clubs Redraw – Caled Attack! The party stumbles into a band of tattooed barbarians, ready to fight. The exact situation is left to the GM. Add two enemies each time this scene is played.

(E) Naked Spearman (1 per hero + 2). See page 61.

Diamonds Redraw – Stranded Soldiers. The party finds a number of stranded

soldiers, survivors of the battle, who are trying to leave the forest and get to Fort Skargos. If the card drawn is black, among them there is at least one seriously wounded soldier. He can be transported, but causes -1 to the Advancement roll. Add one Soldier every time this scene is played.

(E) Borderland Soldier (1d4). They belong to various Specializations. See page 59.

Hearts Redraw – Getting Lost. This damned forest all looks the same! The heroes must make a group Smarts roll. In the case of failure they cannot gain any Advancement Tokens this round, and they also lose one. Every time this scene is played, the roll is made with an additional -2.

Spades Redraw – Morale Loss. The heroes and their allies are in a very stressful situation. The first time this scene is played, a random Ally tries to seize command from the heroes. Depending on how the situation is handled, it can be played out as a pure role-playing situation, with a Social Conflict or even with a combat. If the heroes lose command, they should obey the new leader, or strike out on their own. Regardless of how it ends, from that moment on, every time this scene is played one ally deserts, leaving the group, thinking he has more chance of survival alone than in the group. The number of deserters increases by one every time.

THE BATTLE OF FORT SKARGOS

When the party gathers eight or more Advancement Tokens, they finally reach the forest border, and leave the

Caledlands. They are dirty, exhausted, but safe. Fort Skargos lies only some hundreds of paces from the forest's border, guarding the Borderlands.

When the party arrives at the fort's door, they are enthusiastically welcomed by the garrison. If Lord Brannon is with them, he falls down on the ground, holding his hurting side. When the heroes succor him, they understand the man's wound is much more severe than he said, and that now he is deeply infected. Nothing can save Lord Brannon, and he will die in a couple of hours.

But this isn't the worst thing happening. The Caled forest resounds to drums: Dothra Vagg, knowing that the Borderlanders suffered great losses in the forest ambush, wants to exploit the situation, assaulting the Fort, which is the only thing preventing the Caleds from swarming into the Borderlands.

The Caleds aren't visible, they hide on the border of the forest, and attack at sunrise, a horde of naked, howling warriors.

The battle of Fort Skargos commences.

MAKING THE BATTLE INTERESTING

The scene is a Mass Battle, played as normal, plus the *TB* additions, if you want.

Each mass battle round lasts three hours.

Here follow some ideas to make the scene more exciting.

Command. The commander of the Borderlands forces should be Captain Toras, a middle-aged, cautious officer, who Lord Brannon left behind to secure the

fort. The Captain is decently competent, but he'll offer command to one of the heroes if he is more skilled.

For the Caleds, if Dothra Vagg was killed, River Turtle (see above) takes command (Knowledge (Battle) d4, Wild Card). If they are both dead, Vulgra Van, another war chief, is in charge, with Knowledge (Battle) d6. He is an Extra.

Lord Brannon. The presence of Brannon, the Gray Lion, on the battlefield is fundamental; the Borderlanders love him and the Caleds hate and fear him. Probably only the characters and Captain Toras know he is dead, so a ruse is possible: a hero, wearing his armor, could impersonate him. This will make the hearts of the Borderlanders strong and the Caleds tremble.

Tricornian Vengeance. If one of the heroes wears Haraman's Circlet, something weird could happen. From the second battle round, at the start of each Mass Battle round, the character must make a Spirit (-4) roll, plus +2 per each attempt after the first. In the case of success, the gem on the circlet starts shimmering, and from the border of the forest, behind the Caled horde, strange shapes appear: they are Tricornian war slaves killed in the Tricornian fortress in the forest, or at least their ghosts, returned to take their vengeance. They fight for a single battle round, before disappearing, dissolving into subtle dust. They are worth 300 BV and grant +3 to the battle roll due to the terror they cause in the Caleds and their tactical position.

The Caled War Chief. The commander of the Caled forces, whoever he is, isn't so foolish as to lead his men from the front line, at least during the first assaults. But, if after three mass battle rounds (nine

hours) the Caleds haven't already won, he understands he must force the hands of the defenders, so he leads the assault. You can play this scene on the tabletop. If the Caled war chief is defeated, the defenders receive +2 to battle and morale rolls in the current battle round, and from this moment on, the Caled army uses Knowledge (Battle) d6 and Spirit d6.

(Varies) Caled Army Commander. See Above.

(E) Caled Commander's Best Warriors (1 per Hero+2). Use the Naked Spearman profile, raising Fighting and Vigor by one die step. See page 61.

THE FORCES

The battle of Fort Skargos should be played with the Mass Battle rules. The opposing forces are as follows; the armies use the Battle Value rule (see *TB*, page 40), which is summarized in the sidebar.

CALED HORDE

Commander:	Dothra Vagg – Knowledge (Battle) d8, Spirit d8
Forces:	300 Naked Spearmen
Band Edges (**):	Animosity (Borderlanders)
Band Hindrances (**):	Inferior Equipment
Personalities (**):	Champion – Dothra Vagg or any other commander
Battle Value:	900

FORT SKARGOS GARRISON

Commander:	Captain Toras – Knowledge (Battle) d6, Spirit d6
Forces (*):	40 Borderlands Archers
	30 Borderland Rangers
	30 Borderlands Heavy Infantry
Band Edges (**):	Shoulder to Shoulder
Band Hindrances (**):	None.
Personalities (**):	Specialist Leader (Infantry) – Lord Brannon
Battle Value (*):	270

(*): Add to the Fort forces the soldiers that the heroes brought with them and the characters themselves. Consider each hero as granting 3 BV per Rank. (So a party of four Seasoned heroes has, by itself, $3 \times 2 \times 4 = 24$ BV).

():** Band Edges, Hindrances and Personalities are optional rules of *TB*. You can just ignore them.

Battle Roll Modifiers

Token difference: the side with the greatest number of Battle Tokens receives +1 per Token

Defenders in a fort (-2 to Caled rolls)

Lord Brannon is (apparently) alive and fighting (+2 to Borderlanders rolls)

Thra Visho the Drummer is dead (-1 to Caled rolls)

Morale Modifiers

Defenders in a fort and cannot retreat (+4 to Borderlanders rolls)

Lord Brannon is dead (-2 to Borderlanders rolls, +2 to Caled rolls)

Lord Brannon is (apparently) alive and fighting (+2 to Borderlanders rolls, -2 to Caled rolls)

Thra Visho the Drummer is dead (-1 to Caled rolls)

BATTLE END

If the Caleds don't manage to take the fort in 5 battle rounds (15 hours) they are considered defeated and retreat into the woods. The same happens if they route for any reason.

If the Caleds win, and the Fort falls, in the next few weeks they'll swarm into the Borderlands, becoming a great threat for many years to come.

BATTLE VALUE?

The Battle Value (BV) is a new stat introduced in TB, to handle the absolute strength of armies in an abstract way.

During mass battles you calculate the number of starting Battle Tokens of two armies using Battle Values as follows:

- 1) The army with the highest BV receives 10 Battle Tokens*
- 2) The army with the lower BV receives a number of Tokens equal to $(10 \times \text{Lowest BV}) / \text{Highest BV}$. The result is rounded down.*

Example. A Valk horde with BV 700 fights against a Zandorian army with BV 500. The Valk gets 10 Battle Tokens, while the Zandorians have $(10 \times 500) / 700 = 7$ (rounded down) Battle Tokens.

HERO'S JOURNAL:

WHY GRAY GHOST?

The GM may wonder why this location is called "The Battle of the Gray Ghost". The reason is simple: during the playtest, one of the players donned the armor of Lord Brannon and impersonated him in the Battle of Fort Skargos. The Gray Lion fought valiantly, winning the day, but when the battle ended, his body (the real one) was found lying in the bed of the Fort's commander. So a wild story spread among the Borderlands soldiers, according to which the Gray Lion's ghost guided them in the battle, and that he'll come back whenever one of the Borderlands Forts is in grave danger.

This is how legends are born, and the heroes helped to create one...

And the heroes? Well, if the battle is won, they will be acclaimed as heroes (+2 to Charisma in the Borderlands Forts) and maybe promoted.

If the battle is lost, the party probably was slaughtered and their bodies left for the crows, or even worse, they could be captured by the Caleds and taken back into the Caledlands, to be sacrificed to the Gods of the Forest...

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d4, Shooting d6, Throwing d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Edges: None.

Hindrances: None.

Gear: Iron short sword (Str+d6), iron dagger (Str+d4), small shield (+1 Parry), light leather armor (+1).

Special Abilities

- **Specialization (Bodyguard):** Raise Fighting to d10, Vigor to d8 and add

CREATURES AND NPCs

BORDERLAND SOLDIER

This soldier signed for the "Price of Blood", a five year period of service in the Borderland Forts. Among them there are grizzled veterans and green recruits.

Battle Value: The average BV of these soldiers is 2.

Specialization: Borderland Soldiers are assigned to various roles. For each of them choose a single specialization below. For green troops, use only the base profile.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6



medium bronze armor (+2) and shield (+1 Parry, +2 Toughness against ranged attacks) to Gear. They can use the Fanatics Setting rule to protect Lord Brannon. Parry: 7; Toughness: 8(2). Battle Value: 6.

• **Specialization (Bowman):** Raise Shooting to d8, add the Trained Thrower (bow) Edge and add bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48) to Gear. Battle Value: 3.

• **Specialization (Heavy Infantry):** Raise Fighting, Strength and Vigor to d8. Replace light armor with medium bronze armor (+2) and spear (Str+d6, 2 hands, Reach 1, +1 Parry). Parry: 6; Toughness: 8(2). Battle Value: 3.

• **Specialization (Ranger):** Raise Notice to d6 and add Stealth and Survival to d6 and add bow (Damage: 2d6, Range: 12/24/48) to Gear.



DOTHRA VAGG

This imposing Caled warrior is gifted with magnetic personality, intelligence and an incredible hate for civilized men. This didn't prevent him from taking a Borderlander woman as a lover (Tamariska). Dothra Vagg is probably one of the best Caled leaders in his generation. If not stopped now, in the next few years he will create problems in the Borderlands, Northeim and even Tricarnia.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d8, Intimidation d8, Persuasion d10, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Throwing d6, Tracking d6.

Charisma: +3; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Charismatic, Command, Hold the Line!, Improved Frenzy, Noble, Tactician.

Hindrances: None.

Gear: Stone-tipped spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, Range: 3/6/12), stone dagger (Str+d4).

Special Abilities

• **Blessed by the Forest Gods:** Dothra Vagg endured a particular spiritual quest, and the deities he called blessed it. He can use the *boost trait* (invoke the forest gods) Power with 5 Power Points using Spirit as the arcane skill. The Power is only personal and affects Fighting, Strength and Vigor only.

• **Dark Fire Tattoo:** The warriors of the Dark Fire clan fear no-one and are driven by an incredible courage in battle. This Naked Spearman receives +1 to all Spirit rolls. This ability doesn't work if the Spearman is under the effect of fear or has lost an Intimidation Test of Will during this fight, since his gods shun cowards.

• **Naked Warrior:** As long as he wears no armor, a Naked Spearman has the Loincloth Hero Edge and can soak wounds even if he isn't a Wild Card (in this case, he rolls only the Vigor die, without the Wild Die). This ability doesn't work if the Spearman is under the effect of fear or has lost an Intimidation Test of Will during this fight, since his gods shun cowards.



GALAGOS THE KING OF THE FOREST

This massive bear is quite old, and smart. Black as the night, its fur is marred by two white stripes near the eyes. It belongs to an archaic race, luckily extinct in the other parts of the Dominions.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Swimming d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10 (9)

Special Abilities

- **Armor +1:** Layers of fat and very thick fur.
- **Bear Hug:** Bears don't actually "hug" their victims, but they do attempt to use their weight to pin their prey down and rend it with their claws and teeth. A bear that hits with a raise has pinned down his foe. The opponent may only attempt to escape the "hug" on his action, which requires a raise on an opposed Strength roll.
- **Claws:** Str+d6.
- **Earth-Shaking Growl:** Galagos can make Intimidation rolls against multiple opponents. Simply place a LBT centered on it: any character in the template is affected from the Test of Will.
- **Size +3:** Galagos is 10' tall and weighs over 1,500 pounds.

MURDER OF CROWS

Swarms are treated just like a creature. Swarms cover an area equal to a Large Burst Template and attack everyone within it every round. When a swarm is wounded, its size decreases to a Medium Burst Template (see the Split Special Ability for smaller size swarms). Another hit reduces it to a Small Burst Template and a third one disperses it.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Notice d6.

Pace: 10; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- **Beaks:** A Murder of Crows inflicts hundreds of tiny scratches every round on their victims, hitting automatically and causing 2d4 damage to everyone in the template. Damage is applied to the least armored location (victims in completely sealed suits are immune).

- **Controlled by Magic:** These beasts are kept together by the Caled shamans' foul magic. This means that successful use of the dispel or beast friend Powers automatically destroys it (the beasts aren't killed but, freed of the compulsion to stay together, fly away). Both Powers are opposed by a Sorcery skill of d8.

- **Split:** This swarm is clever enough to split into two smaller flocks (Small Burst Templates) should their foes split up. The Toughness of these smaller swarms is lowered by -2 (to 4 each) and their Agility is lowered by a die step.

- **Swarm:** Parry +2; because the swarm is composed of dozens of creatures, cutting and piercing weapons do only half damage. Area-effect weapons work normally.

NAKED SPEARMAN

A heavily tattooed warrior, belonging to the clan of the Dark Fire. Naked and armed only with primitive weapons, he is very dangerous.

Battle Value: The average BV of a Naked Spearman is 3.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Intimidation d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Throwing d6, Tracking d6.

Charisma: 0; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7;

Toughness: 5

Edges: None.

Hindrances: None.

Gear: Stone-tipped spear (Str+d6, +1 Parry, Reach 1, 2 hands, Range: 3/6/12), stone dagger (Str+d4).

Special Abilities

- **Dark Fire Tattoo:** The warriors of the Dark Fire clan fear no-one and are driven by an incredible courage in battle. This Naked Spearman receives +1 to all Spirit rolls. This ability doesn't work if the

Spearman is under the effect of fear or has lost an Intimidation Test of Will during this fight, since his gods shun cowards.

• **Naked Hero:** Every band of twelve or more Naked Spearman is led by a hero, a powerful Wild Card warrior with Vigor d8, Fighting d10 and the Command Edge.

• **Naked Warrior:** As long as he wears no armor, a Naked Spearman has the Loincloth Hero Edge and can soak wounds even if he isn't a Wild Card (in this case, he rolls only the Vigor die, without the Wild Die). This ability doesn't work if the Spearman is under the effect of fear or has lost an Intimidation Test of Will during this fight, since his gods shun cowards.



LORD BRANNON

Lord Galerius Brannon is one of the favorites of the Count of Felantium, the highest authority of the Borderlands. Despite his young age, he has proven himself a worthy commander in many battles, even if he is very impulsive. Valerius is a blonde, tall fellow in his twenties, with an open smile and a natural charisma, which makes his men love him. He always leads his men from the front line, shunning the danger. His family coat-of-arms is a white lion in silver field, so sometimes he is called the "Gray Lion".

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Intimidation d4, Knowledge (Battle) d6, Persuasion d6, Riding d8, Stealth d4, Survival d4, Throwing d6, Tracking d4.

Charisma: +4; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7;

Toughness: 9 (3)

Edges: Charismatic, Command, Hold the Line!, Nerves of Steel, Noble.

Hindrances: Heroic, Loyal.

Gear: Iron long sword (Str+d8), dagger (Str+d4, Range: 3/6/12), medium shield

(+1 Parry, +2 Toughness against ranged attacks), Lord's armor (+3, see notes), full helm (+3, -2 to Notice rolls, protects from called shots to the head).

Special Abilities

• **Lord's Armor:** Lord Brannon wears his family armor, recognizable for the gray lion on the surcoat. The armor is very good, mainly because thanks to a clever system of straps, it actually weighs only 50. A character wearing the Lord's armor and helm is almost indistinguishable from Lord Brannon himself.



TAMARISKA THE WOOD WITCH

Tamariska was the daughter of a humble farmer of the Borderlands. Very poor, but extremely beautiful, she quickly knew what evil men can do for lust. Her former husband was killed, and she was kept as a slave, by a minor noble. Tamariska poisoned him and escaped. She took refuge in the Caledlands, having decided to leave mankind forever and live in solitude. Dothra Vagg, a local Caled warchief, found her secluded hut, but, instead of killing her as tradition would require, he became her lover, granting Tamariska protection from the tattooed barbarians. Tamariska deeply hates any civilized men, in particular the Borderlanders. She is savvy in herbal lore, but she is not a true Lotusmaster.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Lotumastery d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d10, Stealth d8, Throwing d4, Survival d8.

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Edges: Attractive, Healer, Poisoner, Temptress, Woodsman.

Hindrances: Vengeful (Major), Wanted.

Gear: Bronze dagger (Str+d4), vests, bag of herbs (counts as a Healer Kit), 3 Refined Lotus doses.

Special Abilities

- **Poisoner:** Tamariska can use the *poison* Power with arcane skill d8 and 6 Power Points. Her customary poisons are a dry fungi soup that she can do as a Nonlethal Normal *poison* or as a Lethal Normal *poison*.

TRICARNIAN SPECTER

The wailing soul of a Tricornian soldier, killed by hunger and brought back to un-life by the death curse of a Priest Prince.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Stealth d8.

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

- **Anchor:** Tricornian Specters cannot leave the place that they haunt (in this case the Tricornian ruins) or, if summoned by a sorcerer, cannot go farther than 12" from their evoker.
- **Cold Hands of Death:** Despite being immaterial, a Tricornian Specter can actually touch enemies. Anybody touched by this creature (with a Touch Attack) must make an immediate Spirit roll or suffer a level of Fatigue from the supernatural cold transmitted. This Fatigue can be lead to Exhaustion and even to death. It is automatically recovered at sunrise.
- **Ethereal:** Tricornian Specters are immaterial and can only be damaged by magic or steel.
- **Fear:** Anyone seeing a Tricornian Specter must make a Fear check.

